

Complementary Pathways in Iraq: Achievements since 2021

Complementary pathways are safe and regulated avenues for refugees to access lawful stay in a third country through their own agency where they remain protected as refugees.

Complementary Pathways are distinct and additional to resettlement, which is reserved for refugees who are at immediate risk of harm (due to their particular profile, such as being part of a minority group or having a certain professional or else profile) or unable to survive (medical cases) in the country where they first found asylum. Third countries establish competitive criteria which ultimately determine who is admitted to their territories for purposes of work, studies or family reunification. Refugees can apply for pathway opportunities on their own, and a UNHCR referral is not required.

UNHCR Iraq's Role

UNHCR in Iraq has supported complementary pathways since 2020. UNHCR Iraq aims to broaden the variety of pathways accessible to refugees in Iraq through contact with potential third countries in order to ease barriers to access, and to ensure information is readily available to allow individuals to pursue third-country opportunities independently. Barriers include limited third-country visa issuance facilities in Iraq; a lack of awareness amongst refugees of available pathways insofar as eligibility requirements and application procedures are concerned; as well as documentation challenges (adequate IDs/travel documents). Similar challenges are present across all pathways.

UNHCR Iraq aims to promote systems change to improve access to third country opportunities. The following direct support is provided to improve accessibility of pathways in Iraq:

Assistance with obtaining **documentation** or proposing alternatives to initiate or progress in formal applications processes. This has also been necessary to facilitate access to mandatory language or health testing.

- National IDs
- Iraqi documents
- Travel documents
- Academic and professional documents
- Legal documents (marriage certificates/custody) necessary for private applications.

Advocacy for individual cases, including.

- Prioritised consideration of individuals who may struggle to progress through pathways independently due to challenges posed by their protection concerns as refugees in Iraq.
- Removal or streamlining of documentation requirements that refugees may not otherwise be able to meet.

Counselling for all applicants navigating private processes.

- This includes **direct guidance** on requirements and action to be taken, as well as **management of expectations**.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The permanent reunification in a third country of dependent nuclear family members (parents of minor children, children under 18, and spouses) with family members who previously travelled to third countries as refugees or were granted asylum domestically.

SPONSORSHIP PATHWAYS

The financial and practical commitment to sponsoring and supporting a refugee to travel and integrate into society in a third country. Often strict financial requirements and limited eligibility (refugee status may be required). Sponsors may be community organisations, family members, friends and collective community groups.

HUMANITARIAN VISAS

Special visas issued by third countries to allow for permanent relocation for specific refugee profiles.

LABOUR MOBILITY PATHWAYS

Employment opportunities for refugees with specific skills and experience to help meet labour shortfalls in third countries. Opportunities must include protection from refoulement and path to asylum, permanent residency and/or citizenship.

EDUCATION PATHWAYS

Scholarships and financial aid tailored to refugee requirements. Provide the opportunity to study in a third country and build personal skills for future employability. To be a pathway there must be protection against refoulement and an opportunity to regularise stay in the third country.

Liaison with domestic authorities for departure procedures and exit permission.

Piloting both **education** and **labour mobility** pathways initiatives for Iraq-based candidates.

- Two years supporting Duolingo's University Access programme for refugees. UNHCR Iraq identified 8 eligible individuals for inclusion in Duolingo's University Access programme for refugees to secure funded study opportunities in third countries. UNHCR also arranged English classes for selected candidates.
- UNHCR has worked with Talent Beyond Boundaries to identify candidates for opportunities in Canada, the UK and Australia; positions include carpenters, nurses, halal butchers, and elderly care workers.
- UNHCR provides ad-hoc support as seen in other pathways to labour mobility and education candidates who independently secure an opportunity.

Coordination with **UNHCR counterparts** in receiving countries, domestic and international **NGOs**, as well as domestic and third-country **authorities**.

- Coordinating legal support on applications when required.
- Coordination between third country authorities in the country of asylum and the authorities in the destination country.
- Liaising via UNHCR counterparts with sponsoring family members in the destination country to overcome barriers.

Identification of **eligible applicants** through UNHCR registration data for specific third-country programmes.

- Candidates meeting work experience or education requirements for labour mobility and education pathways.
- Individuals with close family links pursuing family reunification to third countries.

Referral for pro-bono **legal support** in private application processes where necessary, and if applicants are unable to arrange this themselves.

Provision of **interview space** and **logistical support** for third-country private application interviews.

Facilitation of **trainings** for UNHCR colleagues in field offices and NGO partner staff to raise awareness on complementary pathways.

- Builds capacity for UNHCR counterparts to identify and refer complementary pathways applicants in need of support.
- Enhancing frontline provision of information on pathways.
- Awareness raising counteracts and mitigates fraud and exploitation schemes related to private applications.

Development of **material** and **resources** on complementary pathways. In combination with training, increased awareness combats fraud and exploitation schemes in third-country processes.

Individuals	Family Reunification	Sponsorship Pathways	Humanitarian Visas	Labour Mobility Pathways	Education Pathways	TOTAL
Identified in 2023	488	104	44	7	4	647
Assisted in 2023	630	159	99	119	13	1020
Departed since 2021	286	18	8	2	4	318

**The above statistics exclude applications falling under 'Other' complementary pathways, which include less defined opportunities which do not fall under above mentioned more formal refugee-focused programmes.*