

## FAMILY REUNION AWARENESS RAISING

## COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LEADERS TRAINING



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**PARTNER'S NAME: BRITISH RED CROSS**

**Work package 4: Capacity-building and awareness-raising at the national level**

**TITLE OF DELIVERABLE: FAMILY REUNION AWARENESS RAISING AND TRAINING**

## **FAMILY REUNION AWARENESS RAISING**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHT TO FAMILY REUNION AND HOW TO ACCESS THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

#### **Background**

The British Red Cross are one of the four national societies delivering the Reunification Pathways for Integration (REPAIR) project led by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). One of the project work packages was to deliver a diaspora research programme aimed at collating the experiences of families to produce recommendations to help improve the delivery of family reunion support. The research included holding focus groups with refugee community organisations and community groups as per country national origins whose participants were leaders of the groups or what we often considered to be unofficial general advisers.

One of the recommendations was to provide training to community leaders to enable them to provide a better and safe support to their members and help build better links with their local Red Cross refugee support offices.

This guide is for BRC workers with enough experience to provide family reunion training, primarily for staff and volunteers within the refugee support and restoring family links.

#### **Introduction**

##### Overview and Objectives

This training programme is to provide the right knowledge to community leaders about all aspect of family reunion. Community groups and their leaders have played and continue to play a vital role in supporting refugees and their family members going through the family reunion process. Their role has been unofficial and at times very risky as it has often led to wrong information being provided to those desperately in need to fast track the process.

Due to several gaps in the advice sector this has often led to many factors forcing service user to see alternative and unconventional advice including:

- delayed access to
- long waiting list
- no access to legal advice (none in certain areas)

## **TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS**

### **1. Introduction and Welcome**

#### **1.1 Purpose of family Reunification:**

It is essential for participants to understand the importance of family reunion.

Participants should discuss and agree on the importance of being reunited

Divide participants to discuss in pairs or in groups

- What experience do you have of being reunited with family members or supporting people to be reunited.

- The principle of family unity is referred to in the [UNHCR Handbook](#) (chapter VI, paragraphs 181-188), which sets out that as a minimum requirement a spouse and minor children of a refugee should benefit from family unity provisions where family life has been temporarily disrupted due to conflict or persecution.

## 2. Team Building Activities (Optional)

### Key Definitions Game:

- Activities to help everyone have a general understanding of key words

family unity; DNA test; Tuberculosis test; visa application centre; phone record; financial evidence; refugee status; humanitarian protection; resettled refugee; Indefinite Leave to Remain; immigration rules.

Trainers can add more words or initiative similar activity to support participants learning of key words.

### Facts about giving support:

Initiate discussions by asking leaders to share examples of any family reunion related support they have provided; share interesting facts about specific roles undertaken to facilitate family reunion; what they have in common as community groups.

## 3. Experiences of Family Reunion Process support

- **Activity 1: Family Tree Workshop:**

Creating or updating the group on how much they know about family reunion and what they are faced with. Asking participants to draw their family tree.

- **Activity 2: Storytelling Sessions:**

Sharing family stories of separation and impact on individuals. Initiate the sharing (on voluntary basis) of family reunion stories as per cases known to participants of from personal experience. Split then in two groups to discuss challenges and difficulties people facing family reunion face and go through.

- **Activity 3: Importance of Family Unity Presentation:**

Exploring the background to family's unity. Explain the importance of family unity quoting formal and official definitions. Initiate groups discussions about why a family unit is important.

## 4. Communication and how to avoid false information or avoid misleading people

- **Effective Communication Skills:**

Share tips and exercises to help participants improve better and safer communication.

- **Sharing correct information Techniques:**

Share tips and strategies to help participants handle wrong information they become aware of, or they handle.

## 5. Providing Practical Support

- **Understanding Family Reunion:**

Share and go through the Family reunion FAQ; Navigating the Red Cross Family Reunion web page to ensure participants know how to navigate the page and find the right information.

Share FAQs doc (share copies in different languages)

[https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/get-help-as-a-refugee/family-reunion-faqs.pdf?sc\\_lang=en&hash=3758B7FB69B04B5C6E14E6EDD05D02FF](https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/get-help-as-a-refugee/family-reunion-faqs.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=3758B7FB69B04B5C6E14E6EDD05D02FF)

Family reunion guide - <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/family-reunion>

- **Providing Guidance and Support:**

How best to support your members; The advisable do and don't practice

Provide practical role plays and exercise on how to provide evidence gathering support (what it is needed? How does each piece of evidence satisfy the criterias?)

- **Family Reunion Referrals Awareness:**

Referring to legal advice organisations. Help participants understand the importance of making a referral at the earliest opportunity, how a referral can be made and have a general overview of family reunion support available.

## 6. Closing remarks

- **Thank You Notes:**

Expressing gratitude to participants. Thanking participants for their attendance and contributions.

- **Final Remarks:**

Summarising the day's events and looking forward to the next reunion.

<b>GUIDE</b>	<b>EXPLAINING FR GUIDE</b>	<b>EVIDENCE REQUIRED/FURTHER LEARNING</b>	<b>WHAT YOU CAN EXPLAIN &amp; HELP WITH</b>
<a href="https://freemovement.org.uk/refugee-family-reunion-a-users-guide/">https://freemovement.org.uk/refugee-family-reunion-a-users-guide/</a>			
<b>Understanding Family Reunion</b>	The Right to Family Reunion 1951 Refugee Convention UK Laws & legislations		Useful learning resources
<b>Definition of Legal status &amp; Who is Eligible</b>	-Refugee Status: you have 5 years – your asylum case is fully granted -Humanitarian Protection (HP): -Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR):	Home office status Grant letter  BRP card	People files
<b>Who is a Sponsor</b>	-The person who has been given a status (RS;HP) -The person is residing in the UK	ID documents	Any ID from home country -Any ID in the UK

	-The person wanting to bring their family members		
<b>Who is A Family Member (Eligible members)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The sponsor family (ideally already declared in the asylum interview)</li> <li>-Family members in a family unit before the sponsor left country of residence or transit.</li> <li>-The sponsor spouse (husband or wife)</li> <li>-Children born or conceived before the sponsor left +part of the family unit +not married</li> <li>- The same children are under the age of 18</li> <li>- Partner: Lived together for at least 2 years</li> <li>- Relationship: is genuine and subsisting (True and will continue being and living together)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check copies of the asylum interview</li> <li>-<b>Spouse</b> (they are formally married: Recognised wedding; with marriage certificate</li> <li>-<b>Partner</b>: statement from a trusted community leader; a religious leader; photo of the sponsor and partner</li> <li>-<b>Child</b>: birth certificate; baptism certificate; school registration documents</li> <li>-DNA evidence</li> <li>-documents relating to joint purchase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other useful documents</li> <li>-Wedding invitations</li> <li>-Statement from the religious or traditional leader who celebrated your marriage</li> <li>-Adoption orders from the country of origin. Check with UK adoption authorities</li> <li>-WhatsApp messages</li> <li>-Bank transfers</li> <li>-Proof of identity must also be required to confirm people</li> </ul>
<b>Who don't count as family members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Husband or wife after the sponsor left their country</li> <li>-The sponsor child was conceived after they left their country</li> <li>-Children over 18 (unless exceptions)</li> <li>-Parents</li> <li>-Other relatives (niece/nephew/cousins)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please advise your members to go seek legal advice</li> <li>-Avoid random helpers</li> <li>-Use other immigration rules</li> <li>-Apply for Exceptional Case Funding</li> </ul>	It is important people know the risk of misrepresentation
<b>Family Members not Eligible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The list of those who don't count (parents, other relatives)</li> <li>-They must seek legal advice</li> </ul>	Parents and other relatives	Immediate Family members rule
<b>Making a Visa Application Step by Step Guide</b>			
<b>It is important to speak to someone as soon as status is granted</b>			
<b>Preparing for your first Family Reunion Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make sure both the spouse and family members meet the eligibility criterias</li> <li>-Prepare evidence of your relationship</li> <li>-Bring all required documents to your appointments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check the asylum interview record</li> <li>-Get together your Home office grant letter/BRP card</li> <li>-Any other ID document</li> <li>-Marriage certificates</li> <li>-Birth Certificate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They must have these documents with them and take them to your appointment</li> <li>If you have any certificate not in English, do query about getting a</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children school certificates</li> <li>-Photographs</li> <li>-Statements from Sponsor and spouse</li> <li>- Statement from third parties as witness of the relationship</li> </ul>	simple translation to help the caseworker understand what the document is
<b>Declaring family Members to the authorities</b>	-If you did not mention your family during your asylum interview	-A statement to explain the reasons (e.g for safety reasons)	It is very important to explain the reasons in details and give any evidence
<b>The Relationship must be genuine and Subsisting</b>	-Subsistence of the relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-telephone records with copies of messages</li> <li>-emails and letters</li> <li>-social media messages</li> <li>-Statements from trusted individuals</li> <li>- Evidence of any travel post flight to meet in third country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-International calling card: set up a call log</li> <li>-Never make up evidence</li> <li>-Do not use photoshoot</li> <li>-If the sponsor travels to see their spouse in another country keep copies of flight tickets and photo of them together</li> </ul>
<b>Showing the family members dependency</b>	-Proof of financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Receipts of money transfer</li> <li>-Copies of bank statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Western union; moneygram etc. you can log online</li> <li>-traditional money transfers, you must get a statement</li> </ul>
<b>The correct application must be submitted</b>	Making an online application	The sponsor or the adult applicant must have an email address	Find out about information needed for the online application (e.g. parents or grandparents date and place of birth)
	Family settlement form (VAF4A)	-Information required in the VAF4A can be provided by the sponsor	Find out about information needed for the online application (e.g. details of the

			house where you live and whether you will find a new home when the family arrives
<b>Meeting the TB criteria as per country nationals listed</b>	Tuberculosis Test (TB)	-A TB test centre has been identified and fees have been discussed	They need to find on the gov.uk website where the nearest TB test is (usually run by IOM)
<b>Attending the visa application centre</b>	Visa Application Centre	-Check & confirmation of the nearest visa application centre -Logistic to get to the centre has been discussed with the sponsor & family -Getting the bundle to the family overseas	They must know where the nearest visa application centre is
<b>A Case is deemed a straightforward application</b>			
<b>First outcome after the First Assessment</b>	-Sponsor has refugee status, humanitarian protection; ILR following Refugee status or humanitarian protection; A resettled refugee -The sponsors mentioned the family members in their asylum interview -The relationship is proven a pre-flight before the sponsor left and claimed asylum -Children are all under 18	All evidence are available and mostly original copies including: Photo; marriage and birth certificates; copies of asylum interview; DNA test done when possible	Give evidence that children were living with the parents immediately prior to separation
<b>Support &amp; Representation</b>	-There is a high possibility to be represented through the Red Cross family reunion project	-You must speak to the local Red Cross office	
<b>A case is deemed complex</b>			
<b>Second outcome after the assessment</b>	Most of the element in the first outcome are not met -Children are over 18 or some are over 18 -Family were not mentioned in the asylum interview -Lack of correct documentation as evidence		A DNA test is recommended

	Other complexities (adopted children)		
<b>Support &amp; Representation</b>	-The Red Cross can advise you on seeking alternative advice - The Red cross can make a referrals to another legal adviser taking on complex cases - They can discuss with you the possibility to complete an Exceptional Case Funding Application (ECF)	- The sponsor will be required to provide some evidence to support the ECF application	
<b>A Case is outside Immigration Rules</b>			
<b>Third outcome after the assessment</b>	The case is deemed outside immigration rules -The relationship/marriage is after the sponsor left -The child was conceived after the sponsor left - Children and over 18 and there was an unexplained delay - The application includes family members who are not eligible (adults' siblings, other relatives)	Evidenced by  Documents submitted	
<b>Support &amp; Representation</b>	The sponsor will be advised to seek legal advice -The case can be signposted or referred for alternative advice		
<b>Negative outcome</b>			
<b>The Visa application has been rejected/refused</b>	There will be the Right of appeal against refusal	Appeal forms must be submitted to the immigration tribunal for a judge to decide	Appeal forms

### Appendices and References:

It is important for leaders to have a basic knowledge of the advice sector to strengthen their ability to support. Here are useful resources.

- **Legal Aid providers**  
Legal Aid provides funding to solicitors to provide free legal advice. This is the main website where to find legal aid solicitors to refer people for advice.  
[Find a Legal Aid Adviser or Family Mediator](#)
- **OISC regulated organisations**  
The OISC which stand for the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner are one of the bodies in the UK that regulate advice  
[Finding and Using an OISC Regulated Organisation - GOV.UK](#)



➤ **The British Red Cross**

The Red Cross are one of the organisations that deliver family reunion support across the UK. They have a lot of expertise, and they produce guidance to support different stakeholders

[Family reunion application guidance | British Red Cross](#)

➤ **Law Society Accredited providers**

The Law Society also regulate the advice sector in the UK

[Find a solicitor | The Law Society](#)

➤ **Further Learning**

Here are more resources where learners can read more about family reunion

<https://freemovement.org.uk/refugee-family-reunion-a-users-guide/>

**The Right to Remain**

**JCWI learning modules**