



# IRAP

International Refugee  
Assistance Project

**2022**  
REPORT TO  
SUPPORTERS



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Note: The content of this Report is current as of September 2022.  
For the security and privacy of clients, some of the names in this  
Report have been altered or omitted.

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Photo Credit: Anna Ridout/Oxfam

# Letter from the Executive Director

Photo Credit: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



“ We view the principles of diversity, anti-racism, and global justice as foundational to our mission. By collaborating with our clients to address inequities in forced migrants’ access to legal solutions, we seek to combat injustice while elevating the agency and dignity of people experiencing displacement and marginalization. ”

## Dear IRAP Community,

Over the past year, the number of people experiencing displacement reached a record 100 million worldwide, underscoring the urgent need for innovative, scalable legal solutions for people seeking safety. IRAP works to ensure not only that these solutions exist, but that displaced people around the world can access them equitably. The global welcome extended to displaced Ukrainians this year demonstrates that countries can efficiently welcome displaced populations, quickly and at scale, when the political will is there. IRAP believes that all people should have the same opportunity to reach safe refuge and live with dignity.

Through legal aid and information, impact litigation, policy advocacy, strategic communications, and partner capacity-building, we are working toward a world where every person experiencing displacement is empowered to know their legal rights, access safe migration pathways, and catalyze fairer and more humane refugee and immigration systems.

We are holding the U.S. government accountable for its ongoing obligations to U.S.-affiliated Afghans. At the same time, we are leading global efforts to facilitate family reunification as a key pathway to safety, especially for children who have been separated from their parents. We are also expanding our legal assistance to new parts of the world, clearing the way for migrants to activate their rights and enact systemic improvements, and spearheading efforts to develop legal protections for people displaced by the climate crisis.

This year, after a rigorous due diligence process, IRAP was selected as one of only nine organizations to comprise the 2021-2022 cohort of The Audacious Project, a collaborative funding initiative housed at TED that enables organizations to pursue bold solutions to the world’s most urgent challenges. This honor makes possible a growth project, developed in tandem with IRAP’s recently-finalized five-year strategic plan, that encompasses building out the world’s most robust and accessible virtual legal information platform for displaced people, investing significant resources into capacity-building for frontline partners, and extending our presence, partnerships, and systemic change



# Letter from the Executive Director

work to regions hosting 75% of the world's refugees. These project components will help us serve 2.5 million forced migrants worldwide by 2027.

We have laid the groundwork for this growth, establishing a sophisticated new legal case management database and undertaking a multiphase needs assessment to identify areas for IRAP's geographic expansion. We are also building out IRAP's infrastructure in ways that systematically integrate equity considerations into our business practices and ensure that our programs and staff have the support necessary for success. We recognize that an inclusive, high-trust workplace is essential for sustained, collaborative progress toward our goals.

More broadly, we view the principles of diversity, anti-racism, and global justice as foundational to our mission. By collaborating with our clients to address inequities in forced migrants' access to legal solutions, we seek to combat injustice while elevating the agency and dignity of people experiencing displacement and marginalization.

With forced migration rising, we remain committed to ensuring that everyone can have a safe place to live and a safe way to get there. We are grateful to the community of supporters who make the privilege of our work possible, and to the clients who trust us to advocate alongside them.

Sincerely,



**Becca Heller**  
Executive Director



Photo Credit: Jessica Lea/DFID

# Our Impact

This past year, IRAP provided legal assistance to a total of 4,354 clients from 52 countries.

## The clients we served include\*:

**53%** U.S.-affiliated  
Afghans and Iraqis and  
their families



1,130 Afghan clients assisted during and following the  
U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

**12%** Asylum seekers at the  
U.S.-Mexico border, including people  
with disabilities and  
additional populations who  
are marginalized or are  
underserved by legal aid



**17%** Survivors of sexual  
and gender-based violence  
and at-risk women



**14%** Survivors of torture  
and other violence



**7%** People facing  
religious persecution



**6%** LGBTQIA+ people  
experiencing persecution



**21%** Unaccompanied or  
at-risk children seeking to  
reunite with their families



**12%** People with  
medical vulnerabilities



\*Client risk factors may intersect

856



clients were separated  
families seeking  
reunification.

79%\*



of cases IRAP  
represented had a  
positive outcome, which  
includes resettlement,  
family reunification, and  
other legal benefits.

\*Percentage of positive outcomes among cases with known outcomes.



# Our Impact

IRAP is a global leader in equipping displaced people with legal resources to know, activate, and unlock their legal rights.

## Since IRAP's founding in 2008:

IRAP has provided **legal aid** to more than **40,000 clients** from over **100 countries**.

IRAP's legal information website, offering **self-help legal resources** in multiple languages, has been visited by nearly **204,000 people** since it was launched in 2019.

More than **29,400 people** have used IRAP's **chatbot** to access tailored information about their eligibility for pathways to safety — and connect with staff when we can offer legal assistance — since it was created in 2019.

IRAP's **litigation in U.S. courts** has benefitted, and stands to benefit, more than **493,000 displaced people** and their families.

IRAP's **policy advocacy** has protected and expanded pathways to safety in the United States for approximately **370,000 people**.

IRAP has built a network of more than **6,300 pro bono attorneys and student volunteers** advocating for refugees' rights.



Photo Credit: Indrek Torilo

# Collaborating with Clients and Partners to Guide Our Priorities

IRAP's priorities are guided by insights gleaned from our clients' own lived experiences as well as from our partners working with displaced populations around the globe. By providing legal aid and information directly to displaced people, IRAP is also able to identify patterns of injustice and gaps in information and services, allowing us to tailor our programming to **address the needs of displaced populations as expressed by displaced people themselves.**

Clients direct the goals of their legal representation, provide formal feedback to strengthen our work, and inform all stages of our legal services and advocacy. Our role as advocates is to empower our client populations to construct their own solutions to challenges by providing them with legal assistance, information, and options, as well as referrals to vital humanitarian services that fall outside the scope of IRAP's work. Furthermore, we work to bring about large-scale systemic reforms by partnering with clients and amplifying their voices through strategic communications, policy advocacy, and impact litigation.

For example, IRAP works with families eligible for the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee and Parole Program, which enables children at risk in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to reunite safely with their parents in the United States. Two of our CAM clients are participating in IRAP's ongoing litigation with co-counsel Haynes & Boone LLP to keep this vital pathway for family reunification in the United States open, and another CAM client engaged in media advocacy with us to highlight the importance of the program. By collaborating with IRAP to share their lived experiences with the court and media, our clients are powerfully conveying how the program benefits separated families.

Furthermore, IRAP works with hundreds of partners – including many refugee-led and community-based organizations – who refer potential clients to us, provide additional support services, and serve as allies for systemic change. Through this network, we also refer our clients to organizations that can connect them with vital humanitarian resources such as medical services, mental health care, and housing assistance.



Photo Credit: United States Mission Geneva



Photo Credit: UN Photo / Evan Schneider



# Collaborating with Clients and Partners to Guide Our Priorities

Our humanitarian referral process is especially robust in Lebanon, which hosts one of the largest displaced populations in the Middle East, and where political and economic instability have increased the need for humanitarian assistance among refugee and host communities alike. By closely tracking clients' service referrals, IRAP's dedicated humanitarian assistance staff in Lebanon is able to assess whether clients may have a stronger case for certain resettlement programs, such as those that prioritize people with significant medical needs. This highly personalized follow-up helps ensure that clients' basic needs are met to the extent possible in Lebanon, while providing evidence for the urgency of their cases for resettlement in other countries.

Whether we are providing direct legal services, connecting clients with wraparound resources, or advocating for systemic improvements to safeguard the rights of displaced people around the world, IRAP's work is guided by close collaboration with the individuals we serve and members of refugee and host communities.



Photo Credit: Luciano

## CLIENT STORY: Al Nabolsi Family



Photo Credit: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

The Al Nabolsi family are Syrians living in Lebanon. Both parents are survivors of extreme violence and torture, and one of the children – a two-year-old girl – has multiple, severe medical vulnerabilities, including a birth defect and paralysis in her legs. The family has also had difficulty finding safe housing in Lebanon. While providing legal services to the family, IRAP referred them to the Lebanese Center for Human Rights for medical services, including psychological care for the parents and physiotherapy for the child. We also referred them to the humanitarian organization, Caritas, for housing and emergency cash assistance.

Combined, these efforts not only help meet the family's urgent needs, but also result in important documentation of their precarious medical and living situation for their resettlement application. We continue to both advocate for their safe resettlement in another country and collaborate with partners in Lebanon to help ensure they have access to the services they need to live in health and dignity while seeking lasting refuge.

\*Photo changed to protect client identity.



# Mobilizing Legal Resources in Displacement Crises

IRAP's expertise helps us anticipate displacement emergencies and prepare for their impact through policy advocacy and legal resource development. We can then apply our innovative service delivery model to the specific circumstances of each crisis situation, disseminating critical legal information and calling for systemic solutions.

After the Biden administration announced its timeline for withdrawal from Afghanistan in April 2021, we leapt into action to **help U.S.-affiliated Afghans facing threats from the Taliban** reach safety, drawing upon our decade-plus of experience working with this population. Once the withdrawal began, we ramped up our direct legal services and systemic advocacy. Our crisis response included developing timely, multilingual legal resources for Afghans and their advocates; mobilizing *pro bono* attorneys to provide critical legal counsel; helping to build the pivotal Evacuate Our Allies advocacy coalition; and mounting robust litigation strategies to hold the U.S. government to its obligations to its allies. These efforts contributed to the arrival of at least 79,000 Afghans in the United States since mid-August 2021, and we are continuing our crisis response so that Afghans at risk in Afghanistan and third countries can reach safety, and those in the United States can obtain lasting refuge.

After the **Ukrainian displacement crisis** began in February 2022, we drew on our expertise to develop new legal resources in Ukrainian, Russian, and English for people fleeing Ukraine to help them understand and assess their options in Europe and elsewhere. We were heartened by the global welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees, including the Biden administration's swift launch of a humanitarian parole program, Uniting for Ukraine, for which we provided technical advice. At the same time, we engaged in advocacy to highlight the fact that swift and humane solutions to displacement crises are possible, and to illuminate the inconsistent treatment experienced by Ukrainians compared to other displaced populations — particularly Black, brown, Indigenous, and Muslim displaced people — many of whom, like U.S.-affiliated Afghans, have waited for years for entry to the United States.



Photo Credit: UN Women / U.S. Air Force Capt. John Callahan



# Mobilizing Legal Resources in Displacement Crises

IRAP is committed to securing equitable protections for all refugee populations, and we will continue our efforts so that when emergencies arise, displaced people have access to timely legal information and opportunities for refuge.



Photo Credit: UN Women / Michal Swan



Photo Credit: Georgia National Guard

## CLIENT STORY: Mohammad\*



Photo Credit: ISAF / U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Swafford

Mohammad\*, an Afghan man who worked with the U.S. government promoting women's and children's rights across Afghanistan, applied to the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program in 2019. Under continued threat from the Taliban, Mohammad managed to reach the United States, where he waited for the government to process his SIV application so that his wife and two sons could join him.

With his family still in danger in Afghanistan, Mohammad — consumed with fear and worry — was not able to truly begin his new life. In 2020, in a devastating turn of events, Mohammad's wife died suddenly from a heart attack while being threatened directly by the Taliban, and his sons were forced into hiding with their grandmother and uncle, since they still had no path to safety in the United States.

When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, the threats against Mohammad's family escalated, yet Mohammad's SIV application was still pending. In October 2021, IRAP sued the U.S. State Department on Mohammad's behalf, seeking to ensure that the government fulfill its obligations to protect his family. "My greatest wish is to hug my kids again," Mohammad said at the time. After months of advocacy, Mohammad finally received special immigrant status. His sons finally received their visas in January 2022 and were able to reunite with their father in the United States.

However, tens of thousands of SIV applicants and their families are still waiting for decisions in their cases. Others applied for humanitarian parole, like Mohammad's mother and brother, who were unable to accompany the children they had cared for for so many months. Their applications, like thousands of others, were denied.

\*Name and photo changed to protect client identity.

# Safeguarding Existing Pathways to Safety

IRAP's direct legal aid teams help forced migrants everywhere navigate pathways to safety, and our policy and litigation teams fight to keep these pathways accessible and responsive to the needs of people experiencing displacement.

## REUNITING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN WITH RELATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

Family reunification is part of many countries' immigration systems, yet it remains unjustly inaccessible to many displaced people. IRAP collaborates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through our Central Mediterranean regional partnership and with other UNHCR offices globally, governments in destination countries, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help clients navigate this valuable pathway.

IRAP's Europe-based team provides direct representation to help hundreds of separated family members — mainly unaccompanied children — obtain safe, legal passage and reunite with relatives. We use insights from our client work to identify barriers that can be remedied through systemic change efforts. For example, this year, we leveraged our casework to develop technical research and recommendations related to prohibitive documentation requirements for family reunification that have been formally recognized by German and Swedish migration authorities.

IRAP also partners with Equal Rights Beyond Borders to provide legal assistance to refugees in Greece, including those seeking family reunification.

Notably, IRAP and UNHCR are working to finalize an unprecedented Memorandum of Understanding that will enable all UNHCR offices globally to refer cases eligible for family reunification to IRAP for legal representation.

In the United States, IRAP has redoubled our efforts to defend the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee and Parole Program. When multiple states filed a lawsuit this year seeking to end CAM, IRAP — in collaboration with clients impacted by CAM — joined ongoing litigation to preserve this vital family reunification program. We also launched an NGO policy coalition to advocate for the Biden administration to protect CAM for its thousands of existing applicants, and expand eligibility to thousands of additional families. Through our litigation, advocacy, and strategic communications, IRAP is a leader in working to protect CAM as a pathway for family reunification.

### CLIENT STORY: Aaron\* and Miriam\*



Aaron\* and Miriam\* were separated from their mother when she was forced to flee their home in Eritrea. While their mother was able to safely resettle in Germany, the children stayed behind for safety reasons. After their mother reached

Germany, the children moved to a refugee camp in Sudan since it is impossible to initiate family reunification proceedings from Eritrea. Thanks to IRAP's collaboration with UNHCR, staff inside the camp had been trained by IRAP to identify cases eligible for family reunification, and Aaron and Miriam became IRAP clients.

The German government initially denied the children's application to reunite with their mother since they could not get passports because the Eritrean government considered the family traitors for fleeing the country. IRAP challenged the denial in German court, and won. Not only were Aaron and Miriam reunited with their mother in Germany in June 2021, but IRAP also began to establish a legal precedent to ease the German passport requirement for thousands of refugee children in similar situations.

\*Names changed to protect client identity.



# Safeguarding Existing Pathways to Safety

## REBUILDING U.S. RESETTLEMENT SYSTEMS

IRAP advocates to ensure that the United States continues to provide safe haven for forced migrants through humane, welcoming policies.

In September 2022, IRAP and our coalition partners at the Refugee Advocacy Lab published a bipartisan letter signed by more than 380 state and local elected officials from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, urging President Biden to invest in and rebuild the refugee resettlement program for the United States' fiscal year 2023. As of August 31, with only a month left in its fiscal year 2022, the United States had admitted less than 16% of the maximum number of refugees it aimed to resettle. The U.S. government will continue to fall short of its refugee resettlement goal without substantially increased investment in and reform of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). While we are glad that the United States was able to utilize creative new models of parole and private sponsorship to bring a combined total of over 150,000 Afghans and Ukrainians to safety this

year, we continue to advocate for increased admissions for displaced people of all nationalities.

IRAP's efforts, including strategic communications and media advocacy, also contributed to the State Department's reinstatement of the Iraqi Priority-2 Direct Access Program (for Iraqi allies of the United States), which had been suspended in 2021. IRAP is leveraging momentum from this victory to push the government to address the application backlog that has left tens of thousands of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and their families in danger.

Following extensive advocacy by IRAP, the Biden administration took important next steps toward creating an expanded channel for NGOs to augment the UNHCR referral system and refer cases directly to the U.S. resettlement program. This change will help bring the U.S. government closer to its refugee admissions goal and provide more equitable access to U.S. resettlement, especially for populations of particular concern.

### CLIENT STORY: Sam



Sam, an Iraqi school teacher and interpreter for a U.S. Army Reserve unit, has shared his story many times over the course of his long journey to safety, bringing attention to the systemic issues faced by Iraqi and other refugees under the Trump administration. He was an IRAP client both during his application for resettlement through the Iraqi Direct Access Program (DAP) and as one of several plaintiffs in IRAP's lawsuit against the Muslim refugee ban, which was co-counseled by the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), Perkins Coie, HIAS, and Lauren Aguiar, Mollie M. Kornreich, and Abigail Sheehan Davis.

Since Sam first applied for a visa to the United States in 2014, his case was affected by delays and setbacks, including due to the Muslim refugee ban and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite support on his case from U.S. soldiers who had benefited from his work as a translator under dangerous circumstances in Iraq, Sam was stuck in Egypt, where he lived in hiding to protect his family, who were still in Iraq.

Applicants like Sam faced yet another dangerous delay after the U.S. government suddenly suspended the Iraqi DAP program in 2021, an action that affected hundreds of thousands of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and their families at risk of retaliatory violence. IRAP used all available legal, policy, and litigation tools to advocate for Sam and others in similar situations, calling on the government to uphold its promises to them. Finally, on March 1, the State Department announced that the suspension would be lifted, allowing application processing for thousands of at-risk Iraqis to begin again. Later that month, Sam finally arrived in the United States, where he was welcomed with a warm embrace by one of the soldiers he worked alongside for so many years.

# Ensuring Equity of Access to Safety

IRAP seeks to ensure that all displaced people are able to claim their legal rights equitably and with dignity.

## LEADING EFFORTS FOR EQUAL PROTECTION IN JORDAN

In Jordan, two legal systems exist for forced migrants: one for Syrians and one for people of other nationalities. This double standard leaves tens of thousands of people who have fled to Jordan from countries like Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Yemen unable to access humanitarian resources and without equitable protection from threats including human trafficking, detention, and deportation. As Co-Chair of the One Refugee Approach Working Group, IRAP advocates for a legal framework inclusive of all refugee groups in Jordan. IRAP's Jordan staff is also working in partnership with embassies in Amman to form a diplomatic working group to address the unmet social, protection, and healthcare needs of displaced LGBTQIA+ populations facing worsening discrimination.

### CLIENT STORY: Hani\*



In the 1980s, Hani's\* parents fled political persecution in Syria to build a new life in Jordan, where Hani was born. Hani, however, experienced persecution of his own in Jordan, including by his own family, for being gay. His brother threatened to kill him if he ever found out he was gay.

In order to survive, he hid his identity, but he was still harassed and bullied because he was perceived as "not masculine enough."

In 2020, a local NGO supporting LGBTQIA+ people referred Hani's case to IRAP's Jordan office. IRAP submitted a resettlement referral to UNHCR on Hani's behalf, and UNHCR referred Hani to Norway for resettlement. His application was approved, and he traveled to Norway in January 2022. He is now living a safer and more secure life in Norway, where he can express himself freely without fear.

\*Name and photo changed to protect client identity.

## EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL WHO SEEK ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES

At the U.S.-Mexico border, accessible legal information and counsel are scarce for all forced migrants, but especially for those who have disabilities, are not Spanish speakers, or face discrimination because of their race or other aspects of their identities. Through our direct services and advocacy, IRAP is fighting to restore asylum access, which has been severely restricted by harmful policies like Title 42 and "Remain in Mexico" that force people seeking safety to wait indefinitely in precarious conditions in Mexico.

IRAP works with the Mexican NGO, Derechos Humanos Integrales en Acción (DHIA), and other local partners to disseminate *Know Your Rights* information, identify and screen potential clients, and provide legal aid to advance their claims. We also collaborate with Johns Hopkins University and local organizations to make medical documentation and legal assistance more accessible for migrants with disabilities.

To address the targeted anti-Black racism, isolation, and disparity in access to services that Haitian migrants experience in Mexico, IRAP has increased our legal services for the Haitian community at the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2022, we held three legal clinics with Haitian Creole interpretation and translation services – including two with our *pro bono* partner Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP – to share legal information, help participants understand their rights and options, and provide additional legal representation for qualifying clients. These clinics have resulted in increased requests for assistance from Haitian migrants, demonstrating that there is a need among Haitian migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border for focused, linguistically-tailored legal services.





# Ensuring Equity of Access to Safety

## FIGHTING THE CONTINUED IMPACT OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S MUSLIM AND AFRICAN BANS

Despite President Biden's rescission of the Muslim and African bans, the bans' legacy continues to keep many Muslim and African refugee families apart.

This year, IRAP engaged in extensive advocacy, including publishing an open letter signed by more than 75 partner organizations and calling on the Biden administration to dismantle all vestiges of the bans and end egregious processing delays that prevent refugee families from reuniting. We also filed litigation challenging unreasonable delays and discriminatory denials of applications connected to the Muslim ban, including two lawsuits on behalf of Somali refugee families who had been approved to reunite in the United States before the ban was enacted, but who remained separated after it was lifted. One of the families was reunited in July 2022, and we will continue fighting so that the second family, and others like them, can also be reunited in safety.

## BROADENING THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE IN THE U.S. RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

After extensive advocacy by IRAP, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) implemented an important policy change this year to recognize certain refugee marriages, including interfaith and LGBTQIA+ unions, that are not legally recognized in countries of origin or asylum. This change, and the legal resources that IRAP published for affected refugees, asylees, and their advocates, help ensure equity of access to U.S. migration pathways.

We are proud to advance principles of equality and fairness so that all displaced people have equitable access to pathways to safety regardless of religion, race, nationality, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

### CLIENT STORY: Afkab



Afkab and his wife are Somali refugees who met and married while living in a Kenyan refugee camp. When Afkab received approval to resettle in the United States, it was too late to add his new wife to his case without causing significant delays. He made the difficult decision to travel to the United States alone and file for family reunification as soon as he arrived.

But when former President Trump's Muslim refugee ban, which suspended family reunification under the follow-to-

join program, threatened the chance that his wife and their newborn would be able to reunite with Afkab in the United States, he became a plaintiff in IRAP's lawsuit, *JFS v. Trump*. With Afkab's partnership, IRAP successfully obtained a preliminary injunction against the ban and negotiated a settlement agreement in February 2020, which required the government to prioritize processing of Afkab's family's case, as well as others who would have traveled to the United States but for Trump's ban. Despite the government's commitment to prioritize processing for Afkab's case, the family remained separated several years later. At that point, Afkab had seen his young son only once in person.

As conditions worsened in Nairobi, where Afkab's family continued to wait for a decision on their case, Afkab again agreed to partner with IRAP in March 2022 by filing another lawsuit – this time challenging the government's unreasonable delay in processing the family's follow-to-join petition.

In early July 2022, more than six years after Afkab began the application process for his family to join him in the United States so they could live together in safety, they were finally reunited. "I'm feeling so excited," Afkab said when meeting them at the airport.

# Innovating New Pathways to Safety

IRAP teams are working to open new pathways to safety and develop new legal frameworks that will provide lasting refuge for more displaced people.



Photo Credit: UN Women / Mahmudul Karim

## LAUNCHING PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES

IRAP is a leading advocate for private sponsorship of refugees in the United States, which will expand resettlement opportunities and resources by allowing civil society organizations and private groups of individuals to directly support newcomers. This year, we played a key advisory role in the development of community sponsorship programs for Afghans and Ukrainians. We also published joint recommendations with Amnesty International USA, the Community Sponsorship Hub, and the Niskanen Center for a U.S. private sponsorship pilot program for refugees of all nationalities. Our advocacy contributed to the Biden administration's announcement that it intends to launch such a program later this year.

## DEVELOPING A LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT PEOPLE DISPLACED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate-related displacement has already eclipsed conflict as the leading cause of internal forced migration, but no domestic laws or multilateral treaties to protect climate-affected populations exist. IRAP is working with partners to accelerate the development of legal protections in the Americas for people displaced by environmental devastation, which could serve as prototypes for other regions. We are also collaborating with partners to develop training materials for asylum and refugee officers to better evaluate situations when climate contributes to displacement and international protection is warranted. Furthermore, in December 2021, IRAP and 12 partner organizations sent a letter to the White House demanding concrete action to address climate displacement and in May 2022, we successfully advocated for members of the U.S. House of Representatives to support a letter calling for Temporary Protected Status for people from climate-vulnerable Central American countries. Looking ahead, IRAP is planning our second convening with partners in the climate and immigration justice movements to advance these efforts and develop a community of practice working toward legal protections for climate-displaced people.



Photo Credit: Scottish Government



Photo Credit: Mortaza Shahed



# Securing Lasting Refuge in the United States

**IRAP staff advocate to ensure that once displaced people reach immediate safety in the United States, they also have the opportunity to seek permanent refuge.**

Reaching safety is only the first step on a displaced person's journey to rebuilding their life.

In the case of Afghans evacuated to the United States, most entered the country on humanitarian parole, a temporary status that does not provide a pathway to permanent residency or benefits. To address the latter, we successfully advocated for the September 2021 passage of a bill that provided \$6.3 billion for resettlement and benefits to help Afghans paroled into the United States. We have also played a leading role in building bipartisan support for the Afghan Adjustment Act, a bill introduced in Congress in August 2022 that would provide a pathway to Green Cards for Afghan parolees.

Parallel to these efforts, IRAP lawyers, with volunteers from law firms and student chapter partners, organized clinics for Afghans in Sacramento, California and Rochester, New York that provided legal aid and information to help them pursue lasting refuge. We continue to expand the reach of our legal expertise through our legal information website, partnership with the International Rescue Committee to support the legal aspects of their work with Afghans, *Ask An Expert* online portal, and online training sessions that have served thousands of legal practitioners and resettlement agency staff.

Furthermore, as a co-founder of the Refugee Advocacy Lab, IRAP advocates and provides technical legal support to advance state and local policies benefiting refugees of all nationalities. By providing easier access to necessities like school enrollment, occupational licensing, and COVID-19 relief funding, these policies facilitate a smoother transition to life in the United States. We also work with our student chapters to assist former clients of any nationality in the United States with U.S. citizenship applications.

Collectively, these efforts help people rebuild their lives with permanence and dignity.

## CLIENT STORY: **Julissa**



Julissa was granted asylum in the United States after she fled El Salvador seeking safety from anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination, but her future in her new home country was still uncertain. IRAP worked with Julissa to apply for permanent residency—her Green Card—but excessive administrative delays meant that IRAP had to engage in extensive advocacy to cut through the red tape.

Even after Julissa received her Green Card, her path to citizenship was not a simple one. Julissa had been subjected to discriminatory police interactions during her time in the United States, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services was trying to use information about these encounters to withhold citizenship from her. Ultimately, Julissa and IRAP were successful in getting her application approved, and Julissa was sworn in as a U.S. citizen in early 2022.

# Student Chapters

IRAP helps develop the next generation of legal advocates for displaced people through our partnerships with law school student chapters.

Student chapter members provided critical assistance to IRAP's legal, litigation, and policy teams over the past year, including preparing legal research, advocating for IRAP's policy priorities on Capitol Hill, working on client cases with IRAP attorneys and *pro bono* partner attorneys, and conducting outreach to displaced populations to help them identify pathways to safety for which they may be eligible.



"Volunteering with IRAP has made me a better advocate and improved my ability to creatively solve problems. Through my work on [an IRAP] case, I have learned about the patience and dedication required to assist individuals through the opaque, lengthy,

and stressful immigration process. Working with IRAP has had a profound impact on how I think about lawyering. IRAP is a global law firm that not only serves clients, but it has a larger mission of ensuring that people displaced by war, persecution, regime change, and climate change get support that they need and the causes of their displacement are discussed and their voices are amplified. I am really grateful to be a volunteer with an organization with an incredible impact and legacy."

— **Hailey Phelan**, University of California at Irvine, recipient of IRAP's 2022 Excellent Case Team award



"For the past year and a half, I've had the opportunity to work with amazing attorneys from IRAP and with three phenomenal Steptoe & Johnson LLP attorneys who have all taught me so much about creative thinking in a difficult and complex case and

about the importance of paying attention to even the tiniest details. I think we all agree that the recognition is really [for] our client for his fortitude and his grace throughout this difficult and drawn out process. [He] is an incredible self advocate and we want to thank him for his thoughtfulness, his diligence, and his willingness to trust all of us with this case."

— **Kiri Van Lengen-Welty**, NYU School of Law, recipient of IRAP's 2022 Excellent Case Team award

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Yale Law School



# Pro Bono Partners

IRAP's *pro bono* network plays an invaluable role in providing clients with expert legal assistance and bolstering IRAP's litigation and advocacy efforts to defend the rights of forced migrants.

We are grateful and proud that in 2021, IRAP's *pro bono* partners provided over 32,400 hours of free legal aid, valued at over \$21 million, to help displaced people seeking safety.

"AIG is very proud to be recognized for its work with IRAP. In August 2021, as we watched Kabul fall to the Taliban, a team of lawyers, interpreters, and business analysts from AIG worked around the clock with IRAP to assess options for evacuation and analyze immigration issues for our clients. It is more important than ever to continue this work and ensure that Afghan refugees here and abroad receive top notch legal advice. These experiences serve as important reminders of how fortunate we are and our responsibility to continue this vital work. We are very proud of these efforts and look forward to continuing our work with IRAP to help our refugee clients."

— **Erica Blau**, AIG, recipient of IRAP's 2022 Excellent *Pro Bono* Partner award



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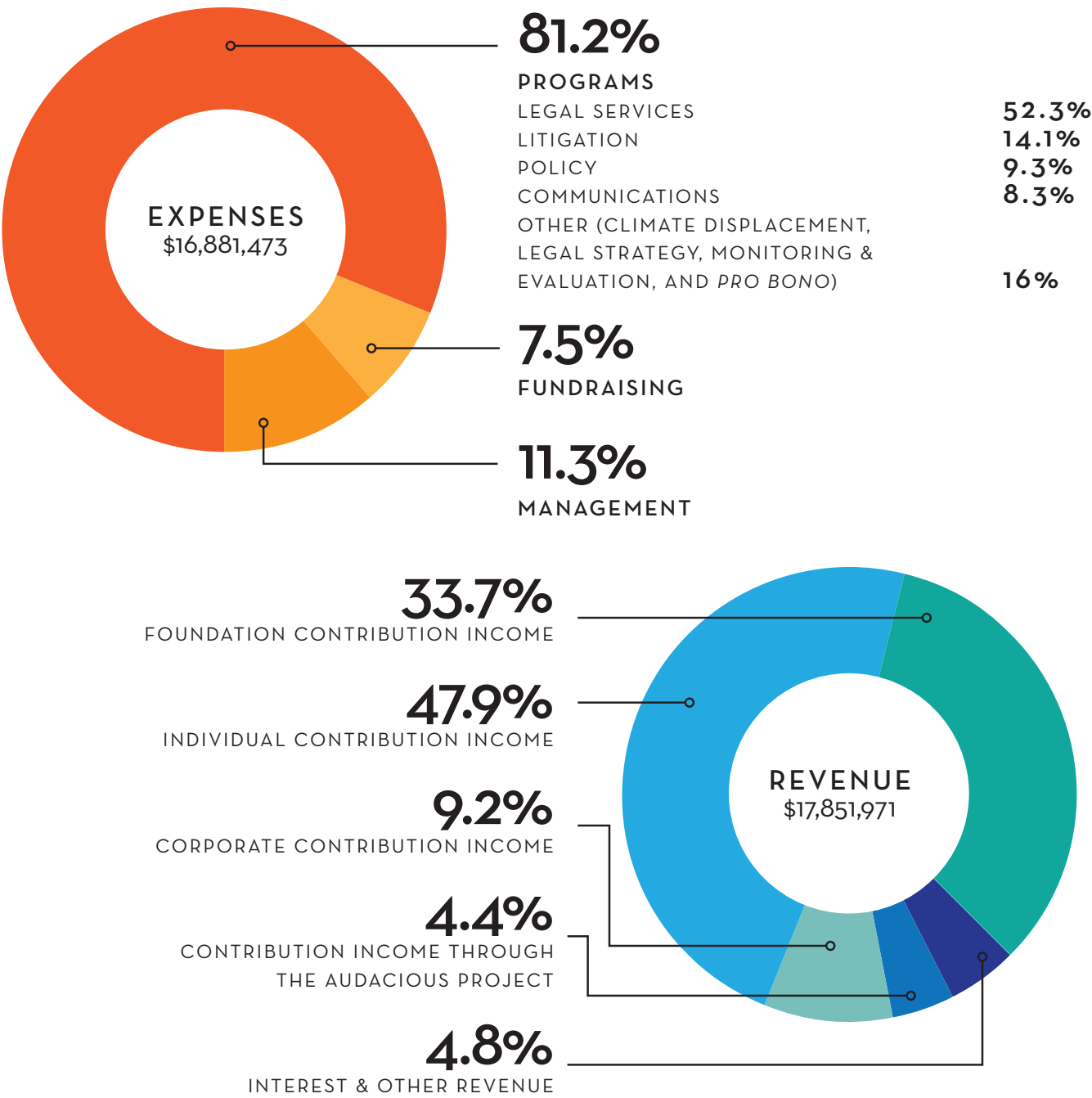
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# IRAP, Inc. Fiscal Year 2022 Financials

We truly appreciate the dedicated community that makes our work possible.

Together, we will continue working to ensure that displaced people are able to know and access their rights as they seek safe, lasting refuge.



Expenses include fiscal year 2022 components of a six-year growth project funded through The Audacious Project to which we have committed. Revenue includes only the portion of total growth project funding allocated to the project's initial year.

The International Refugee Assistance Project is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to transparency and accountability. At the time of this report's publication, IRAP is undergoing our annual audit, to be completed in late 2022. As such, these graphs reflect unaudited financial numbers. Our most recent financials are available on the IRAP website. Upon completion of our annual audit, IRAP will publish the independently-audited financial statements for the fiscal year which ended August 31, 2022, along with IRAP's 990 filings, on our website.

# IRAP

International Refugee  
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One Battery Park Plaza, 4th Floor  
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