



International Refugee Assistance Project Strategic Plan

2023-2028

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I. Introduction to the Strategic Plan, 2023-28

This is IRAP's first Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan serves as an articulation of the overall direction and priorities of IRAP for the next five years, in which IRAP anticipates organizational growth.

At the outset, we acknowledge that IRAP's mission and vision are ambitious. At the end of 2020, UNHCR estimated that 82.4 million people were displaced around the world.¹ These communities of displaced people that IRAP seeks to serve are dispersed and diverse. Some have been displaced for decades and others have been recently displaced. They identify with different ethnicities, cultures, and histories; speak different languages; practice different religions; live in cities, remote areas, or refugee camps; and face different obstacles to finding safety.

Moreover, we enter this strategic plan period at a time when the world is sharply turning away from the principles of human rights and global justice that drive our work. In the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, wealthier and more powerful nations have elected xenophobic leaders who seek to close their countries' borders to people who have been displaced. Refugees and others who seek safety have often become scapegoats and pawns in a divisive political moment.

Given the enormity of the challenges facing people who have been displaced, we acknowledge that – even with IRAP's projected growth over the next five years – we will not be able to meet the needs of every person who requests our assistance. This is why IRAP's ultimate goal is to maximize *impact*, not solely the number of people that we serve through direct legal aid. We do this through an integrated approach of relying on strategies that impact far more people than any individual case representation model can, while learning from the experiences of our clients and others in their communities. This Strategic Plan will provide a blueprint for how IRAP can focus our work, grow sustainably, and leverage our resources creatively to have the maximum impact towards our mission and vision.

In this Strategic Plan, we chose three strategic priorities, each of which are intended to relate to and support each other.

Priority 1 is to strengthen and grow IRAP's programming in a way that is accountable to displaced people and that leverages innovative strategies to increase our impact. We will do this by strengthening and growing IRAP's model of integrating various approaches to legal services and advocacy; building digital legal resources that can reach more people; leveraging existing and new partnerships; and engaging in

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

communications advocacy. We will prioritize work around three programmatic focus areas:

- (A) Opening new and innovative pathways;
- (B) Protecting and improving pathways to make them more efficient, accountable, and equitable; and
- (C) Securing pathways for displaced people who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refoulement from their country of displacement.

Priority 2 is to build organizational sustainability and health. To achieve the programmatic impact that we hope for, we need staff who feel fulfilled at work; well-functioning internal systems and policies to support a cohesive and equitable IRAP community; and financial health and direction that make all this possible.

Priority 3 is to build Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) into all aspects of IRAP, both programmatically and operationally. We believe that in order to succeed in our work, IRAP must also commit to the principles of human rights and global justice that underlie our mission and vision. This means continually fighting against racism, colorism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, neo-colonialism, and other oppression in our work. By choosing DEIA as its own strategic priority, we affirm our commitment to making equity a central tenet of IRAP's identity.

For each priority, we have established:

- Overall Vision for the Priority: This is a general long-term aspiration for what IRAP is striving for in each priority area.
- Goals: What IRAP seeks to accomplish.
- Success Indicators: This is the evidence that will show that IRAP has been successful in reaching its goals in each area. They are generally short to medium-term indicators.
- Strategies: How IRAP will accomplish its goals in this area.

This Strategic Plan was put together with input from staff and external parties. We look forward to the next five years of implementing the plan, growing our impact, and developing an organization that we can all be proud to be a part of.

– Leadership Team

II. Foundational Framework

A. Mission

IRAP is a global legal aid and advocacy organization working to create a world where refugees and all people seeking safety are empowered to claim their right to freedom of movement and a path to lasting refuge.

Everyone should have a safe place to live and a safe way to get there.

B. Vision

IRAP envisions a world where refugees and all people seeking safety have a set of affirmative, vested rights and protections that guarantee them a safe way to get to a safe place to live permanently. Our vision of safety goes beyond freedom from physical danger: it includes protection from psychological and emotional harm, reunification with family, and the freedom to lead a fulfilling life. Under our vision, borders will no longer be the oppressive, violent transitional spaces that they are today for many people seeking safety.

IRAP further envisions a world where global justice prevails. Today, the vast majority of people seeking safety live in temporary conditions in countries that are economically and politically marginalized. But it is often the actions of the wealthier and more powerful nations, unleashing forces such as colonialism, military conflict, and environmental degradation, that have directly caused displacement, and they are the ones with more capacity to provide permanent refuge to people seeking safety. These wealthier and more powerful nations have the moral obligation to live up to their responsibility to provide refuge.

C. Scope of Work

IRAP engages in immigration-related legal services and advocacy on behalf of people seeking safety. The populations that we serve are people who have experienced displacement by losing the freedom to remain in their homes safely, including but not limited to those who fall within the traditional definitions of a refugee, asylee, or stateless person, and those who are still in their home countries but are seeking to migrate to safety. These communities are diverse and dispersed, but united in their search for a safe place to live and a safe way to get there.

We acknowledge the limitations of focusing our work on supporting the freedom to migrate, rather than the freedom to stay and fighting the root causes of migration. We respect that migration will not be the right choice for all and that, in an ideal world, everyone should have the right to be safe at home and/or where they are currently located.

D. Our Model

IRAP operates on a coordinated model of integrating five forms of legal services and advocacy, each of which informs the other:

- **Legal aid:** IRAP provides quality, client-centered and trauma-informed legal representation on immigration-related matters, as well as holistic referrals to partner organizations where possible. While maintaining in-person presence in some locations, IRAP's legal services are also available through the use of secure technology to reach people who are in otherwise inaccessible locations.
- **Strategic litigation:** IRAP uses judicial systems where possible to achieve systemic change beyond those individuals that IRAP represents.
- **Policy advocacy:** IRAP engages in policy advocacy, in partnership with other organizations, that is aimed at international, regional, national, and local government officials where possible to achieve systemic change in how the government works that can benefit large groups of people seeking safety.
- **Media advocacy:** IRAP uses communications strategies to move public opinion in support of systemic change that can benefit large groups of people seeking safety.
- **Legal information:** Using knowledge gained from IRAP's legal services and advocacy, IRAP provides comprehensive and accessible legal information on immigration-related matters in multiple languages that can be used by people seeking safety and by partner organizations working with them.

In addition, to expand the impact of our work further, IRAP leverages our networks of pro bono attorneys, students, partners, and other advocates in various aspects of our work.

E. Our Values

IRAP is committed to the following core values that we will strive to achieve in all of our work.

1. **We center people seeking safety in our work and aim to empower them.** In the context of legal representation, this means being client-centered: that the client, their interests, and their concerns are at the heart of each instance of legal representation. We seek to provide each client with clear, accurate, and

relevant information and legal advice that empowers them to make their own best decisions. We establish respectful, professional relationships with clients to support them in their decision-making process. We strive to reverse cultural norms that put the legal practitioner in a position of authority vis-a-vis the client and instead foster an attorney-client relationship that the client experiences as one of dignity and empowerment. Being client-centered means recognizing that while our clients are seeking safety, being displaced is only one of many intersecting identities and does not define them; they have needs, interests, and goals beyond the scope of IRAP's scope of work, for which we make referrals to partner organizations when possible, while communicating clearly when we cannot offer assistance.

In and beyond the context of an attorney-client relationship, putting people experiencing displacement at the center of our work has concrete implications for our work, including our focus on working through partnerships. It means:

- Ensuring that the legal information we provide (even outside the context of legal representation) is clear, accurate, relevant, actionable, accessible, and easy to navigate;
- Respecting and elevating the voices and narratives of people experiencing displacement in all of our work; and
- Structuring our work such that the needs, experiences, and feedback from people seeking safety can inform and drive the work we do and how we do it, even while recognizing the diversity of views and experiences within the population that we serve.

2. We approach partners with humility. IRAP's global model depends on collaborative partnerships in various parts of the world with local organizations in direct contact with displaced people, including community-based partners, frontline humanitarian organizations, impact campaign allies, and social movements led by, and/or staffed by, displaced people. We strive for meaningful collaboration with those groups that are grounded in humility. We seek to understand the context, listen to their needs, learn from others and fill gaps, and not undermine the work of other organizations. While IRAP's work does not focus on movement-building given the diverse and dispersed nature of the communities that we serve, our approach to partnerships will be guided by movement lawyering philosophies.

3. We value Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in both our internal and external work. We recognize in our work and in our workplace that individual experience is based on multiple and intersecting identities, including but not limited to age, citizenship, class, color, culture, education, ethnicity, family status, formerly incarcerated, gender identity and expression,

health status or disability, income, language, national origin, partnership status, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. We value differences and commit to respect all people, and foster a diversity of experiences, thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. We seek to create a community at IRAP where all people wholeheartedly belong and feel safe at work, supported, and free. We also acknowledge that as a U.S.-founded organization, we are a product of the neocolonial global context, and that in order to live our belief in global justice we must counteract those dynamics to the best of our ability. We understand that our commitment to these principles will require continuous growth, humility, and development. We hold ourselves and each other accountable to be upstanders and not bystanders in our commitment to serving our clients.

- 4. We are adaptive.** IRAP is an adaptive organization. We recognize that the world is rapidly changing and we are committed to constantly learning, iterating on our model, and pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

III. IRAP's Overall Strategic Priorities 2023-2028

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Strengthen and grow IRAP's immigration-related legal services and advocacy in three programmatic focus areas: (A) Opening new and innovative pathways; (B) Protecting and improving pathways to make them more efficient, accountable, and equitable; and (C) Securing pathways for displaced people who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refoulement from their country of displacement.

Overall Vision for the Priority: People seeking safety around the world have improved immigration options that they are empowered to navigate as a result of IRAP's coordinated approach to legal services and advocacy.

Goal 1: High-quality, coordinated legal services and advocacy. Strengthen and grow IRAP's coordinated programming model in deliberate ways to provide high-quality immigration-related legal services and advocacy.

Success indicators:

- IRAP is known as a trustworthy, committed, and high-quality immigration-related legal services and advocacy organization among clients and partners.
- Displaced people, including clients, are empowered by IRAP's legal services and advocacy.
- IRAP has well-functioning accountability and quality-control systems to ensure clients are well served.
- IRAP has well-functioning internal communications and reporting mechanisms to enable coordination between programming departments.
- IRAP grows its humanitarian referral partner network so that legal services clients have greater access to critical services to meet their legal, medical and humanitarian needs.
- IRAP program staff understand their role and the roles of other IRAP staff and are trained, equipped, and resourced to provide high-quality legal services and advocacy, including during an emerging crisis.
- IRAP's programmatic growth has an equitable impact, both externally and within the organization.

Strategies:

- A. Identify and revisit, on a periodic basis and across departments, specific program priorities within the programmatic focus areas, using the IRAP Programmatic Priorities Principles (see Appendix A) as guidelines.

- B. Develop new partnerships in alignment with definitions and guidelines articulated in the Partnership Guidelines (see Appendix B).
- C. Identify new geographic regions for programmatic growth through an assessment process in alignment with IRAP's Strategic Plan and programmatic priorities.
- D. Assess opportunities to grow strategic advocacy capacity outside of the United States in regions where we already have substantial presence.
- E. Assess needs and build structure around providing legal services and meaningful referrals to secure lasting refuge for IRAP clients arriving in the countries of final destination on temporary pathways and who cannot obtain legal aid for permanent pathways.
- F. Initiate new programmatic projects as pilot projects that are properly monitored and evaluated before they are adjusted for optimal impact.
- G. Build referral partnerships with trusted humanitarian organizations to better provide holistic referrals to our legal services clients, including reciprocal referral partnerships where the partner will be trained to screen cases for referral to IRAP and/or to utilize IRAP's library of resources.
- H. Ensure that each program department, in coordination with other departments, has the clarity of role and the resources necessary to implement the Strategic Plan. Monitor programmatic growth, staff workload, and quality of work and make adjustments as necessary to ensure sustainable growth.
- I. Develop an internal information management system for program departments that allows for accountability, efficiency, quality control, and information sharing among program departments.
- J. Develop internal communications mechanisms that facilitate coordination of legal services and advocacy and ensure that each prong of IRAP's programming informs and drives the other. This mechanism should include initial project planning that takes an integrated approach and periodic debrief for projects to identify lessons learned and implications for future work.
- K. Develop staff capacity to monitor global developments relating to IRAP program work and to identify harmful or positive developments that might affect the work.
- L. Develop parameters and protocols for emergency, time-limited response to clients and ensure that staff has sufficient capacity to engage in such response.
- M. Continue to build internal training resources for program departments to support continued learning within and between the program departments.
- N. Develop, implement, and maintain equitable and accessible outreach, screening, and intake mechanisms that are responsive to IRAP's programmatic priorities and will enable us to reach displaced people who have been historically excluded from legal, protection, and resettlement services or who have historically faced severe discrimination.
- O. Develop client feedback systems for our legal services to understand and prioritize client experience and needs in both legal services and advocacy.

- P. Develop monitoring and evaluation systems to better assess, improve, and make decisions about IRAP's programmatic work.

Goal 2: Comprehensive legal information. Leverage technology and partnerships to make immigration-related legal information and resources available and accessible to people seeking safety around the world.

Success indicators:

- IRAP has comprehensive, up-to-date digital resources that are readily available to people seeking safety around the globe.
- A wider and more diverse audience are accessing IRAP's digital resources.
- Displaced people visiting IRAP's digital resources find the content accessible, and any barriers to access are continuously identified and addressed.
- Partner organizations are actively utilizing our resources to work with their communities and find the content accessible.

Strategies:

- A. Develop technology and internal capacity to create and maintain comprehensive digital resources.
- B. Build capacity to coordinate, maintain, and support self-help and legal information resources, leveraging IRAP's knowledge founded in its legal services and advocacy. Consistently identify opportunities to develop or update legal information resources, including working with partners to develop and share targeted self-help resources
- C. Provide information in multiple media formats for improved access for people with disabilities, limited literacy, or low internet.
- D. Provide information in multiple languages by investing in translation services, staff hires and/or partnerships, as appropriate.
- E. Build partner relationships with community-based organizations and groups that can disseminate our resources to populations we do not reach and provide in-person support (see also Goal 4).
- F. Enhance visibility and reach of our digital resources through communications, including social media.
- G. Collect regular user feedback about IRAP's legal resources, including from partners, to ensure usefulness and accessibility.

Goal 3: Network of advocates. Develop our network of attorneys and students as advocates for displaced people who maximize the impact of our work.

Success indicators:

- IRAP grows its pro bono network to leverage its legal aid power.

- IRAP leads trainings and engages in active information dissemination that trains students and attorneys to be advocates for displaced people.
- Displaced people, including clients, are represented in a respectful and empowering way by students, pro bono attorneys, as well as other attorneys using IRAP's resources.
- Students, pro bono attorneys, as well as other attorneys using IRAP's resources learn to be advocates for displaced people and continue engagement in the work.

Strategies:

- A. Improve the efficiency, accountability and quality consistency of pro bono legal aid, including by continuing to develop resources for and provide training to pro bono legal teams.
- B. Continue to nurture and expand IRAP's engagement with students, including through student chapters, internships, and volunteer programs, and with particular attention to expanding opportunities for disadvantaged students and for students outside of the United States where we have presence.
- C. Continue to develop our connections and share our expertise with pro bono attorneys, students, and the greater legal community by hosting and participating in trainings, speaker events, webinars and conferences; producing written guides; and publicizing information.

Goal 4: Partnerships with local organizations. Develop partnerships with local organizations in direct contact with displaced people or marginalized communities.

Success indicators:

- IRAP develops programmatic partnerships with local organizations in direct contact with displaced people or marginalized communities, especially those that are led by, and/or staffed by, displaced people or marginalized communities.
- IRAP's programmatic growth elevates the priorities of local organizations in direct contact with displaced populations.

Strategies:

- A. Identify new areas for programmatic growth primarily in partnership with local organizations in direct contact with displaced populations.
- B. Develop feedback systems from partner organizations and other impacted populations to ensure "ground up" information on gaps and needs related to both legal services and advocacy.
- C. Identify trusted community-based programmatic partners led by, and/or staffed by, and/or serving displaced and/or marginalized people to expand and inform our work, including by potentially providing technical assistance and consultation, engaging in programmatic collaboration, and offering subgrants to support capacity-building and/or ongoing legal training.

- D. Develop strategic advocacy partnerships with impact campaign allies that are led by, and/or staffed by, displaced people or marginalized communities, or local organizations in direct contact with displaced people or marginalized communities.

Goal 5: Public communications and narrative change. Engage in public messaging that moves public opinion and narrative in support of displaced people.

Success Indicators:

- Displaced people are represented in a respectful and empowering way in the media and in IRAP's communications strategies.
- IRAP's public messaging is amplified strategically in diverse channels around the world, using metrics and data from press hits, ads, social media engagement, etc. as a method for tracking success.
- Messaging from key institutions and actors reflect IRAP's public messaging, demonstrating that IRAP has had an impact on the public discussion.
- IRAP is able to rapidly respond with public statements to current events and developments in collaboration with partners and coalitions in support of displaced people.
- IRAP's public messaging is unified and consistently reflects the organization's foundational framework.

Strategies:

- A. Coordinate communications strategy across the organization to maintain unified messaging and to ensure that it reflects IRAP's foundational framework (including the values of centering displaced people, humility, DEIA, and adaptiveness).
- B. Continue to build capacity for communications as a strategic advocacy approach, including in international, regional, local markets and beyond the United States.
- C. Develop social media capacity to share information externally that diversifies communications channels (moves beyond overreliance on our website), including by amplifying our message through social media accounts of IRAP staff and supporters.
- D. Continue to work and cultivate relationships with reporters and other media professionals in traditional media and beyond to build those relationships over time.
- E. Develop an increased roster of public spokespeople, including IRAP staff, clients, former clients, displaced people, board members, and influencers, and improve their media competency.
- F. Continue to educate donors and supporters on systems-level challenges and opportunities, and provide a range of opportunities for donors to join in advocacy efforts where appropriate.

Strategic Priority 2: Build organizational sustainability and health in support of mission and desired impact.

Overall Vision for this Priority: IRAP staff thrive as advocates for displaced people because IRAP promotes effective and equitable workplace structures, systems, and practices that support community, team, and individual wellness and sustainability.

Goal 1: Staff. Ensure staff satisfaction with their roles and their professional development opportunities within the organization.

Success indicators:

- Each IRAP staff member understands their role, responsibilities, and workload and how it advances IRAP's mission.
- IRAP staff have equitable and transparent access to increases in compensation and promotions.
- IRAP transparently promotes, and staff utilizes, opportunities for professional growth that results in enhanced skills in support of IRAP's mission, deepening experience, and positive morale and engagement.
- Staff are supported in their growth and development, are able to use new skills, are receiving appropriate training and support for trauma, and demonstrate positive levels of engagement with their work.
- Staff who leave maintain a strong, positive connection with IRAP.
- IRAP is a collaborative, supportive and desirable place to work.

Strategies:

- A. Review professional development needs segmented by role, area of work, and supervision responsibilities, and develop an aligned plan that includes the development of clear job description and promotion pathways along with transparent titles and salary ranges; support for education, professional, and career development; and a focus on growing relevant workplace engagement, management, communication, and technical skills.
- B. Ensure that all staff have parity in terms of their growth and development opportunities, including opportunities for mentorship, promotion, further education/accreditation, and equitable increases in compensation in a transparent and systematic manner.
- C. Keep an ongoing focus on providing leadership development support to staff who are supervisors or who lead teams so that supervisors are equipped with skills for effective and humane supervision resulting in positive growth experiences for supervisors and supervisees when they encounter opportunities and challenges.
- D. Continue training for all staff on positive workplace engagement skills, e.g., giving and receiving feedback.

- E. Continue to implement and support organizational practices that support employee wellness, encourage work life balance, and avoid burnout, taking the context of all IRAP locations into account (holidays, needs, etc.).
- F. Continue trainings for staff given by individuals within the IRAP team and by topic experts in our networks.
- G. Consider creative, equity-minded strategies like a mentorship pool in the IRAP network that goes beyond developing job skills and the opportunity for interested staff to experience cross-functional projects and learning.

Goal 2: Internal structures and systems. Ensure adequate internal resources, structures and systems to support a sustainable, collaborative, high function organization through its growth.

Success indicators:

- Growth in budget and staffing for internal systems like HR, finance, IT, organizational culture, and development, tacks to a desirable ratio to program resources and staff to promote sustainability.
- Improved responsiveness in time for internal systems requests from IT, HR, finance, and other operational departments.
- Staff in various locations have support that is tailored and appropriate to the context of operating in that location.
- Growth in staffing leads to measurable improvements and results (e.g., adding new program staff increases capacity to serve clients; enhanced HR and IT capacity leads to increased staff satisfaction).
- Programmatic growth is supported with an appropriate level of resources and support and creates opportunities for professional growth.

Strategies:

- A. Develop a staffing plan with a timeline that takes into account emerging needs and gaps, the desire to hire both efficiently and thoughtfully, and a program/ops ratio that supports sustainability.
- B. Continue to refine organizational structure and functions as IRAP grows (e.g., centralize hiring and onboarding functions where it makes sense, decentralize these and other functions where appropriate).
- C. Develop efficient and equitable processes and tools for hiring, onboarding, and offboarding that emphasizes DEIA principles and includes clarity on HR's role in much of the legwork, lowering the burden on teams outside of HR, and that ensures that all managers and supervisors know what role they play in hiring and onboarding new staff and allows for fast and effective integration of hires into teams.
- D. Develop an overall ops, finance, and development strategy that builds capacity in these areas as IRAP grows as well as creates integration across internal systems.

- E. Develop a sustainable IT infrastructure with appropriate expertise, data integrity, and security and integrated systems.
- F. Build internal project management capacity, including international project management, through training and the use of consistent technology platforms.
- G. Ensure consistent monitoring of conditions in all geographic areas of IRAP operations (including and especially through direct communications with staff in those areas) so that IRAP can be quickly responsive to particular operational needs in different locations such as safety concerns and logistical challenges.
- H. Continue cross-functional and cross-level engagement on important organizational and programmatic priorities (such as working groups on family reunification, climate, etc.).
- I. Ensure that supervisors distribute work equitably and know how to request additional resources where necessary to complete workload.

Goal 3: Internal processes and practices. Improve internal processes and practices so that IRAP exercises equitable and effective decision-making, including opportunities for staff and impacted communities to provide input where appropriate, and maintains clear policies and procedures.

Success Indicators:

- Decision-making protocols and processes are clear, including where and how staff and community input is sought and utilized.
- Staff are well informed of key organizational priorities and decisions, and know how decisions are made and how to provide input.
- IRAP takes input from community partners and impacted communities into consideration as it makes decisions.
- IRAP staff arrive at the correct answers for how to proceed in commonly encountered situations by referring to accessible resources about things like health insurance benefits, reimbursements, and basic technology.
- Staff have access to explanations of how organizational functions work and understand how to apply that information to their own situation and that of their supervisees.

Strategies:

- A. Continue to develop and refine effective decision-making and communication practices that foster inclusion, collaboration, transparency, idea-generation and speed where appropriate.
- B. Create effective ways for leadership to consistently and clearly share information and decisions.
- C. Create multiple channels for staff to share feedback, concerns and ideas.

- D. Build practices that maintain a high degree of staff input into ongoing planning at specific decision-points (e.g., growth decisions, team level planning, department-driven budgeting process) with clear decision-making guidance.
- E. Build practices that maintain a high degree of input from partners and impacted communities around key decisions.
- F. Build practices that foster greater and earlier coordination between IRAP's different geographical offices as well as between operations, development, and program leads on program development and implementation (e.g., coordination between tech and programs, more regular training and update on IRAP financials).
- G. Develop systems for more proactive and formal planning, idea generation, coordination, and decision-making between different streams of work, including when new areas of programmatic or geographic work are being considered.
- H. Build sustainable practices and plans, to the extent possible, for emergency, time-limited response for clients, including a set of debriefing sessions when the response is done.
- I. Create standardized systems to inform and train staff on new policies and procedures and where to find resources/tools.

Goal 4: Financial health. Raise and allocate financial resources to support IRAP's impact and organizational health.

Success Indicators:

- IRAP meets or exceeds annual revenue targets as set in relation to projected expenses, and continues to maintain a healthy reserve.
- Infrastructure is a consistent part of annual budget and allocations and is appropriate to need.
- Fundraising strategy includes identification of potential funding sources for organizational sustainability and health.
- Budget allocations for organizational health and sustainability are transparently planned and allocated; resources for this work are consistently prioritized by the development department and successfully raised.
- Staff is aware what resources are being raised and allocated to organizational sustainability and health globally.

Strategies:

- A. Enhance transparency in the budgeting process at every level, including sharing information on infrastructure allocations globally.
- B. Continue to prioritize raising general operating support to help maintain overall organizational health and sustainability and facilitate sufficient and equitable investment across all internal and external strategic plan goals.
- C. Coordinate funding opportunities with all offices, not only in the United States.

- D. Improve connections and communication between the development team and others teams.
- E. Continue to diversify revenue streams through both traditional and innovative channels.
- F. Continue to enhance interdepartmental communication, prioritization, and adaptability in response to evolving needs and resources.
- G. Work with the board to finalize gift acceptance, reserve, and investment policies.
- H. Deepen the engagement of our donor community with IRAP's mission, vision, and programming, and raise IRAP's profile within the refugee and immigration philanthropic field.
- I. Aim to maintain a reserve equivalent to approximately 12 months' worth of operating expenses based on the budget of the current Fiscal Year, pending Board approved reserve policy.
- J. Continue to ensure that IRAP will not accept funding that does not further our mission or our long-term strategic planning goals; and that we will not accept funding that would restrict us to create new programming that does not align with our strategic plan.
- K. Maintain financial health so that donors are not dictating program and infrastructure direction.
- L. Maintain a high degree of staff input into budgeting through a department-driven budgeting process.
- M. Provide regular training and updates on IRAP financials for staff.

Goal 5: Verified data security and privacy for all. Through regular testing and staff development, IRAP attests that our data security and privacy protocols protect the sensitive, confidential information of people who interact with IRAP or its systems.

Success indicators:

- Independent audits of our protocols and systems that verify that our goals and actions protect the data of those who interact with IRAP.
- Ongoing professional development for staff and interns related to cybersecurity and data privacy to ensure staff confidently use IRAP's systems securely, follow security protocols, and be prudential when using IRAP accounts/data.
- Completion of the rollout of device management system(s) to all devices to ensure staff receive prompt technological support on their devices and that data on the devices are secured from accidents and malicious intent.
- Implementation of an alert system for mentions of IRAP accounts on suspicious websites.

Strategies:

- A. Implement audits and penetration testing by independent groups to ensure our systems are secure and our security protocols are being followed.

- B. Expand the use of training videos/exercises, such as KnowBe4 phishing training and testing.
- C. Prepare multimodal resources for training staff and interns and reminding them how to use IRAP's systems securely.
- D. Work with all staff to find security/privacy solutions that are understood, easy-to-follow, and (where possible) automatic.
- E. Have all tech staff regularly test device management system(s) to ensure the data on the devices are secure and that the systems are automatically updated as planned.
- F. Monitor IRAP systems—with humans and automated systems—for suspicious activity.
- G. Require that IRAP's Data Protection Officer and a technology security staffer work with the planning of new technological systems and integrations to ensure that data is kept confidential and secure.
- H. Define and publicize security/privacy policy non-compliance consequences for staff and interns.

Strategic Priority 3: Build Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) into all aspects of IRAP so that we elevate the power and dignity of people with lived experiences of displacement and marginalization.

Overall Vision for the Priority: IRAP elevates the power and dignity of people with lived experiences of displacement and marginalization by prioritizing DEIA considerations both in our programming and internal operations.

Goal 1: Representation. Increase diversity, including the representation of people with lived experience of displacement and marginalization, on IRAP's board and in all levels of IRAP staff.

Successor Indicators:

- Increased representation of people with lived experience of displacement and/or marginalization in IRAP's staff, leadership and board, with a particular attention to diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability.

Strategies:

- A. Regularly evaluate board structure and composition, and create a board culture where equal value is attributed to time, money, expertise, and experience.
- B. Regularly evaluate leadership team and staff structure, composition, and compensation with an eye towards increasing representation.

- C. Create more opportunities for IRAP staff, including non-white staff and non-attorney staff, to take up visible leadership roles internally and externally (e.g. in program development, hiring, and organization planning).
- D. Improve recruitment practices to increase opportunities for more diverse hires and those with lived experience of displacement, marginalization, and/or those who are underrepresented in their profession (e.g., hire from a wider pool of potential applicants; extend hiring timelines; remove reliance on elite university degrees).
- E. Develop strategies for diversifying the application pipeline for open positions, e.g. utilizing student chapters, volunteers, and internship programs as talent pipelines.
- F. Diversify the IRAP circle of donors and supporters, and develop a broader range of opportunities for supporters to engage with IRAP.

Goal 2: Inclusive workplace. Create an inclusive and high-trust workplace where DEIA is a shared value and norm and where staff feel that they belong, are safe at work, and are respected and valued.

Success Indicators:

- Staff are included and respected at IRAP, with no disparities between different social identity groups.
- Staff are aligned in terms of shared DEIA norms and language, including a global perspective.
- Staff have the skills to understand, engage, and address DEIA related concerns in the workplace.
- IRAP has good systems and practices that staff can trust when raising DEIA concerns.

Strategies:

- A. Develop expertise in progressive DEIA human resources policies and practices in countries where IRAP has a presence.
- B. Continue training on DEIA topics and issues, incorporating more trainers with experience working in the regions/localities where IRAP has presence and/or in an international context with multi-national staff and awareness of race/ethnic/gender discrimination issues beyond a U.S. perspective.
- C. Provide training, support, and accountability systems for directors, managers, and supervisors to work equitably with direct reports.
- D. Create clear processes within the organizational culture function to address DEIA related concerns, conflicts, and microaggressions to recognize harm and facilitate reconciliation.
- E. Create clear expectations, support, and accountability for behaviors that reflect DEIA values for all staff.
- F. Continue to refine effective onboarding practices for new staff to include an orientation on IRAP's DEIA norms and practices.

Goal 3: Systemic equity. Systematically include equity considerations in all aspects of internal policies, processes, and practices.

Successor Indicators:

- IRAP adopts equitable policies and practices across all regions, adapted for context.
- DEIA considerations are integrated and utilized in key internal processes and decisions.
- Staff leaders and teams are familiar with and utilize DEIA protocols.

Strategies:

- A. Leadership team continues to lead the DEIA process for the organization, in consultation with the Director of Organizational Culture and the DEIA committee of staff.
- B. Develop decision-making and communication protocols that support equity, transparency, and inclusion, making conscious room for staff and client voices that may be overlooked.
- C. Regularly review, evaluate and update internal policies and procedures to reflect best practices and ethics in DEIA, including pro-Black norms, in all IRAP offices and locations while adapting to local issues and remaining mindful of the context.
- D. Ensure equitable recruitment and onboarding processes, protocols and tools, e.g. specific guidance on how to expand an applicant pool, how to avoid unconscious bias while hiring, and staying mindful of overreliance on degrees and credentials.
- E. Ensure that staff development and mentorship practices at IRAP reach people where they are, are creatively and thoughtfully designed for equity, and offer support based on individuals' targeted needs.
- F. Continue to invest in DEIA, including raising general operating funds that can be invested in DEIA goals (internal and external).
- G. Adopt a Gift Acceptance Policy to ensure that donations are aligned with our mission and vision and will not redirect our mission or programmatic priorities.

Goal 4: Programming. Ensure that IRAP's work is informed by and empowers displaced persons, particularly those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refolement from their country of displacement.

Success Indicators:

- IRAP identifies and serves displaced populations who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refolement from their country of displacement in each region in which it operates.
- IRAP has long-term reciprocal relationships with community-based organizations, especially those led by, and/or staffed by, displaced and marginalized persons, that guide the direction and focus of IRAP's work.

Strategies:

- A. Prioritize expanding services and advocacy for displaced people who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refolement from their country of displacement in each region that IRAP operates.
- B. Proactively develop programming relationships with organizations serving displaced people who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refolement from their country of displacement, including through sub-granting relationships that direct financial resources to them and support that ensures long-term programmatic and financial health (see also Priority 1, Goal 4).
- C. Prioritize removing barriers to accessing IRAP's services, legal information, and resources.
- D. Participate in key networks of migrant and human rights organizations and activists so that IRAP can be aware and informed, and act appropriately in rapid response situations or where groups of people face systemic or structural barriers.
- E. Regularly solicit the experience of displaced persons and communities who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refolement from their country of displacement, including organizations led by, staffed by, and/or serving those communities, to inform IRAP's programmatic agenda.
- F. Direct financial resources to community-based partners led by, and/or staffed by, displaced and/or marginalized persons when IRAP is approached by potential donors about work that falls outside the scope of our mission or that does not align with our programmatic priorities.

Appendix A: IRAP Programmatic Priorities Principles

These principles inform how IRAP should select and prioritize its programmatic work. The principles will be used in developing and revisiting IRAP's programmatic priorities on an annual basis.

- Work that involves legal assistance or advocacy and falls within IRAP's programmatic focus areas of:
 - (A) Opening new and innovative pathways;
 - (B) Protecting and improving pathways to make them more efficient, accountable, and equitable; and
 - (C) Securing pathways for displaced people who are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refoulement from their country of displacement
- Work where IRAP can add the most value, such as:
 - Pathways and parts of pathways that can most benefit from legal service and advocacy;
 - Work where we have experience and expertise;
 - Work where we are well-positioned to build expertise to fill a gap;
 - Work that is more complex than other organizations have resources to take on; and
 - Emergencies that need immediate action
- Work that serves communities that are marginalized, disenfranchised, historically excluded, or otherwise at risk of severe harm in or refoulement from their country of displacement, which could include:
 - Displaced people who have been historically excluded from legal, protection, and resettlement services;
 - Displaced people who have historically faced severe discrimination;
 - Displaced people whose living circumstances put them at risk of being marginalized and excluded from legal, protection, and resettlement services;
 - Displaced people who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from legal, protection, and resettlement services because they are pre-literate, non-literate, or their language is different from the dominant language in their country of displacement;
 - Unaccompanied children and the elderly;
 - Displaced people with urgent medical needs; and
 - Displaced people who are survivors of torture
- Work that presents opportunities to build or strengthen partnerships with:
 - Organizations led by, and/or staffed by, displaced and/or marginalized individuals and communities;

- Local organizations working with displaced individuals and communities and can provide referrals; and/or
 - Providing social and other services that could benefit our existing clients
- Work that leverages IRAP's model of working with pro bono lawyers and student chapters
- Work that presents opportunities for large-scale impact, including systemic change work and work that can inform our self-help resources and empower large numbers of people in that way
- Work that presents opportunities for professional development and skills building for staff

Appendix B: IRAP Partnership Guidelines

IRAP leverages partnerships in every aspect of our work. We center the values of reciprocity and humility in our work with partners. IRAP's Strategic Plan emphasizes our commitment to strive for meaningful collaboration grounded in these values. We seek to understand the context in which our partners work, listen to their priorities, fill gaps in a strategic manner, and be mindful not to undermine the work of other organizations, especially local and community organizations.

Growth: We are committed to growing in thoughtful and deliberate ways that center the needs of displaced people and the critical work of partner organizations as opposed to organizational expansion for its own sake

Inform: Organizations led by, and/or staffed by, displaced persons, and other community-based partners guide the direction and focus of IRAP's work. We will regularly solicit the experience of displaced persons and communities who are systematically marginalized to inform IRAP's programmatic agenda.

Equity: We strive to proactively develop relationships with organizations serving marginalized, isolated or otherwise disadvantaged populations.

Addressing inherent power imbalances: When appropriate, to address inequities in the international aid industry, we will direct financial resources to community-based partner organizations, particularly when they are staffed and/or led by people with lived experience of displacement. We will support our partners in their efforts to ensure long-term programmatic and financial health by taking other measures to elevate their profiles and give credit for their work.

When choosing partners we will:

- Choose partners whose mission aligns with ours and whose projects align with our priorities
- Value a diversity of experience, especially lived experience
- Ensure our partners share leadership and decision-making roles
- Ensure that we always credit the role of our partners in collaborative work
- Ensure that our work elevates the voices and priorities of impacted people in communications, messaging and decision-making
- Share access to resources and consider long-term capacity-building when working with local organizations

IRAP's partners fall into the following categories:

1. Pro bono partnerships

- *Who*: Pro bono partners are lawyers and other professionals
 - *For what*: Legal services; legal research; litigation support, operational legal support
 - *What do we look for?*
 - i. Client sensitivity and centeredness
 - ii. High quality of legal research, writing, and strategy
 - iii. Responsiveness/ability to meet deadlines
 - iv. Infrastructure and support for strong pro bono program
 - v. Resources (able to contribute with capacity, connections, and money to pro bono cases)
 - vi. Experience with immigration pro bono work
2. Student networks
- *Who*: Law school students; students in other degree programs related to IRAP's mission (aspirational)
 - *For what*: Internships; externships; clinic-model legal representation; legal research; policy advocacy; engagement and education
 - *What do we look for?*
 - i. Client sensitivity and centeredness
 - ii. Responsiveness/ability to meet deadlines
 - iii. Interest and commitment to the work
 - iv. Students with lived experience of marginalization or displacement, backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the legal profession
 - v. Relevant language skills
3. Refugee-serving local partners
- *Who*: Organizations working directly with displaced populations on the local level, including humanitarian referral partners (e.g., psycho-social, shelter, education, medical), legal and advocacy organizations
 - *For what*: Diverse programmatic collaborations, including referral and sub-granting relationships (implementing partners)
 - *What do we look for?*
 - i. Client sensitivity and centeredness
 - ii. Responsiveness
 - iii. Trusted relationship with marginalized communities
 - iv. Representation of displaced persons and/or other marginalized communities within the organization
 - v. High quality of services, as measured by satisfaction of clients served by the organization (including our own clients)
 - vi. Understanding of the limitations of IRAP's work
 - vii. Additional guidelines exist for sub-granting

4. Impact and Advocacy Partners

- *Who:* Organizations working on IRAP’s core issues (displacement, migration, and immigration justice) as well as cross-partnerships with climate organizations, veterans’ organizations, and other issues relevant to our work
- *What:* Policy, advocacy and communication campaign partners; litigation clients, think tanks and policy shops; coalition member partners, and more
- *What do we look for?*
 - i. A shared vision, mission, and understanding of the work
 - ii. Effective advocacy strategies
 - iii. Understanding and respect for client sensitivity and centeredness
 - iv. Responsiveness
 - v. Trusted relationship with marginalized communities
 - vi. Alignment in messaging
 - vii. Representation of displaced persons and/or other marginalized communities in the organization

5. Communication and narrative change organizations

- *Who:* Comms organization or PR firms on social justice broadly
- *What:* Communication campaign partners; messaging development and narrative change partners
- *What do we look for?*
 - i. Responsiveness
 - ii. Alignment in messaging
 - iii. Building a rapport with IRAP and vice versa
 - iv. High quality strategy
 - v. Understand immigration and refugee issues broadly as well as the issues that IRAP focuses on

EXAMPLE OF IRAP’S COMMUNITY-LAWYERING APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS

This example describes IRAP’s Liberian Refugee Fairness Act (LRIF) project. It is intended to illustrate a community lawyering approach to IRAP’s work. This is not the only instance at IRAP of community lawyering, but is intended to be one example of collaborative work.

Background of Project

In April 2021, IRAP saw a listserv post from the UndocuBlack Network (UBN) that sought pro bono representation for Liberians to apply for adjustment of status under LRIF. IRAP decided to get involved, and the project yielded many lessons about community lawyering: how to build relationships with legal and community-based organizations,

determine community needs and follow through to assist with those needs, with patience and flexibility.

Direct Representation Cases

After preliminary conversations with UBN, we decided to take on representation in 10 cases. We set the last day for new case referrals at October 15, 2021 because LRIF had a filing deadline of December 20, 2021. We began reaching out to organizations across the United States and ultimately conducted 8 intakes and were able to take on only 5 cases. There were many challenges to reaching our goals. During our outreach process, we learned that members of the Liberian American community were extremely reluctant to come forward to apply because of the fear of revealing their undocumented status, even for the purpose of obtaining legal assistance. We also needed to gain the trust and support of community leaders who acted as gatekeepers.

Client and community outreach took more time and effort than we initially anticipated. We were new to this community and worked remotely, so we had to invest in building relationships, gaining the trust of community organizations, and showing them that we were a reliable referral partner. This meant that we had to adjust our project parameters and expectations and keep our sense of urgency in check.

We extended our deadline for receiving new cases multiple times, taking cases as late as December 14 when we heard there was great need to assist with last-minute applications. We hoped that this would prove that we could follow through on our commitments to take cases and could be a trustworthy partner in the future.

We also adjusted our expectations about what made the project a “success.” Even though we did not take as many cases as we had planned, we met the needs that were presented to us, made connections in a new client community, and provided legal assistance to the clients who wanted it. We learned that client communities do not always behave as one expects, and it is important not to assume what the best path is for a client, even if we believe it is their best legal option. An individual’s own empowered decision-making process will always include weighing many factors, some of which an attorney may not understand. We learned about the importance of understanding these factors when we can and supporting clients in their own decision-making. We also learned about the necessity that advocacy efforts be paired with coordinated outreach and community education. The mere existence of a law creating a legal relief option for one community does not mean that eligible individuals will actually know about this option and come forward to apply. It is critical for organizations like ours to spend time and resources on effective community outreach.

Litigation and Advocacy

We attended regular LRIF coalition calls with the LRIF Strategy Group consisting of legal services providers and policy advocates. Attending these meetings was important to connect with the other organizations working on this issue, to better understand LRIF, and to help us identify where gaps in services were so that we could determine if there were other ways we might get involved. We worked to elevate the coalition's advocacy efforts through social media and the promotion of sign-on [advocacy letters](#).

During this time, we began a new project that was unexpected after learning about the lack of information about LRIF available to detained Liberians. After speaking with organizations deeply connected to this community, IRAP's litigation department worked with law students to develop know your rights materials to be distributed at detention facilities that housed Liberian nationals. Student teams filed FOIAs to gather information about Liberian detained populations, researched laws and policies around outreach strategies in detention centers, and developed know your rights materials and guides. In all, IRAP's student chapters distributed original materials to 10 immigration courts and 21 detention centers ahead of the LRIF application deadline.

Conclusion

As IRAP grows and puts more emphasis on partnerships and coalition building, it is important to center the tenets of community lawyering in our work. We must invest in relationships and take our cues from organizations and individuals who are deeply rooted in communities. Additionally, community lawyering is an acquired skill and requires staff training and sensitivity to community needs which may not always match our needs or current practice. This work is time-intensive and requires flexibility and an understanding that you may not be able to measure success using the usual metrics of clients served or case numbers. The sense of urgency we often feel in our work and our methods to evaluate success are not always compatible with community lawyering. We hope the LRIF project provides helpful takeaways and considerations as IRAP begins to work in new areas of the globe with new populations and communities.