

Complementary Pathways and Family Reunification

STARTER PACK



WHAT ARE COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS?

Complementary pathways are the systems that refugees can use to access work, study and other opportunities outside their countries of origin or asylum. They let refugees apply for work, study and other types of visas or reunite with family just like any other person wishing to migrate, but they take into account a refugee's need for protection against forced return, or refoulement. They also offer the opportunity to find protection and/or solutions via named sponsorship and humanitarian admission.



💡 Click on the explainer on complementary pathways for more.

Explainer videos on [family reunification](#), [labour mobility](#), and [education pathways](#) are also available.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS?

- **[FAMILY REUNIFICATION](#)**: Family reunification procedures are legal, rights-based and states-provided avenues allowing refugees to access this right and reunite with their family members.
- **[EDUCATION PATHWAYS](#)**: Education pathways are opportunities such as university scholarships or vocational trainings for refugee students to study in a new country. The expansion of such opportunities is one of the pillars of UNHCR's Tertiary Education Strategy ([15by30](#)) which aims at 15% of refugee youth enrolled in higher education by 2030.
- **[LABOUR MOBILITY](#)**: Through labour mobility programmes, refugees can move to another country to work and apply their skills.
- **[PRIVATE/NAMED SPONSORSHIP PATHWAYS](#)**: Through private sponsorship programmes, individuals, groups of individuals or organizations nominate specific refugees to enter and stay in their country.
- **[HUMANITARIAN PATHWAYS](#)**: Programmes designed to offer safety to individuals in need of protection through their identification and transfer to a third country. They can take the form of humanitarian admission programmes or humanitarian visas.

HOW ARE COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS RELEVANT TO UNHCR'S PROTECTION ACTIVITIES?

Complementary pathways are fully embedded in UNHCR sectoral strategies, guidance and other materials at global level, including the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), the [Third Country Solutions for Refugees - Roadmap 2030](#) and [UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026](#).

Roadmap 2030 sets the goal for **2.1 million refugees** to benefit from complementary pathways and family reunification by 2030.

WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS IN COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS?

Complementary pathways are led by partners; depending on the pathway, these can include State authorities, the corporate sector, universities, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations and civil societies, local communities, other UN agencies, refugee and diaspora groups, public sector services, donor organisations, philanthropists, and private entities.

💡 Read the [pledging guidance](#) to find out more about actions partners can take to advance complementary pathways.

Family reunification is based on the **human right of family unity and family life**. Although the processes with other pathways are similar, we do not refer to family reunification as a complementary pathway, but as a **protection tool**, such as asylum and resettlement.

WHAT IS UNHCR'S ROLE?

UNHCR's overarching role in complementary pathways is to mobilise support, act as a bridge between partners, and broaden horizons around solutions for displaced persons. We advocate for lifting legal, administrative and political obstacles in host and receiving countries to unlock opportunities. UNHCR builds partnerships and networks, supports coordination efforts, and helps to build a stronger evidence base.

💡 To learn more on how UNHCR teams can engage with complementary pathways, check [10 Actions to Advance complementary pathways](#).

THE GLOBAL TASK FORCES

Complementary pathways and family reunification are led by partners and require a whole-of-society approach to expand. UNHCR is a proud member of the following Task Forces:

- [Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility](#)
- [Global Task Force on Third Country Education Pathways](#)
- [Global Family Reunification Network](#)

Complementary pathway work has **clear links with livelihoods, education, child protection, private sector partnership, donor relations** and other teams, and can be streamlined across UNHCR structures.

COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS AND GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM 2023

Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum 2023, there are three multi-stakeholder pledges under development on complementary pathways.

- [Skills-based pathways](#)
- [Family Reunification](#)
- [Refugee Travel Documents](#)

POLICY AND GUIDANCE [coming soon]

- UNHCR Operational Guidance on Complementary Pathways for Admission to Third Countries
- Family Reunification Operational Guidelines
- Complementary pathways and family reunification learning course

KEY DOCUMENTS

- [Complementary Pathways for Admission of refugees to third countries: Key considerations](#)
- [10 Actions you can take to promote complementary pathways](#)
- [Pledging guidance on complementary pathways and family reunification](#)
- [OECD-UNHCR Safe Pathways for Refugees report III \(joint bi-annual study on first-time permits issued for work, study and family reasons to seven nationalities by OECD countries and Brazil\)](#)
- [Complementary Pathways for Admission to third countries: Glossary of Key terms](#)

Objective 3 of the Global Compact on Refugees aims to **expand access to third country solutions** i.e., resettlement and complementary pathways. Complementary pathways are **additional and separate to resettlement**.

USEFUL LINKS

- help.unhcr.org (country-specific information for refugees including on pathways and family reunification)
- [Opportunities platform](#) (scholarships for refugees)
- [Global Compact on Refugees Platform](#)

DATA ON COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS

For the latest data on complementary pathways visit the [Complementary Pathways Dashboard](#) in the Community of Practice.

For guidance on how to collect data for complementary pathways, read the [Operational Guidance about data recording in Progres V4 and V3](#).

STAY UPDATED

- [Complementary Pathways Community of Practice](#): Visit the CoP to find information on complementary pathways, including [complementary pathways focal points](#) globally, a [library of resources and tools](#) and [latest news](#).
- [MS Teams groups](#): Join our MS teams channels to raise questions, share advice, updates and good practices, and exchange tools and other information with colleagues from around the world.
- [Complementary Pathways Intranet page](#)

Who should I contact?

Check the list of [complementary pathways focal points](#) globally.