

## Global Refugee Forum 2019 Template for Good Practices

Please send this template and any attachments to the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team at [hqgrf@unhcr.org](mailto:hqgrf@unhcr.org) **as early as possible** to facilitate the consolidation and presentation of good practices in time for the Global Refugee Forum.

Good practices can be shared on the Global Refugee Forum website and then included in the digital portal, which is currently under development.

Please complete a separate template for each good practice.

<b>Name of entity sharing good practice</b>	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
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<b>Twitter handle</b>	
<b>Partners</b>	The programme is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and implemented by IOM in the countries of transit and origin. In Germany, family reunification is supported by a strong counselling network across Germany with NGOs, such as Caritas, German Red Cross, Diakonie or Arbeiterwohlfahrt providing advisory services or support around the processes of family reunification.
<b>Name of good practice</b>	Family Assistance Programme (FAP)
<b>Country/ Region:</b>	Nine (9) IOM FAP centres in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Sudan and Afghanistan
<b>Year(s) of implementation and duration:</b>	2016-onwards
<b>Document related to the good practice model/approach:</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Available at:	

### **General description of the good practice:**

In 2015-2016 the number of asylum-seekers in Germany rose significantly and so did the number of individuals with protection status seeking family reunification. To respond to the needs and requests, the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO) partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to initiate the Family Assistance Programme (FAP). The programme was launched in March 2016 and is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The central aim of the programme is to support families in vulnerable situations to reunite with their relative in Germany by assisting them with the family reunification visa application process. The programme facilitates accessibility to an existing regular migration pathway, dissuading families from seeking unsafe, irregular migration channels and protecting them from misinformation and exploitation by visa brokers and smuggling networks. With facilities in ten countries, FAP offers both in-person and remote assistance to a high volume of beneficiaries by providing them with timely, trusted and accurate information and visa-related support services in their native language.

### **Main activities of the good practice:**

The FAP programme is not an admission programme but provides administrative support to the individuals who have started procedures at the German missions abroad for family reunification with family members in Germany. In most cases, family members in Germany had been granted either refugee status or subsidiary protection status. Against the background of complex administrative application procedures, the centres provide support with the completion of administrative forms required by the German Government for family reunification. Support services include; document completeness checks, assistance in proving family relationships, appointment scheduling, collection of complete visa applications and biometrics enrolment on behalf of German Consulates, and offer of additional assistance for beneficiaries with special needs as well as assessment of possible medical conditions if needed. Furthermore, a key component of the programme is to provide accurate and timely information, in order to protect families from seeking unsafe migration channels and from exploitation by visa brokers and smuggling networks. FAP provided pre-departure integration classes and provides an integration handbook to assist with integration. As beneficiaries are often in a situation of heightened vulnerability, the programme is built on a protection-centred approach. Staff are carefully selected, security cleared and trained to provide empathetic and culturally sensitive services and to identify and prioritize the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied minors and persons with medical conditions. The centres are accessible for people with disabilities, include child-friendly spaces, prayer rooms and private spaces for mothers with infants. As over 83% of principal applicants are women, a gender sensitive approach is at the core of the service support offered.

### Results of the good practice:

The project helps families to help families to apply for family reunification by providing timely and protection centred services, offering enhanced access to support, with reliable information in their native language about eligibility and application criteria. According to IOM, until early 2019, more than 300,000 individuals have contacted IOM FAP centres since the first centres opened in 2016 and more than 95,000 families have been supported with their family reunification applications to Germany. As visa procedures are frequently delayed because applicants don't fill in forms correctly, fail to present relevant documents and other evidence at the often long-awaited appointment for a visa application at an embassy, the project helps applicants in having the paperwork ready and provide relevant evidence when turning up for the appointment. The FAP therefore makes administrative procedures for visas better informed, more timely and more efficient.

## Challenges in implementing the good practice and how they are being addressed:

*Please provide a maximum of 200 words.*

There have been operational challenges due to: 1) difficulties faced by Syrian and Iraqi families to travel to a third country to apply for family reunification visas. These difficulties were anticipated and addressed, as possible in cooperation with the host governments to facilitate border crossings in some countries; 2) security related challenges due to the conflict and conditions in some countries, which could not be completely addressed; 3) Initial difficulties in contacting beneficiaries directly as most were relying on unscrupulous visa brokers for assistance. This was addressed with information campaigns, primarily via Facebook (over 40,000 followers on the FAP FB page), to better inform about the programme and to warn about the risks of relying on visa brokers.

In addition to the operational challenges, the greatest political challenge was the rapidly changing legal framework for family reunification, especially for subsidiary protection holders. A suspension of family reunification for subsidiary protection holders was introduced at the beginning of the programme in March 2016 and again renewed in March 2018. Starting August 2018, a new law was passed enabling beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to apply for family reunification again, with a fixed quota of 1000 beneficiaries per month. This has been met with ongoing, close and productive cooperation with the relevant German authorities to make sure that the programme can deliver to its best capacity within the given legal framework of the country of destination.