



GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM LEGAL COMMUNITY PLEDGE

2020 PROGRESS REPORT

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2020

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 will forever be known as the year the world was turned upside down by Covid-19. It was also the **first year that the global legal community came together to deliver on the Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge** ('the Pledge'), a joint pledge made in solidarity by a diverse range of legal stakeholders at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019.

The pandemic disproportionately negatively affected the lives of refugees, asylum-seekers, and others forcibly displaced, worsening the already precarious situation that these communities face in many countries. It also severely disrupted local legal assistance programs, including the ability of local legal aid providers to reach the displaced communities with which they normally work. Despite these challenges, in 2020, the global legal community mobilized itself effectively to deliver on a broad range of activities **to improve access to justice for refugees** and others forcibly displaced around the world.

What is the Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge?

At the inaugural [Global Refugee Forum](#) in 2019, [more than 80](#) legal and community empowerment organizations, law firms, bar associations, refugee law clinics and corporations came together to **collectively pledge to address the unmet legal needs of refugees and others forcibly displaced.**

Those that joined the "Mobilizing the Global Legal Community to Protect and Find Solutions for Refugees and Others Forcibly Displaced" pledge - also known as the Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge - expressly committed to support efforts to protect and find solutions for **refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and other forcibly displaced persons**(1) and to increase the number of those displaced around the world who have equal access to justice in line with **Sustainable Development Goal 16 "Equal Access to Justice for All."**

The [wording of the Pledge](#) and up-to-date information about its implementation can be found on PILnet's [forced displacement](#) page.



Local legal aid pledgers continued to work directly with displaced communities(1) to identify and respond to their legal needs, **working in agile ways to develop new methods of delivering essential legal services in the midst of the pandemic.**

Local legal aid providers, often working in partnership with private sector actors that joined the Pledge, established and scaled remote legal counseling sessions across various online platforms, and set up and expanded hotline and other telephone services, to reach those in need of legal assistance. Local legal aid providers **continued to be the backbone of the legal assistance ecosystem**, providing countless hours of free specialized legal assistance for refugees and others forcibly displaced.

Within this context, the private sector was mobilized in an unprecedented way to contribute additional legal resources to help address the access-to-justice gap for refugees and others forcibly displaced. In 2020, **the private sector reported providing over 164,294 pro bono hours(2) in fulfillment of its GRF pro bono commitment, surpassing the number of hours pledged at the GRF by over 30%.** Private sector signatories also utilized their extensive networks to raise awareness about refugee and statelessness issues within their own staff, with their clients, with government actors, and other stakeholders, as well as to providing valuable financial support to local legal aid actors and to law students with displacement backgrounds.



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(1) The Pledge uses the language: "refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and other forcibly displaced persons" - it was designed to be inclusive of all persons that experience displacement that may be in need of protection. Other legal categories within the scope of the Pledge include: internally displaced persons (IDPs), those with claims under the Convention Against Torture (CAT), and survivors of trafficking. For the purpose of this report, this group is collectively referred to as "refugees and others forcibly displaced" or "displaced communities".

(2) A full list of the signatories to the Pledge can be found [here](#). The contents of this report, including the number of pro bono hours undertaken, is drawn only from data provided by the pledgers who reported progress against their Pledge commitments to PILnet. The number of pro bono hours undertaken to support greater access to justice for refugees and others forcibly displaced by those that joined the Pledge, and by other actors, is in reality much larger.

HIGHLIGHTS

During a time of global crisis, the GRF Legal Community Pledge acted as a much-needed **catalyst for a stronger, more united, global legal community** committed to working together to address the unmet legal needs of refugees and others forcibly displaced, while also fostering greater awareness about refugee and statelessness issues. In 2020, the actors that signed the pledge effectively mobilized themselves in an unprecedented way - including by forming new public-private sector partnerships and other multi-stakeholder collaborations.

Highlights from 2020 include:

- A group of individuals and NGOs that initiated the Pledge established the **Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge Core Group** ("the Core Group"), to support the implementation, growth, and sustainability of the Pledge.
- Within a more connected global legal community, both public and private sector signatories moved quickly to **adapt legal assistance programs and pro bono projects to accommodate Covid-19 related restrictions**, allowing pledgers to continue to reach displaced communities and supporting the **private sector signatories to surpass the pro bono commitments made at the GRF**.
- The Core Group developed reporting tools to support monitoring of the implementation of the Pledge and **began to annually track pro bono hours dedicated to improving access to justice for refugees** and others forcibly displaced.
- The Core Group partnered with UNHCR to **develop and disseminate tools to support refugee-led organizations (RLOs) and NGOs** to scope pro bono projects to address the unmet legal needs of displaced communities.
- With support from the Core Group, RLOs and NGOs pitched a broad range of new pro bono projects that were matched with law firms, **unlocking millions of dollars' worth of legal services, provided for free**.
- **Private sector law firms became greater champions for the rights of refugees**, including through increasing awareness about the importance of access to justice for refugees and others forcibly displaced within their own staff and with private and public sector clients.



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The Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge Core Group

The group of NGOs that drove the initial design of the Pledge and mobilized the global legal community to join it in December 2019, continued to meet in 2020 to support the Pledge's implementation. These actors established an informal **Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge Core Group** (the "Core Group") to work together to mobilize the global legal community to identify and address the unmet legal needs of refugees and others forcibly displaced.

The Core Group members committed to work collectively to **leverage networks, partnerships, and resources, including pro bono hours, to increase the number of those displaced who have access to legal assistance and who can access justice, rights, and solutions to their displacement.** The Core Group selected PILnet to act as the coordinating body for this work.

In 2020, the Core Group members undertook a range of activities to support implementation of the Pledge, including undertaking a **legal needs assessment and mapping** at a global level with those that had joined the Pledge, supporting **capacity development and initial pro bono matching initiatives in Asia**, designing **reporting tools** to track implementation of pro bono hours pledged and their impact, and **raising awareness and undertaking outreach** to expand the network of private and public sector legal actors involved in the Pledge.



COVID-19 AND THE PLEDGE

The Covid-19 pandemic caused immeasurable harm on a global scale throughout 2020 but it also created space for fast-paced innovation and the adoption of new ways of working. The first year of the implementation of the Pledge reflects this reality. **Refugees and others forcibly displaced often faced extreme hardship and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic** and were frequently excluded from the medical, financial, and other assistance programs designed to address its impacts. This is especially true for those undocumented, who often lived with the burden of the fear of arrest, detention and deportation if they were to seek such assistance. Lockdown measures and other restrictions on movement and association caused **delays in the registration and consideration of asylum claims, the renewal of identity documents and the processing of resettlement applications** and, at least initially, prevented asylum-seekers and refugees from accessing, sometimes life-saving, legal assistance.

Within this context, both NGO and private sector pledgers mobilized quickly to develop new ways of delivering legal assistance programs to minimize the impact of disruptions and maximize the opportunities created by the pandemic. Once established, **new remote legal counseling practices put in place by pledgers allowed staff and volunteer lawyers to continue to reach many of their refugee and other forcibly displaced clients.** In some instances remote services enabled pledgers to expand the scope of their activities and reach clients they would otherwise not have been able to meet in person. This quick adoption of remote working modalities contributed to the ability of the private sector pledgers not only to meet, but to exceed, the number of pro bono hours pledged, even in the midst of the pandemic.



Many pledgers shared that they will **continue to employ at least some remote work in future projects** while others shared that they have been motivated by the effectiveness of remote working to develop new projects, which are predominantly delivered remotely. For example, the law firms **Orrick and Ashurst** have worked with another firm to develop a new collaboration with Refugee Law Clinics Deutschland (RLC), called Refugee Rights Access. Volunteer lawyers from the German offices of these three firms provide free legal information sessions via the Zoom platform, alongside RLC student advisors, on the EU asylum system and process to individuals who have arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina from other third countries.

Given financial and other uncertainties faced by many NGOs as a result of the pandemic, some private sector pledgers highlighted that they chose to **strengthen relationships with existing local legal aid partners** rather than develop new partnerships. A number of firms worked with existing partners to refocus their pro bono activities to provide services to those particularly vulnerable to the virus, including detained asylum-seekers. Others shared that the pandemic brought about some positive procedural changes in certain jurisdictions, which created opportunities for greater rights for refugees.

"The shock and turmoil of the pandemic also created new possibilities: the government created a first of-its-kind forum for deliberation between NGOs and government offices relating to the needs of refugees and migrants during the crisis; legal dead-ends in regards to releasing detainees were reconsidered by the courts, opening the path to the release of more detainees than before; and even the requirement that asylum seekers renew visas in person, which has been an ever-present burden for the community, was removed, moving to an online system for visa renewals."

The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants (Israel)

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Readily available legal assistance⁽³⁾ is fundamental to refugee response. Legal assistance programs and measures support refugees and others forcibly displaced to mobilize their rights, seek recourse, and pursue long-term solutions to their displacement.

Yet, far too often displaced individuals and communities are unable to access legal assistance and are left without essential legal support. To address this gap, those that joined the Pledge provided a broad range of pro bono and other legal assistance to displaced individuals and communities in 2020. Many law firms and legal empowerment NGOs provided **specialist asylum advice and representation** free-of-charge. Other pledgers provided legal advice and representation in regard to a broad range of rights, including **socio-economic rights** (such as public benefits, housing, and employment), as well as in the pursuit of protection (such as in cases of **sexual and gender based violence**) and solutions (such as **family reunification and resettlement**). Many pledgers provided advice to refugees and others forcibly displaced who were at risk of or were subjected to **immigration detention and deportation** during the year.

In some countries, where refugees and others forcibly displaced are eligible for state-funded legal aid for asylum and immigration matters, securing this assistance can be difficult. Private law firms that had signed the Pledge played a valuable role in securing access to such assistance by successfully supporting asylum seekers and migrants to make applications for specialized legal aid. An example of this is the collaboration between several law firms, including **Orrick, Ashurst and Dechert**, that have partnered for a number of years with Bail for Immigration Detainees to run a pro bono project in the United Kingdom focused on securing legal aid funding for destitute detained individuals facing deportation.

“There is no question that having expert legal help in deportation proceedings can be life changing, and given the complex rules and procedure around legal aid funding and the vulnerability of the client group, there is little chance it can be secured without the help of pro bono lawyers.” Orrick

⁽³⁾“Legal assistance” is used to refer to the full range of legal services required by those displaced, including legal awareness, legal advice, and legal representation. For a non-exhaustive list of the types of legal assistance those that commit to the Pledge undertake in fulfillment of the Pledge, please see the [Menu of Pro Bono Options](#).



In many contexts, the chance an asylum-seeker has of securing legal recognition of their refugee status is often linked to whether or not they have access to legal assistance. In the instances where advice and representation were provided by those that joined the Pledge, asylum-seekers were more likely to be granted legal status and to access corresponding rights. As some of the pledgers shared:

Hong Kong: "In 2020, among all the asylum appellants represented by our law firm partners through our pro bono partnerships model for whom a decision was issued, 100% were successful in their application. This is in contrast to the 0.8% success rate experienced by the general population at the asylum appeal stage." **Justice Centre Hong Kong**

Greece: "Overall, those we have assisted received international protection in 74.5% of cases, compared to a Greek national average of 46.5%." **European Lawyers in Lesbos**

France: "We set up an asylum clinic in France focused on providing asylum-seekers with representation during their interview at the first instance level. This representation is key since asylum seekers do not have access to legal aid before the appellate level. While asylum seekers can represent themselves during these proceedings, their chances of being awarded refugee status improve with attorney assistance." **DLA Piper**

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Addressing the access-to-justice gap for refugees and others forcibly displaced requires a **“whole of society” approach**(4); effective and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships and enhanced collaboration across a variety of sectors, which underpins the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), are key to the design and implementation of the GRF Legal Community Pledge.

In 2020, global and local signatories initiated new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, including with **refugee-led initiatives and local actors who work directly with displaced communities**. In addition to establishing new bilateral partnerships, new multi-stakeholder networks and working groups were established, allowing pledgers to increase their work capacity; to share resources, expertise, and networks; and to expand the geographic scope of their work and impact.

"Collaborating with nonprofit organizations that work in the heart of our clients' communities has been one of the most effective and inspiring practices in which we have engaged. The organizations we partner with to serve individuals know the clients' needs, the latest policy trends, and the best way to address and offer support for other issues that often arise when working with immigrants, including those related to public benefits, housing, and employment." Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher



© Paris Bar Association

The Paris Bar Association's Solidarity Bus, from which mobile asylum clinics are run, in collaboration with NGOs (see further info at page 12).

(4)[The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2016, calls for comprehensive refugee responses to be grounded in multi-stakeholder, "whole-of-society" approaches that include local authorities, international organizations, **civil society partners, the private sector, media, and refugees themselves**.

Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Core Group Partnership with UNHCR

UNHCR is the UN body mandated to ensure the international protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons, and other displaced persons around the world. Given this, as well as its role in co-hosting the GRF - where the Pledge was born - and its global presence and ability to identify unmet legal needs within displaced communities, **UNHCR partnered with the Core Group to support the Pledge's implementation throughout 2020**, including:

- Partnering with Core Group members to develop a "[Menu of Pro Bono Options](#)" and other tools to support law firms, NGOs and other relevant actors to envision and categorize the types of pro bono assistance that could be available under the Pledge.
- Through their UNHCR regional and country operations, and in coordination with relevant local partners, utilizing the Menu of Pro Bono Options and other tools to **map the legal needs** of refugees and others forcibly displaced.
- Supporting the **matching of the legal needs** identified with pro bono assistance provided by private sector signatories to the Pledge.
- Partnering with the Core Group and Trust Law to co-organize an **Asia Pro Bono Roundtable**, which led to RLOs and NGOs pitching 15 pro bono projects, resulting in 22 new partnerships being formed between local and international law firms, in-house counsel, and civil society actors.
- **Engaging with private sector firms that had joined the Pledge on pro bono projects** to provide legal assistance, representation or research in areas identified by UNHCR operations, such as **child protection** (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand), **livelihoods** (e.g. China), IDPs (e.g. Mozambique), and **statelessness** (e.g. Central Asia). Projects with a global scope included reviewing and summarizing of cases for UNHCR's Refworld database and research on access to remote legal assistance and representation in refugee and/or stateless status determination procedures.



Pledgers reported that they have formed over 100 new partnerships and collaborations since joining the pledge (5). Some examples include:

United Kingdom: Five firms that joined the pledge - **Ashurst, Allen & Overy, Orrick, Reed Smith**, and **White & Case** - developed a new collaboration called the Family Reunion from Europe (FRFE) project, together with another global firm and the legal charity Refugee Legal Support (RLS). The lawyers from these firms are fully trained and supervised by expert lawyers at RLS to assist individuals in Greece and other countries who have family members legally residing in the UK to **access family reunion rights**, following the UK's departure from the European Union.

Kenya: **The Refugee Consortium of Kenya** partnered with the Coptic Hospital Gender Violence Recovery Centre and Nairobi Women's Gender Violence Recovery Centre to provide **survivors of gender-based violence with medico-legal support**, promoting their access to justice and sensitizing hospital staff on appropriate legal responses to gender-based violence.

Hong Kong: **Herbert Smith Freehills** joined a collaboration of a number of international firms – including **DLA Piper, Linklaters, Ashurst** and **Allen & Overy** which are also signatories to the Pledge – in assisting refugees to apply to the Hong Kong Immigration Department for work authorization. Since the start of the project in 2016, an ever-increasing number of refugees have been supported to secure **work rights** each year and, the application procedure has transformed from an unclear process that took months, to a streamlined process taking a matter of weeks.

France: **Barreau de Paris Solidarité - Paris Bar Association** entered into five new partnerships with NGOs to support its asylum clinics and other work to address the unmet legal needs of those forcibly displaced. Through its **asylum clinics** – many of which are run out of its Solidarity Bus - the Paris Bar Association is able to reach over 1,500 asylum-seekers each year, including those living in the streets, camps or emergency shelters. Doing this in partnership with NGOs allows it to share resources, such as translators, and to ensure appropriate referrals are made to address the non-legal needs of their clients.

United States: **Bloomberg's** Legal and Compliance Department collaborated with the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) and Immigration Equality to undertake country conditions research to support asylum claims. The research focused on the violence and discrimination faced by **transgender, gender non-conforming, and HIV-positive** individuals in Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela.

(5) This number is drawn from the data submitted by pledgers and represents only a snapshot of new partnerships and collaborations established. Many pledgers have shared that the Pledge has had a catalytic impact on their refugee rights work, but not all pledgers who submitted a report quantified the number of new partnerships and collaborations entered into and it is difficult to quantify which partnerships reported were the direct "result of" the Pledge.

ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Those that joined the Pledge committed to promoting **fairness, efficiency, adaptability, and integrity of legal procedures and other laws, policies, and practices** regarding refugees and others forcibly displaced. In 2020, both NGOs and law firms used a variety of approaches to advocate for improved legal and protection systems and a greater focus on the rights of and justice for refugees and others forcibly displaced. Some **lawyers reported taking to the streets in Paris to demonstrate** about the rights of asylum-seekers, while others **facilitated discussions between civil society and government actors to address refugee rights and the need for legislative reform**, including in Australia, Israel, Kenya, Thailand, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.

Awareness Raising by the Private Sector

Some larger law firms utilized the signing of the Pledge to raise awareness about refugee rights within their extensive external networks. Others focused on growing refugee rights pro bono within their own firms, including raising awareness, developing capacity, and enhancing coordination across their many offices. For example, one international firm, which has over 40 Offices around the world, established an internal working group to act as a knowledge exchange and a centralised hub for information and staff involved in refugee rights work globally.



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"We have raised awareness of refugee and statelessness issues in our corporate community. We represent many immigrant clients alongside in-house lawyers from corporate clients, including those in the financial, technology, or media fields. Our Firm regularly publishes newsletters and reports regarding our work on behalf of refugee and immigration issues, which we distribute publicly and to a targeted audience of individual and corporate clients who might not otherwise be aware of the problems we address with our work." Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

Strategic Litigation

Global and local law firms partnered with NGOs to successfully litigate against a variety of laws, policies, and practices impacting on the rights of refugees and others forcibly displaced.

Detention: **Morrison & Foerster** worked with NGO partners to support individual immigration detainees to be released from detention, where they were at a heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19, and was co-counsel for an impact lawsuit to help improve conditions in an immigration detention center in Arizona, U.S. In the latter, the court found the conditions in the center violated the U.S. Constitution and granted a permanent injunction requiring the detention center to provide detainees with certain basic minimum standards. A witness in the trial – a former detainee of the immigration detention center – shared:

“I feel very happy to know that things are going to change in these detention centers and that people will not have to spend much time under the conditions I was detained in. I am very happy to know that I helped make things better for all of the people who follow; so many people will benefit from being treated better during the time they have to be detained there.”

Orrick worked with local organizations to secure a ground-breaking application for a preliminary injunction to force the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement to take immediate steps to protect people in immigration facilities from the virus or release these individuals in the interest of public health.



Deportation: **Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher** represented a number of local refugee rights organizations to successfully challenge a proposed rule change that would have dramatically increased the fees for individuals defending themselves against deportation, as well as a Trump-administration decision to abolish a policy deferring the deportation of asylum-seekers and others who came to the United States as children. Gibson Dunn prevailed in both cases, preventing the policies – which could have led to wrongful deportation and unlawful refoulement of asylum-seekers in violation of U.S. treaty obligations and international law – from coming into effect.

Capacity Development by NGOs

The **Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK)** held capacity building sessions with law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judicial officers, and legal practitioners to increase understanding and awareness of refugee protection laws and principles facilitating human rights centered approaches whenever the participants came into contact with refugees. Collaborations associated with monitoring, “enabled faster and effective response in SGBV cases as well as in immigration and protection cases, ensuring that the principles of non-refoulement, non-penalization, and non-discrimination were upheld [and] ensured that Kenya complied with its regional and international obligations.”

Act for Peace, as part of its work with local partners to strengthen systems of protection, supported the organization and delivery of a 2020 Online Training for Processing Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Taiwan in association with Amnesty International Taiwan and the Taiwan Association for Human Rights. Sessions were held for the National Immigration Agency, the Mainland Affairs Council, judges, lawyers, and NGO staff respectively. Lawyers who attended are currently representing a number of asylum claims, and links have subsequently been made with legal experts in other countries in support of these cases.



RCK's courtesy visit to Kasarani Police Station, Nairobi, Kenya on 2 December 2020. RCK has partnered with the police station to offer legal support to survivors of SGBV and technical legal support to the officers of law enforcement in responding to SGBV cases.

NGO Capacity Development by the Core Group

In 2020, **PILnet** and the **Core Group** members:

- Co-organized two capacity-development workshops (July and September 2020) with UNHCR and TrustLaw to build awareness around the Pledge and the potential of pro bono to strengthen legal assistance efforts.
- Developed a range of tools to support refugee-led organizations and NGOs to develop and pitch pro bono projects in consultation with UNHCR and TrustLaw.
- Undertook substantive outreach with refugee-led organizations and NGOs prior to and following these workshops to support these civil society actors to develop pro bono projects to pitch.



- In October 2020, nine RLOs/NGOs successfully pitched 15 pro bono projects to private sector law firms at a virtual Asia Pro Bono Roundtable. Joining the Roundtable were 46 private sector representatives, including law firms that had signed on to the Pledge as well as new private sector partners.



RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The Pledge was developed to **expand the material and financial resources available globally to address the legal needs of refugees and others forcibly displaced**, with a view to improving access to justice for this group. In addition to providing pro bono legal assistance, many law firms and organizations that joined the Pledge mobilized financial and other resources in 2020 in line with their commitment to the Pledge. This included the funding of local advocacy organizations, NGO legal service providers, and other relevant initiatives. This also included **funding activities directly benefiting refugees** and other categories of forcibly displaced persons. In one instance, a corporate organization that had joined the pledge **sponsored and mentored students with a refugee background to undertake legal studies in Germany**. Some law firms also chose to support NGO partners through secondments of lawyers for a dedicated time period, which NGO partners that have joined the Pledge reported to be very beneficial to their work.

While each NGO, corporation, or firm who signed the Pledge is responsible for meeting its commitments, the Core Group recognized the need for a coordinating body to be financed to support overall implementation of the Pledge, including the matching of pro bono and other resources pledged by the private sector with the unmet legal needs of refugees. PILnet and the Core Group were successful in **mobilizing funds from a private foundation to support a variety of activities**, as well as a Global Project Coordinator position, and other staffing resources, to coordinate this work. Resources were also mobilized specifically to **fund the development of locally-designed pro bono pilot projects** in certain jurisdictions, to support mobilization of the legal community and growth of refugee rights pro bono at a local level.



2021 AND BEYOND

In a universally unprecedented year, members of the global legal community came together to meet - and often exceed - the commitments made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum. Essential legal assistance was provided in new and innovative ways and other significant efforts were undertaken to strengthen access to justice for refugees and others forcibly displaced - **but this is just the start.**

In 2021 and beyond, PILnet and the Core Group - working together with those that have joined the Pledge and other key stakeholders in a spirit of the “whole of society” approach - will continue to **build, mobilize, and engage the global legal community** to make and meet Pledge commitments to increase access to legal assistance and justice for refugees. We will further support the implementation of the pledge by focusing on the following priorities:

- **Refugee Participation** - Ensuring greater awareness within displaced communities of the resources available through the Pledge as well as supporting greater refugee participation in decision-making around the implementation of the Pledge, the development of pilot and other pro bono projects and in assessing impact.
- **Locally-led legal aid initiatives** - Fostering greater involvement of local legal service providers in the Pledge, including working with local providers to identify access-to-justice gaps for refugees and others forcibly displaced, to identify and share good practices and to support the development of good practice models to increase access to legal assistance in local contexts.
- **Mobilizing Resources** - Raising awareness among States, donors and other relevant actors about the current resourcing gaps and need to fund local legal service providers and other actors to increase the availability of legal assistance.
- **Advocacy** - Exploring interlinkages with humanitarian actors, refugee rights organizations and the broader legal aid and empowerment community to strengthen advocacy around the fundamental role of legal assistance to refugee rights and access to justice for refugees in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 16 ("Equal Access to Justice for All"), as well as to promote strengthened legal procedures and other laws, policies and practices regarding refugees and displaced persons.
- **Building Pro Bono** - Activating and strengthening refugee rights pro bono culture at the local level, including through the identification of regional and national pro bono champions, greater support for refugee law clinics and training of the legal community.
- **Partnering for Impact** - Building partnerships between and within local legal communities and with legal networks capable of supporting local needs, including launching an online "[GRF Legal Community Pledge Matching Portal](#)". The latter will facilitate local legal aid actors and relevant RLOs and NGOs to share refugee rights projects or individual matters with PILnet, to support matching of these matters with the pro bono hours pledged by the global legal community.

OUR PARTNERS

This report was compiled by **PILnet** in collaboration with the following **Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge** partners.

CORE GROUP MEMBERS

The Core Group members include **Stacy Topouzova** (Harvard Immigration Initiative) and **Charles Gomes** (CEPRI - Centro de Proteção ao Refugiado e Imigrante) together with representatives from the following organizations:



Refugee Legal:
Defending the rights
of refugees.



GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM LEGAL COMMUNITY PLEDGERS

The law firms **Herbert Smith Freehills**, **Arthur Cox** and **Morrison & Foerster** contributed to this joint report, together with the following law firms, corporations and NGOs that have joined the Pledge:



ALLEN & OVERY **WHITE & CASE** **GIBSON DUNN** **Bloomberg**



UNHCR

UNHCR's **Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team** and staff from the **Division of International Protection** contributed to this joint report.



GET INVOLVED

To learn more about the **Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge** and how you can get involved and contribute to **greater access to justice for refugees** and others forcibly displaced:



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