



together
 now

Annual Report
2022 - 2023

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WHO ARE WE?

OUR VISION

Refugee families reunited.

OUR MISSION

Facilitating refugee family reunion.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLE

All families should be able to live together if they choose.

We want all refugees in the UK to have access to family reunification support, from when they first seek asylum to when their family has arrived and are settled into life in the UK.

HIGHLIGHTS

This year has seen challenging circumstances which have heavily affected our service delivery. Despite this we are pleased to have supported over 800 individuals, including 262 families who received travel assistance and are now living safely reunited in the UK.

Input from the families we work with has allowed us to ensure that we are meeting need as best we can, including by continuing to expand our post-arrival support offer and recruiting a part-time caseworker whose lived experience means he is well placed to truly understand families' needs.

Fieldwork for our 'When the Dust Settles' research project with Maria Abranches and the University of East Anglia has been completed and some initial findings have been presented. We are grateful to the families who have taken time to participate in this work, and are looking at how we can best disseminate the findings when they are published in 2024.



Ahmed's story

"Since I applied for asylum in the United Kingdom, I have been living in a state of intense tension and anxiety due to the circumstances surrounding asylum law. I applied in extremely complicated conditions while the world was grappling with the COVID-19 virus. My family's situation was worse in my home country, Sudan, where my wife and my two-day old son were left behind.

I waited for two full years until I was granted leave to remain, and then waited another year to obtain permission for family reunification. Their situation became more complicated due to the outbreak of war in Sudan: Sudan's airspace was closed, cutting off all means for me to bring them here. My mental state deteriorated significantly.

However, through all this, a glimmer of hope appeared through Together Now: they quickly approved my request and worked with me to find every possible way to bring my family. Their arrival became a reality.

I am pleased to extend special thanks to Together Now for their tremendous assistance, patience, and ability to find solutions in extremely complicated circumstances. My gratitude extends to the organisation, everyone working in it, its management, and those behind these great efforts. Truly, I cannot find words to express my thanks and appreciation to Together Now."

Ahmed's flights were provided thanks to funding from Choose Love, and we also thank Miles4Migrants for their help in finding available flight options for this family.

SERVICE DELIVERY

4,473 family reunion entry clearance visas were granted in the UK in 2022, and we are very aware that many more families are not able to access the support they need to be reunited. We continue to explore ways to expand our offer to meet this need.

In 2023 we supported 296 families comprising 820 individuals, predominantly from Sudan, Eritrea and Iran. The escalation of conflict in Sudan has had a significant impact on families' ability to reunite: when air space was closed families were forced to make difficult choices about dangerous journeys overland, and when airlines began to re-operate the cost of travel sky-rocketed making flights inaccessible for most refugees. Sudanese families continue to face further difficulties in making travel arrangements due to the ongoing closure of the visa application centre in Khartoum and passports being held in other countries.

Key service delivery points include:

- 150 families with 412 individuals benefited from our travel assistance programme this year, with 262 people travelling to the UK.
 - Our partnership with Refuaid allowed us to offer loans to 21 families and a total of 68 people this year, with 47 people travelling to the UK.
 - 163 people secured flights through our partnership with Miles4Migrants, using a total of over 5 million donated airmiles at a value of around £74,000.
 - As security situations in countries where family members are living have worsened we have seen an increase in requests for urgent support. While this has been a key area in which we cannot fully meet demand, we have still been able to support 54 families (181 individuals) with the costs of securing their visa - our highest annual total yet.
-



“ My advice is that whoever contacts the Together Now team should don't worry, everything will be fine. ”



Walaa's story (1)

“My dream is to become an electronics engineer. My sister Wigdan’s dream is to become a doctor. My sister Nasma’s dream is to become a childcare [worker]. My sister Noorhan’s dream is to become a dentist. My sister Wedad’s dream is for her to recover and become in the best condition and good health so that she can learn the English language fluently.” – Walaa (24)

Walaa and her father Hassan (56) contacted Together Now at the end of August 2023. They asked for support with flight tickets for Amina (47), Hassan’s first wife and Walaa’s mother, and Wedad (31), Walaa’s eldest sister. Wigdan (21), Nasma (16) and Noorhan (12) were also eagerly awaiting their mother and sister to join them in Bradford. Walaa explains how the family coped while they were separated: *“My sisters and I supported each other by helping each other in everything. We tell my mother and sister the details of our day; what we did every day.”*

When Walaa first contacted Together Now in late August, flights from Port Sudan were not yet fully operational after the airspace closure. It was especially difficult to arrange travel because different countries had imposed limitations on the duration of Sudanese nationals in transit. These changes were implemented quickly and at short notice so it was challenging to find the most up-to-date information.

At first, Together Now tried to coordinate flights with partner organisation Miles4Migrants. This involved the family arranging travel to a neighbouring country on their own before Miles4Migrants then provided flights onward to the UK. However, this approach eventually fell through because of transit limitations.

Luckily, just a few days later, Together Now received a grant for flights for Sudanese families... (PTO)

Walaa's story (2)

...and the flight tickets were finally booked for the end of September. At that time Walaa said: *"I thank you very much from the bottom of my heart, and I greatly appreciate your effort with us. You helped us without saying anything or dictating, thanks a lot. Please extend my thanks and gratitude to your colleagues and all those who worked hard to help us."*

When the Together Now caseworker checked in with the family after their reunification, Walaa responded: *"My young sister Noorhan used to cry every night because she was away from my mother, but now she is so happy. She slept in her mother's bed for a week. Alhamdo lillah, we are very well now, we feel safe and happy with my mother and father."*

Now, a couple of months after the family was reunited, Walaa describes the family's life in Bradford: *"Home for us is Britain because it provides us with security, peace, and basic human necessities, like food, medicine, and education. In my free time, I like to crochet and watch TV. Wigdan likes to play PUBG with her cousins. Nasma likes to draw. She has painted several paintings and hung some of them in the living room. Noorhan likes to play with her friends. Wedad likes to watch TV. We love watching Disney movies together. I always argue with Wigdan when we are going out and I did not find the thing I was looking for to wear. We start arguing, and in the end, I find it in my bag, and we start laughing. As for Nasma and Noorhan, they always argue about who will turn off the light at bedtime. I am the best at cooking (savoury dishes). The best thing the family loves (that I make) is a tray of pasta in the oven. Wigdan is the best at cooking sweets. The best thing the family loves is basbousa."*

Walaa's family was able to travel thanks to funding from Choose Love in response to the urgent need for families to leave the conflict area in Sudan.



I don't have words to express my happiness ,finally after a long time through your help I am able to get a family reunion with my wife. You are one from the reasons that make this family reunion made it to happen . Thank you

FRONT & CENTRE STRATEGY:

From lived experience to leadership

Over 50% of our board members have lived experience of immigration, asylum or refugee family reunion. 25% have lived experience of refugee family reunion. We pay our community interpreters for their work with us on cases - recognising the massive benefit for families of working with someone who has already been through the process themselves - and have provided professional references for clients who have acted as interpreters and peer mentors to promote their access to paid employment. A Family Reunion Experts group is also being piloted, and has had a lot of interest from families.

A big development has been our recruitment of a new Director for the organisation, who has lived experience of immigration himself and will join us at the beginning of 2024. We were very pleased to have one of our clients involved in key parts of the recruitment process.

Our Family Reunion Experts Group has been vocal about the role Together Now should play in working to influence system change. They have particularly asked us to focus on advocacy around the length of time it is taking for the Home Office to process entry clearance applications within the reunification process while families wait in dangerous and precarious circumstances.

Feedback from clients this year has continued to highlight the need for post-arrival support, something currently exacerbated by the limited capacity in social housing in the UK. Last year we piloted offering limited financial support over the Christmas period when most support services are closed, and this year we seek to continue this as well as to explore offering other social support.

Fawad's story: securing a loan

Fawad* is an Afghan with refugee status living in the UK with his wife and children. He works as a shop assistant while studying in order to return to his previous work in IT. His mother, who was displaced and living in Pakistan, secured her visa to come to the UK but he was unable to afford her flights. Together Now supported him to apply for a loan from Refuaid for the cost of the travel.

"I was going through some financial problems as my current job and Universal Credit income were not sufficient to cover the day-to-day expenses of our family, and during the application process I did not have enough spare money to get the ticket for my mom to travel to the UK. The loan application process was easy and swift: before I applied I was worried and was looking for a friend to give me the loan but was not sure who to contact. Now these repayments will be easy and comfortable with the [repayment] options offered. For me, the benefit was that it helped me to quickly get the ticket for my mom to travel as soon as possible. In the future of course, I plan to pay back my loan and complete my bootcamp course. This will help me to look for better job opportunities to facilitate a good life for my family and contribute back to humanity using my newly gained skills in the field of software development."

Fawad borrowed £2,000 which will be repaid in instalments of £30 per month. He can also repay more quickly if he is able. There will be no interest added to the loan amount.

Loans are offered thanks to our partnership with Refuaid.



Your service is wonderful and your employees are creative in dealing with others. I really am. I thank you with all my heart and extend to you greetings from my son and wife

ASPIRATIONS

1

Delivering our Front and Centre strategy to bring those with lived experience to the heart of everything we do.

2

Increasing our impact by investing in our organisation and team.

3

Raising our voice to make sure we are representing our clients and their needs effectively in our advocacy, and creating platforms for them to share their thoughts.

Our plans for the coming year focus on these three key areas. We will continue to ensure that our service is agile, responsive and effectively and creatively meets need.

**Together Now Annual report and accounts 2022/23
Receipts and payments
For the year ended September 30 2023**

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the period October 1 2022 to September 30 2023, set out on pages 13 and 14.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- a) accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- b) the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Chittenden Horley

Stacy Mason

HGA Accountants & Financial Consultants
t/a Chittenden Horley -Chartered Accountants

Hyde Park House
Cartwright Street, Hyde

SK14 4EH

Date: 12/02/2024



Together Now Annual report and accounts 2022/23
Receipts and payments
For the year ended September 30 2023

**Together Now
Accounts**

Registration no. 1183639 Period start date 01/10/2022 Period end date 30/09/2023

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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	26,500	59,222		85,722	51,765
Personal donations	11,609			11,609	6,805
Casework income				-	
Gift Aid				-	
Fundraising	1,528			1,528	
				-	
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	39,637	59,222	-	98,859	58,570
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	39,637	59,222	-	98,859	58,570
A3 Payments					
Case expenditure	29,597	31,135		60,732	50,647
Staffing costs	4,000	1,200		5,200	11,374
Core costs	957.98	799		1,757	664
Project costs (Front and Centre)	1,355	334		1,689	597
Project costs (other)	194	2,153		2,347	202
Training		268	-	268	-
				-	
Sub total	36,104	35,889	-	71,993	63,483
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	36,104	35,889	-	71,993	63,483
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,533	23,333	-	26,866	- 4,913
A5 Transfers between funds					
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,183	1,079		4,262	
Cash funds this year end	3,779	27,314	-	31,093	8,875

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds		3,779	27,314	
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	3,779	27,314	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Olivia Long	08/12/2023	
		Helen Slee	08/12/2023	

Mohammed's story

"My name is Mohammed Omar. I used to work in the national medical supply in Sudan as a technician - I worked on medical equipment. My first wife continued her studying up to high school. My second wife has a university degree in agriculture.

I used to be in the labour union, I used to also be a member of the communist party of Sudan (CPS). There was trouble with the Islamic party: I was arrested and tortured so many times, then I found an agent who could get me out of the country. My plan was not to come to the UK because I didn't think I could get in, but the agent reassured me. I paid part of the money and my uncle covered the rest of the money.

After I came [to the UK] I applied for asylum and then for family reunion. They refused my three oldest sons but the three youngest and my wife managed to arrive safely. Then I applied for my other three sons again and thanks to Together Now I managed to get them to the UK safely.

The three younger sons have entered school and they learnt English, and now they are even helping me type this. The three oldest sons have now applied to college and will be starting in January studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

We thank Together Now [because] they have helped me reunite my family together even though they have never known me, and I am really grateful for their help. I will never forget what they have done for me and my family."



“

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your support during this crucial time. I want you to know that your contribution has significantly eased the stress related to the family reunion costs.

”



THANK YOU!

We are overwhelmingly grateful to all our supporters, who have allowed us to continue delivering our volunteer-run service.

As always Miles4Migrants have shown amazing dedication, commitment and creativity in meeting the needs of our clients: we are thankful for the effort and good will of their staff, and their genuine desire to do whatever they can.

We continue to be appreciative of those who support our clients along the way: those who go above and beyond in providing legal advice, those working in stretched and underfunded charities offering post-arrival support, and friends, family and community members who offer so much to make each reunion happen.

We also thank all the clients who have taken the time to give their feedback and help us improve, in particular those who have joined our board of trustees.

Our final thank you is to our incredible donors and funders including:

Blue Moon, Choose Love, Leathersellers, National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, Southall Trust, The Britford Bridge Trust, The Grace Trust and The Leigh Trust.
