

2021/2022

Refugee Family Reunification Trust Newsletter



Refugee Family Reunification Trust

20 years helping refugees

We have now been helping refugees for over 20 years, which is a remarkable achievement for a purely volunteer charity. In that time, we have reunited more than 300 families, and paid for over 850 airfares to New Zealand.

We have raised nearly \$2.4 million dollars. Not a single dollar of donations has been used to raise that amount. We have approved over 860 applications for assistance with the costs associated with the immigration process. We also continue to advocate for improvements in refugee family reunification policies and practices.

The Regional Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Canberra, Adrian Edwards, recently acknowledged these milestones and congratulated the Trust:

“The exact moment when fear takes over and a person flees for their life is not something we typically see on our TVs or smartphones. 2021 has been different. Seared in our minds are the images of a plane lifting into the August sky at Kabul airport and tiny figures fluttering to the ground, and the airport periphery where parents handed babies across razor wire and into the hands of strangers.

It takes an instant only to become a refugee. How long do you remain one? Ask anyone from Afghanistan, a country with four decades of conflict and displacement. Inshallah. If He wills it so.

Which is why here in New Zealand, far from the turmoil of Afghanistan and the world’s other big refugee situations, the work being done in enabling refugees to reunite with family members is so essential for recovery, and for turning despair around and into new hopes and new dreams. It is not just the individuals who benefit. Families create the norms of behaviour, order and daily routines that underpin all our lives – taking children to school, preparing meals, supervising homework, putting bread on the table. Family unity is key to successful settlement, and a measure of the health of wider society. And bringing refugee families together is also an incredible global good for a world in which more good is always needed. On behalf of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, our sincere thanks to Refugee Family Reunification Trust, its supporters, and its volunteers.”

In the past year, we have been able to reunite a number of dependent and adopted children with their families. We have also been able to reunite spouses, and have helped several successful asylum seekers bring their families to join them here. We are very pleased to have been in a financial position to assist five Somali families who were victims in the Christchurch Mosque attacks. Bringing their family members to join them in New Zealand will offer them a great deal of support and comfort. Two of these very deserving families

OUR SUCCESSES
together
SINCE 2001

20 years
HELPING
REFUGEES



NEARLY \$2.4M
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REFUGEES

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REUNITED



OVER 860
applications for
HELP APPROVED

OVER 850
airfares to
NEW ZEALAND



Thanks to YOU!

thank you FOR YOUR HELP

We remain extremely grateful to all our donors, without whom we could not have reunited so many deserving families. The ongoing support of generous individuals and charities is critical to everything that we have been able to achieve over the past 20 years.

To each and every one of our donors, thank you. We hope that you are able to continue your support, as each donation – whether a regular donation or a one-off – is a vital contribution towards eventually getting a family back together again.

A number of individuals and private trusts, who prefer to remain anonymous, have made very generous donations to our Trust. Other significant donors over the past year include: Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand; Tai Shan Foundation; Hon Robert Smellie QC; and Yvonne and Peter Cottier. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Many volunteers have kindly given their time, skills and enthusiasm to help run the Trust, to organise fundraising or to help new families with resettlement. Special thanks to our honorary accountant, Alison Dyer, and to the Trust's auditor, Kendons. KiwiClass let us share their mailbox. We would also like to thank Phil Dyer for taking the beautiful photographs we use. Special thanks to Hannah and Thomas Schickedanz at Schickedanz Design Studio for designing and building our website pro bono, and also again generously donating time to format this newsletter. Lesley Hooper kindly helps to manage the database. Simpson Grierson provides pro bono legal support. Your assistance is invaluable.

We hope that New Zealand Red Cross will continue its great programme providing volunteer support to family reunion refugees on their arrival in Wellington. This is very practical and important work assisting with basic resettlement tasks and challenges.

share their stories in this newsletter. As the situation in various countries, such as Afghanistan and Ethiopia, rapidly deteriorates we continue to receive urgent requests for assistance.

Unsurprisingly, global disruptions and travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 have had a profound impact on refugee family reunification. Due to the closure of New Zealand's border, and Immigration New Zealand not finalising Refugee Family Support Category cases, an increasingly large number of refugees are in limbo – some for an inordinate time – awaiting approval for their family members to travel here. However, we are very pleased with what we have been able to achieve in such difficult circumstances.

Words of thanks

“Thank you very much to everyone who helped us.”

“My family is very important to me, and to have them here would ease my soul of the suffering due to the trauma experienced as a result of the 15th March attacks which had a detrimental effect on my mental health and wellbeing. My family and I would find true inner peace through family reunion, as it would alleviate the ongoing issues not just from the attacks but also the stress of not seeing my family for over 20 years. The thought of being able to have my mother and father in my presence, and to have the support of my siblings, brings a smile to my face. I am very grateful to all who have helped with this process – I truly appreciate all your efforts. Me and my family will be forever grateful.”



Families we helped came from: Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Cambodia, Myanmar, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Banda Ache. Many of these families were living in refugee camps or equally appalling situations.

About us

The Refugee Family Reunification Trust financially assists refugees, primarily in the Wellington region, to bring immediate family members to join them here. Reuniting these families greatly improves the lives of those refugees already living in New Zealand, and is critical to their successful resettlement and integration.

All money raised is used exclusively to help refugees pay for the expenses directly related to bringing family members from refugee situations. This includes application fees charged by, and medical reports required by, INZ, and the cost of airfares to bring approved family members to New Zealand.

The Trust is a registered charity and donations of \$5 or more are tax deductible.

How you can help

Financial donations: You can donate money to us regularly, or as a one-off donation via post, bank transfer or a regular automatic payment. See details in the footer.

Other help: Call or email us if you are organising a fundraiser which might make a contribution to the Trust: acalder@xtra.co.nz or 04 475 7994.

Please advise if your contact details are incorrect or if you do not wish to receive our newsletter.

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