

# FAMILY

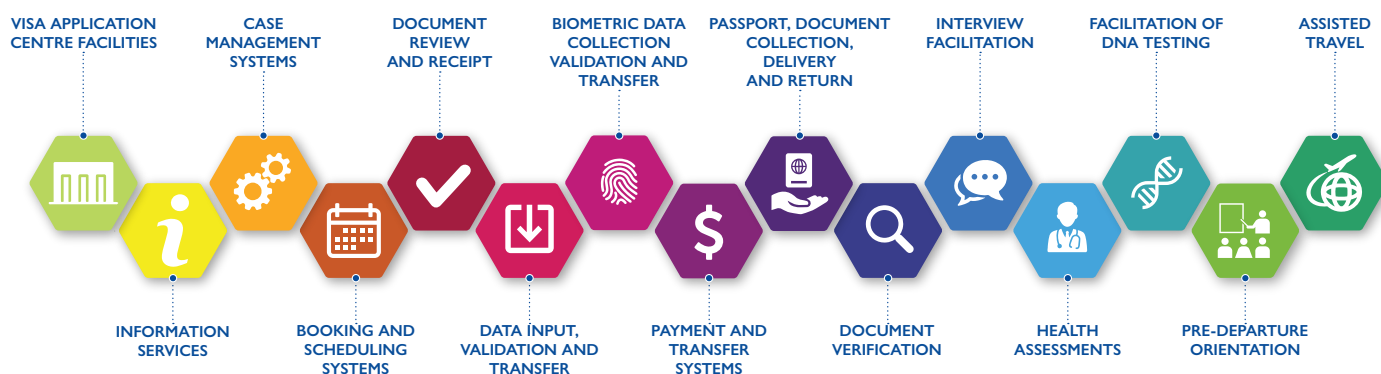
# REUNIFICATION

## POLICIES & PRACTICES SUPPORTING REGULAR MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Family reunification is one of the cornerstones of regular migration. Families that have been separated during the migration process face many obstacles for reunification, leading to prolonged separation. These obstacles include restrictive eligibility criteria, onerous financial and evidentiary requirements, lack of information and support, as well as logistical barriers.

Well-designed and well-managed family reunification solutions support governments in their efforts to enhance regular migration pathways while upholding the right to family life and family unity, and reducing vulnerabilities throughout the migration process. Family reunification can also be a complementary migration pathway for beneficiaries of international protection. Accessible, dignified and timely family reunification benefits both migrants and their host societies, creating socio-cultural stability, facilitating integration, and thus promoting economic and social cohesion.

Through its extensive migration management expertise, IOM stands ready to assist Member States as they take measures to facilitate family reunification. *IOM is uniquely positioned to implement family reunification programmes, such as the Family Assistance Programme (FAP), or to provide innovative, flexible and technology-driven solutions supporting specific processes of family reunification.*



IOM services can be provided in-person or as remote solutions. For more information, click [here](#).

## ELEMENTS OF A DIGNIFIED APPROACH TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION



### BROAD DEFINITION OF FAMILY

To recognize the social configurations of migrants' families, the right to family reunification should not be limited to formal spouses and minor children, but also include non-formal life-partners and non-dependent family members.



### REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS

Reasonable requirements regarding the income level, accommodation, and health insurance of sponsors, as well as pre-entry language or integration tests for family members are crucial to ensure prospective applicants can meet them.



### LEGAL ASSISTANCE & APPEAL

Free legal counselling and assistance are important to facilitate access to regular migration pathways and support family members throughout the family reunification process.

## INFORMATION & TRANSPARENCY

Improved access to and detailed information about visa procedures are crucial for the success of family reunification programmes. States should publish all relevant information regarding the right to family reunification, including procedures, documentary requirements, and average processing times for each country of origin. The information should be available in a number of languages and disseminated through multiple channels. Throughout the process, this should also include updates in migrants' languages on the status of their application.



**IOM Information Services**

## FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROCESSING

### MINIMAL WAITING TIMES

Long processing times impede families from realizing their right to reunification and can lead to family members taking dangerous irregular routes or minors becoming adults and thus no longer eligible for family reunification. Minimal waiting times should be ensured for appointments and visa processing to avoid prolonging family separation, with the possibility of expediting vulnerable cases, including children. Online application filing, remote processing and interviews can reduce processing time and facilitate the procedure for applicants.



**IOM Appointment Booking and Scheduling Systems**



**IOM Data Input, Validation and Transfer**



**IOM Interview Facilitation**

### FACILITATED ACCESS TO CONSULATES AND VISA APPLICATION CENTRES

Many family members find themselves in locations where their country of origin has limited or no consular presence, requiring them to undertake often costly and sometimes unsafe journeys to apply for family reunification. Facilitated access to application processes, for example through mobile units, is crucial.



**IOM Visa Application Centres**

### RESPECTING RIGHTS & PRIVACY

Biometric data collection and DNA testing to establish family relationships should be affordable and conducted in a secure and dignified manner, respecting the rights and privacy of family members. These processes can also be facilitated through mobile units.



**IOM Biometrics Data Collection, Validation and Transfer**



**IOM Facilitation of DNA Testing**

### MINIMAL FEES

In addition to visa fees, migrants often face financial obstacles such as high procedural costs for obtaining the required documents and services, as well as travel costs. States should strive to reduce these barriers, particularly for migrants in vulnerable situations.



**IOM Fees Collection, Exchange and Transfer**

### STREAMLINED DOCUMENT RELATED SERVICES

Gathering, transferring, and verifying required documents is often a long, complicated, and costly process. Facilitated access to legal identity as well as other document related services is crucial to ensure family members can obtain and submit the necessary documents for their applications, including travel documents.



**IOM Document Review and Receipt**



**IOM Passport, Document Collection, Delivery and Return**



**IOM Document Verification**

### DIGNIFIED & NON-DISCRIMINATORY PROCESSING

The processing of applications should take place in a non-discriminatory manner. Staff should be trained to communicate in different languages and provide support in a gender sensitive and child friendly manner, taking into account the cultural and contextual needs of family members. Targeted support should be provided to migrants in vulnerable situations.



**IOM Case Management.**

## REALIZING FAMILY REUNIFICATION

### SUPPORT TO INTEGRATION OF FAMILY MEMBERS

Host societies should take measures to better prepare migrant families for their arrival and successful integration into host societies. Offering pre-departure orientation services that are voluntary and free of charge can be beneficial.



#### IOM Pre-departure Orientation

### TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

Once the request has been approved, it is particularly important to provide travel assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations, such as unaccompanied minor children and those requiring medical support. Often, migrants have difficulties finding an affordable flight in the needed time frame, as well as complying with travel requirements, for example exit permits. Visa-related health assessments such as TB testing should also be easily accessible before departure or should be conducted upon arrival.



#### IOM Travel Assistance



#### IOM Health Assessments

## PERSONAL STORIES



Watch [here](#) how Steer and her children reunited with their husband and father after two and a half years.

Watch [here](#) how three-year-old Nejervan benefitted from family reunification programming.



Bedour's daughter was born when her husband was already in Germany. She cared for her newborn child by herself and managed to safely reach Istanbul. Once there, IOM staff guided her with step-by-step assistance for the completion of the needed documents to finalize their family reunification application. A short period later, the three finally reunited in Germany.



GCM Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration  
GCM Objective 4: Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation

GCM Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration

GCM Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

GCM Objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle



SDG Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

