

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



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2022 was one of the most significant years in recent history for forced displacement and for RSN. The invasion of Ukraine brought the issue of refugees to the forefront of many minds, and while the mobilization and response was noteworthy, it also highlighted gaps, challenges, and inequities. While RSN’s partnership program in Turkey adapted to provide information and counseling to those fleeing Ukraine and Russia, we also struggled with the brutal reality that other refugee situations do not garner as much attention or focus. We worked hard to continue our work in response to the situation in Afghanistan and the plight of the Rohingya, two major refugee outflows that have had a profound impact on South and Southeast Asia. We were shocked by the floods in Pakistan in the summer of 2022, reminding us of our fragile condition in the face of environmental change.

We took action in response to these stark developments including research and publication of a number of reports over the course of the year.

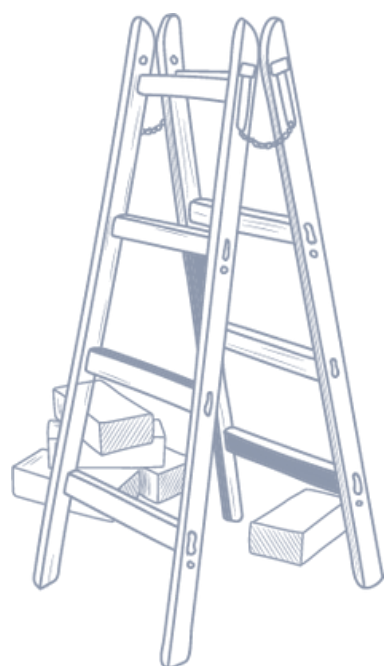
Among them was an Impact Assessment report that outlines the outcomes and impact of our partnership with Refugee Rights Turkey over the last eight years. We plan to build on the report to further reveal how our work yields concrete results for refugees as well as for our NGO partners.

As we look ahead, we will continue to uphold rights, whether defined in international, regional, or national laws. At the same time that we recognize the importance of refugee recognition, we look ahead to advocacy and research that tries to break down categorization and invest our efforts into broader access to justice work for a wider set of vulnerable communities facing precarious legal identities. With your support, we know that we can and will achieve a great deal in 2023 and beyond – thank you for your steadfast commitment and for being a part of our community.



Sincerely,
Zaid Hydari
Executive Director at RSN

At RSN, we take a unique approach to our mission of developing capacity and advancing human rights. We identify advocates in host countries with the best understanding of their respective settings, create long-lasting partnerships, then supplement support through our areas of expertise. This approach allows us to fully understand the particular opportunities and challenges in each context; we then recommend potential practical and policy-based solutions. By working at the intersection of international law, policy, and research—RSN is able to provide effective support tailored to help fill gaps in response. In 2022, we honed our areas of expertise to offer better, context-specific support.



Working bilaterally with civil society partners is fundamental for advancing human rights. We identify and support local organizations by creating opportunities for like-minded advocates to engage with one another. Whether strengthening legal service provision, providing legal training for lawyers, or bringing together actors from the Global South for experience-sharing—we help equip front-line human rights defenders to more effectively secure legal protection for refugees and migrants.

Impact Assessment

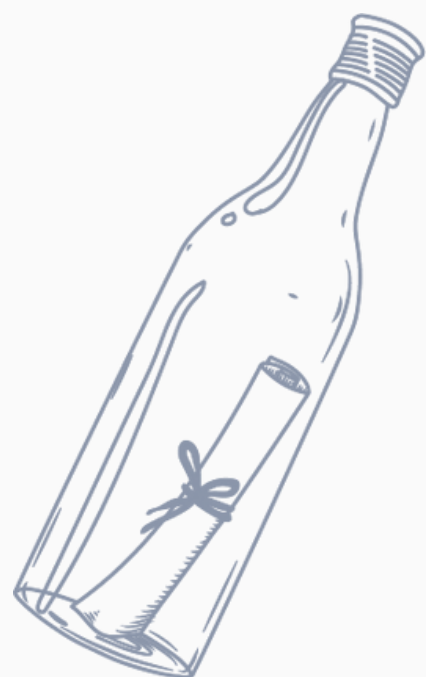
Since 2015, RSN and Turkish NGO, Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT), have partnered with a primary goal of improving legal protection for refugees in Turkey by strengthening the availability of reliable legal information and specialized legal assistance services. Highlighting trends, outcomes, and impact metrics, our [2015-2022 impact assessment](#) takes stock of achievements made possible throughout this seven-year strategically-driven partnership. By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative metrics of our joint activities, we uncover the impact of our programs on their intended beneficiaries.



Regional Convening

In late 2022, RSN and partner RRT, published a joint report, [Reuniting Families](#), to detail opportunities and challenges of family reunification for refugees in Turkey. Derived from first-hand experience and analysis, the report identifies a number of important observations and lessons learned, highlighting the complexities involved in providing support for such cases and includes recommendations to facilitate greater access to family unity for refugees and others facing forced displacement.





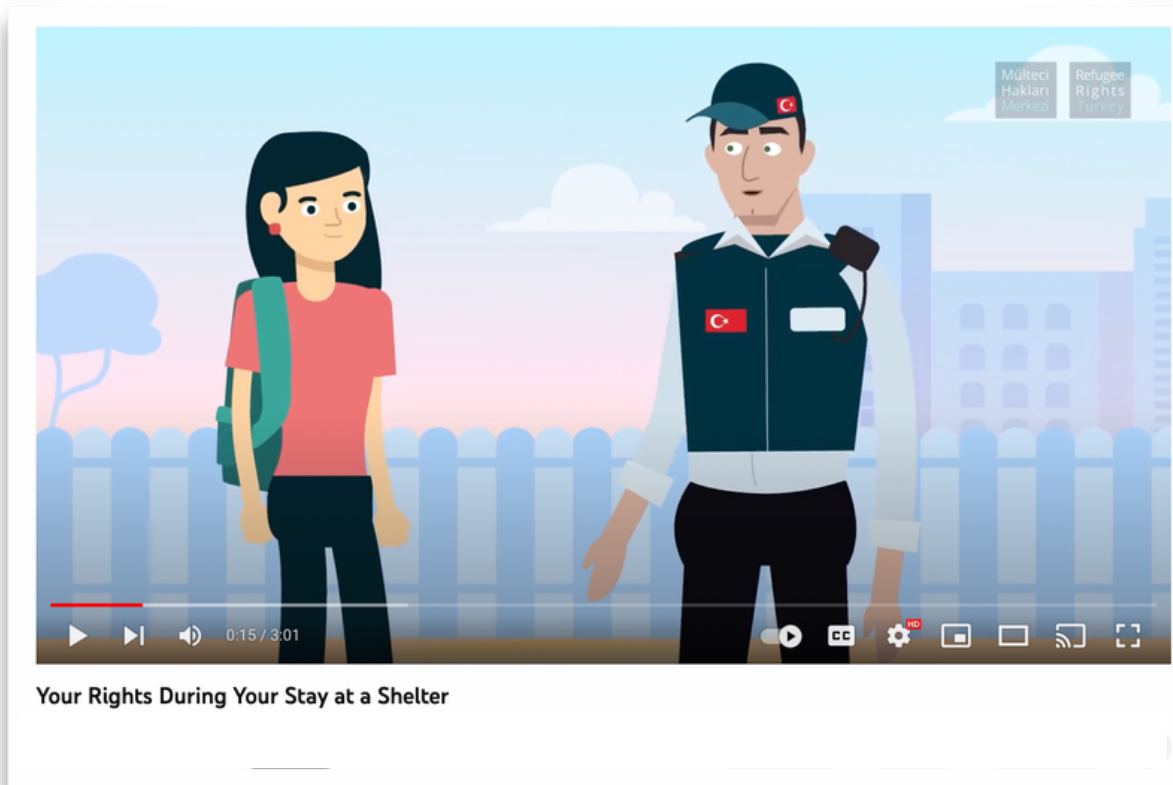
Compiling and disseminating reliable information on legal rights and obligations for refugees and other displaced people is a focal point of our work. With partners on the ground, we assess context-specific legal obligations and protections, then create digital and print materials—in various languages—ensuring the most vulnerable communities have access to information. In 2022, we redirected our focus to improving, translating, and expanding our shared Informational Portal to include an additional six new languages: Russian, Urdu, Pashto, Somali, Kurdish, and French.

Languages Available

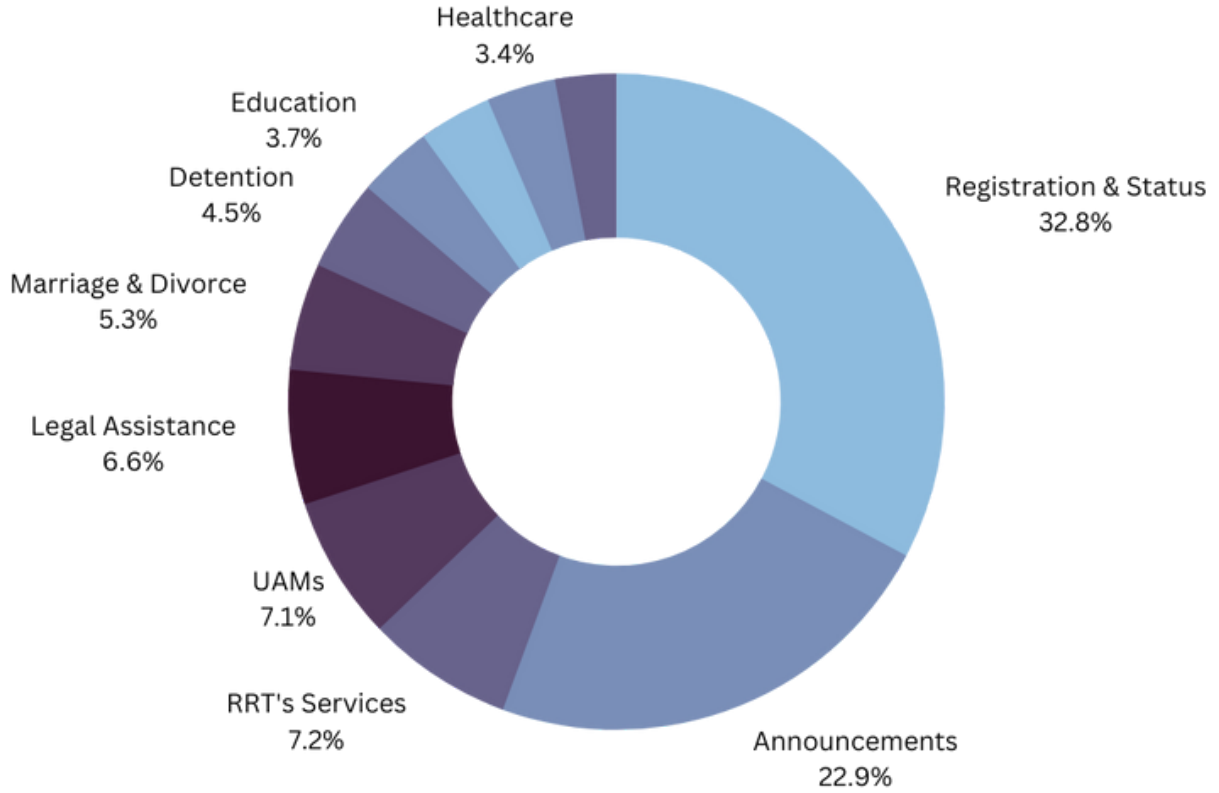


Unaccompanied Minors Video Series

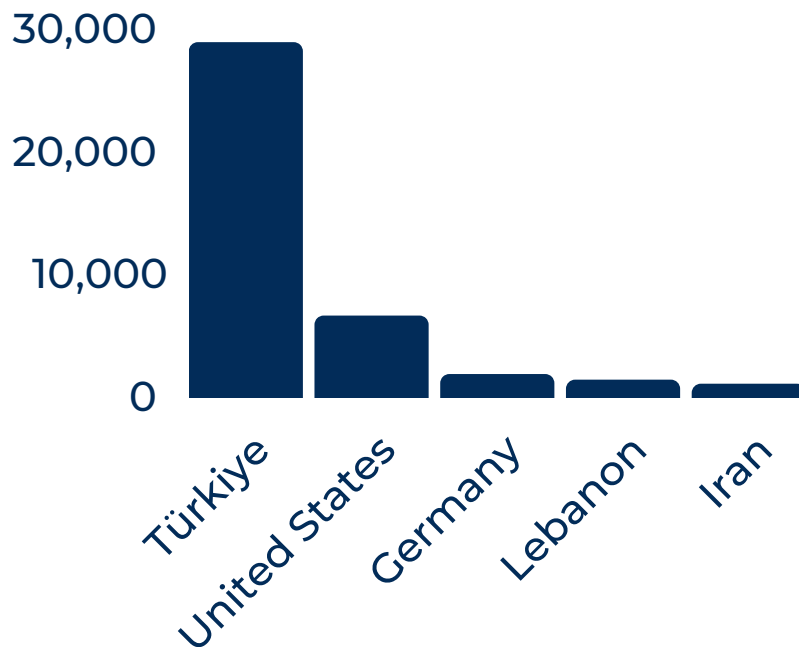
In order to capture the attention of unaccompanied minors in Turkey, we released a four-part animated series detailing rights to education, shelter, and the steps needed to obtain legal protection. The video series—translated in all ten languages—is available on our shared [Information Portal](#), and on [Youtube](#).



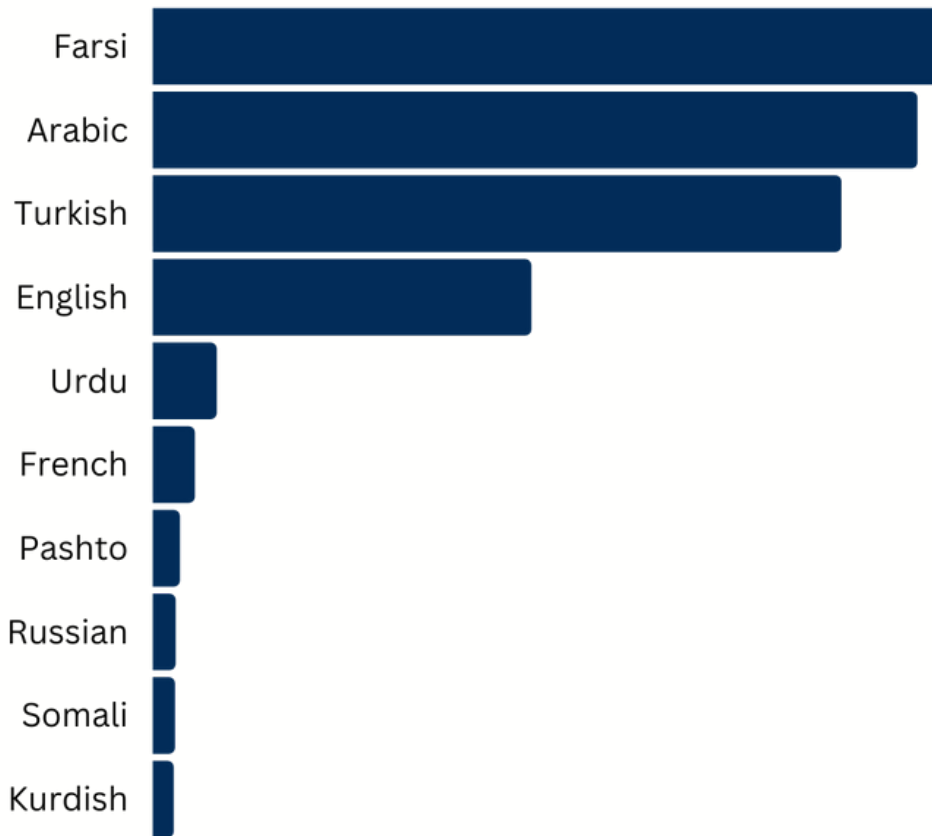
TOTAL PAGEVIEWS BY CONTENT



TOTAL PAGEVIEWS BY TOP FIVE COUNTRY



TOTAL PAGEVIEWS BY LANGUAGE



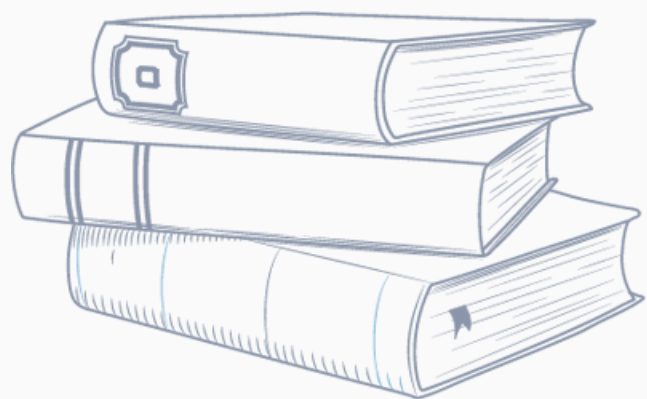
TOTAL PAGEVIEWS BY DEVICE



Desktop Access
46%



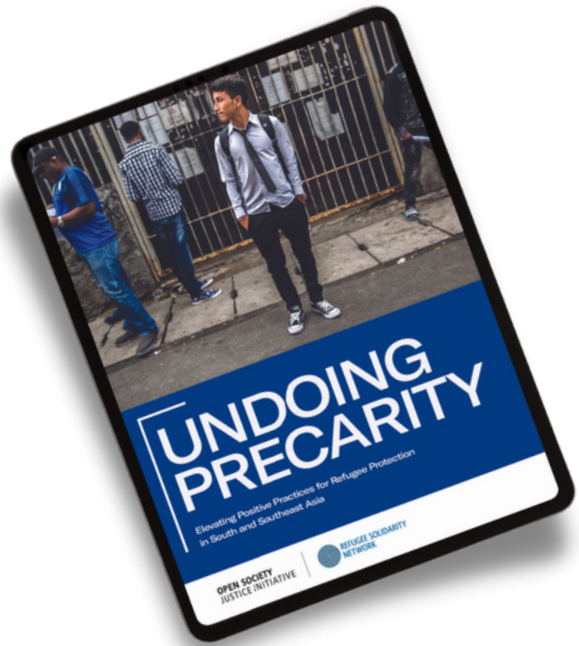
Mobile Access
54%



Focusing on domestic, regional, and international law, we carry out nuanced research with partners then evaluate the direct impact that either depriving or securing refugee rights can have on the lives of those forcibly displaced and the communities hosting them. In 2022, we released two research publications in an effort to help build an evidence-base for why governments should take action and offer concrete ways for them to do so.

Undoing Precarity

Highlighting positive practices of refugee protection in South and SouthEast Asia, RSN and Open Society Justice Initiative, launched [Undoing Precarity](#). The report was made possible through collaboration with a number of partners working in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.



Regional Convening

Recognizing that nearly 85% of all Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers are hosted in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, Refugee Solidarity Network and [Refugee Rights Turkey](#) brought together more than forty representatives of civil society organizations working on Afghan refugee issues in these countries to a regional convening held in Istanbul in late Spring 2022. Advocates and representatives discussed challenges to effective legal protection for Afghan refugees along with identifying key areas of opportunity and potential future collaboration. The regional convening was summarized in a [report](#) released Fall of 2022.





Dismantling the negative portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers often presented in the media and in public dialogue is a critical first step in raising awareness. Focusing our efforts on depicting personal journeys—we translate rights from abstract legal concepts, to tangible stories that unpack refugee lives and place them at the center of our work. As we contribute to external discussions—we hope to counter rising xenophobia.

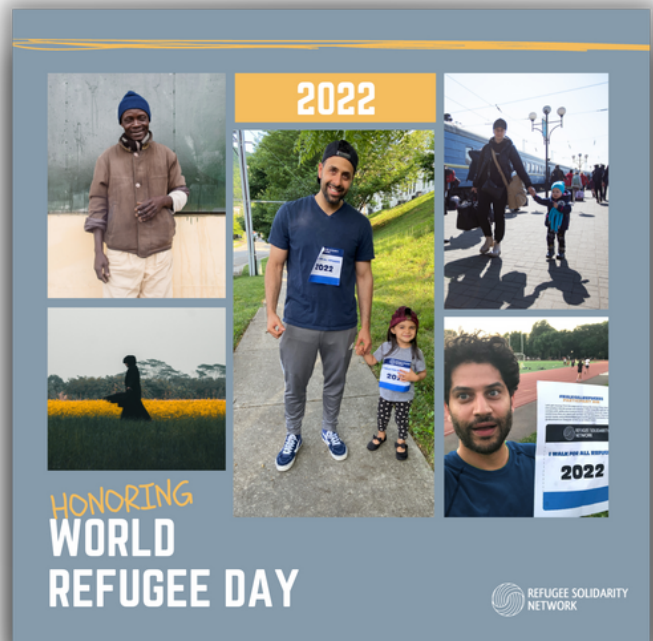
Asia Classroom

Derived from a briefing of Undoing Precarity, RSN's Executive Director, Zaid Hydari delivered a presentation to the Asia Classroom's Youth in Asia cohort touching on refugee rights at the international level. Despite not being signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, many Asian countries have taken measures to combat statelessness among refugee children and have provisions under law to grant legal status for certain groups of individuals in need of protection. According to Hydari, the constructive and pragmatic approach adopted in our report, Undoing Precarity, is a potentially optimal way forward.



Second Annual Walkathon

In an effort to raise awareness of the precarious journey migrants and asylum seekers take to reach safety, RSN centered our Second Annual Walkathon Campaign on the experiences of those crossing The Darien Gap; Ukrainians fleeing invasion; and Afghan refugees crossing into Pakistan in search of stability. Delving deeper into the challenges refugees face on the trek to safety—this year's theme—Together In Solidarity—aimed to show support with those fleeing conflict and persecution. The walk began on June 1st and ended on June 20th, World Refugee Day.



Stories Like Ours



For many of us at RSN, the work we do is personal—our stories closely echo the experiences of uprooted communities today. By celebrating family stories, we reaffirm our unequivocal solidarity with those we aim to help worldwide. Below you will find an emotionally gripping written narration detailing the family experience of an RSN team member.

Nestled in the easternmost part of the Mediterranean, historic Yafa was a port city known for its beloved, sweet oranges. Here, my grandfather lived as a happy child—comforted by the hospitality of home and the smell of the sea. When conflict escalated, my young grandfather and his family fled Palestine—traveling by foot to reach Jordan alongside other newly displaced Palestinians. “This will be temporary,” many thought, reassuring their children as they grasped tighter the keys of home weighing heavy in their pockets, yet heavier on their hearts. For my family, this would be the beginning of our story—a journey of despair, displacement, and determination to one day return home, generation after generation.

Though the landscape in Jordan resembled that of Palestine, home was never forgotten as displaced communities replicated family recipes, sang traditional folk songs, and shared stories of ‘baladna’ (our home), over and over. My grandfather’s family lived in Jordan for years—receiving citizenship through an amended nationality law in the 1950s. Yet, lack of educational and work opportunities—along with news of a booming oil industry in the Gulf—led my family to apply for residency visas in Kuwait. My grandfather lived in Kuwait from late childhood and all throughout his adult life. Unable to return to his birth city by the sea, Kuwait became his home. While he lived in Kuwait for decades, he was never treated equally. With no pathway to citizenship, neither he nor anyone in the family could buy a home, own a business, work certain professions, or access particular medical treatments and programs available only to Kuwaiti citizens. Fulfilling that longing for a place to call home, Kuwait held a special place in his heart—in 2014, he passed away there, leaving behind seven children, and 17 grandchildren.

My father was born in Kuwait in 1967. Run-down, four-story complexes built on the outskirts of major Kuwaiti cities would house the Arabs who came from across the Levant and Egypt—other migrants with their own stories and struggles like my father. Although he was never granted citizenship, Kuwait was home for him. When Iraq invaded in the early 1990s, he was forced to flee—leaving behind the only life he knew.



A familiar feeling of despair washed over him as he recounted family stories he heard of displacement growing up. This time, it was happening to him. With limited prospects to make a livelihood in Jordan and stifling war in Kuwait, a tourist visa to the United States was a significant possibility. Reaching Jordan and flying out from there was the only viable path; yet the journey would be long and daunting for my father and his friend. The two crossed Kuwait, drove through Iraq, and reached Jordan, all in an effort to further avoid the obstacles and dangers they had faced. With little access to fuel, no food, and in danger of being stopped and detained by the Iraqi military—they slept in their car, were price-gouged out of the little money they carried with them, and resorted to offering food as a bribe at certain check-points. Carrying Kuwaiti identification cards was risky, but they made it. Through connections, they were able to board a plane to the United States.

In 1991, my father landed in New York City. The United States was different. Concrete pavements replaced the empty lots of sand where kids back home played past sundown. The skyscrapers couldn't compare to his simple Kuwaiti neighborhood. Citing fear of persecution if he returned during the war, my father applied for Temporary Protected Status, a U.S. humanitarian assistance program that briefly included Kuwait in the early 90s. After a lengthy interview process, his application was granted; then, he picked up and left for Chicago. Taxi-driver, grill-cook, restaurant manager—he moved from one job to the next. Grateful for the opportunity, yet terribly missing home, my father would face his own internal war. The starry-eyed foreigner and the overworked migrant in isolation always seemed to exist in tandem. Eventually, he saved up enough money, became a U.S. citizen, and returned to Jordan post-war to marry my mother and start a family.

I was born in Jordan in 1998 to an extensive family history of displacement and migration destined to shape the first 15 years of my life. After birth, to about age five, we attempted to permanently settle in South Florida. However, increased cost of living, and escalating violence against Muslims post-9/11 added a layer of doubt around staying. We decided to return to Kuwait where we still had family; there, I completed the majority of my schooling years. The constant need to pick up and leave played a major role in how I defined myself. For a while, my identity was blurred: Jordanian? Kuwaiti? Palestinian? Arab? Muslim? American? I never connected to just one, instead I shifted identities to adapt to my environment. We moved back to Florida where I finished up high school and college. At university, I met older Palestinian-Americans on campus who encouraged me to feel confident in my family story of displacement and migration. Welcomed and inspired—these college years left the greatest impact on me. I think about my grandfather and Palestine often, imagining how our lives would have been if we stayed home in Yafa. But I know Palestine is within me, within my father, and deeply rooted in my grandfather and ancestors. I will visit one day and eat an orange by the sea.

"Stories like Ours" is narrated by Samah Asfour (RSN Communications Manager) and Illustrated by Ayouni Studio





Sikander joined RSN in February 2022 as our Regional Policy and Advocacy Associate and then later as RSN's Research and Access to Information Coordinator. He is an international relations professional specializing in the Middle East and South Asia. Sikander is thrilled to join RSN's research and partnerships teams in hopes to further the mission toward advancing refugee rights around the world.



In May 2022, RSN welcomed our new Sustainability and Donor Relations Manager, Amal. She has worked a variety of development and community engagement roles, including securing local partnerships to help fill important needs-gaps. Amal is beyond excited to join the RSN team and to apply her knowledge of fundraising and development to a cause near to her family and her identity.

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2022, RSN continued its vital work in advancing human rights for displaced persons. As the needs of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers shift in the evolving world, RSN remains adaptive and responsive to their needs by partnering with host communities and raising awareness on both the local and international stages.

We are proud to announce that the Information Portal for Refugees in Türkiye is now available in ten languages; this expanded access is crucial so that all refugees have legal information available at their fingertips. RSN's report, "Undoing Precarity," was published and recognized for reimagining existing legal systems in the Global South to advance migrants' rights. We also celebrated RSN's longstanding partnership with Refugee Rights Türkiye (RRT) with an impact assessment report that demonstrates how the RSN-RRT model of engagement not only delivered vital protection benefits for individual refugees but strengthened capacities within Turkish civil society.

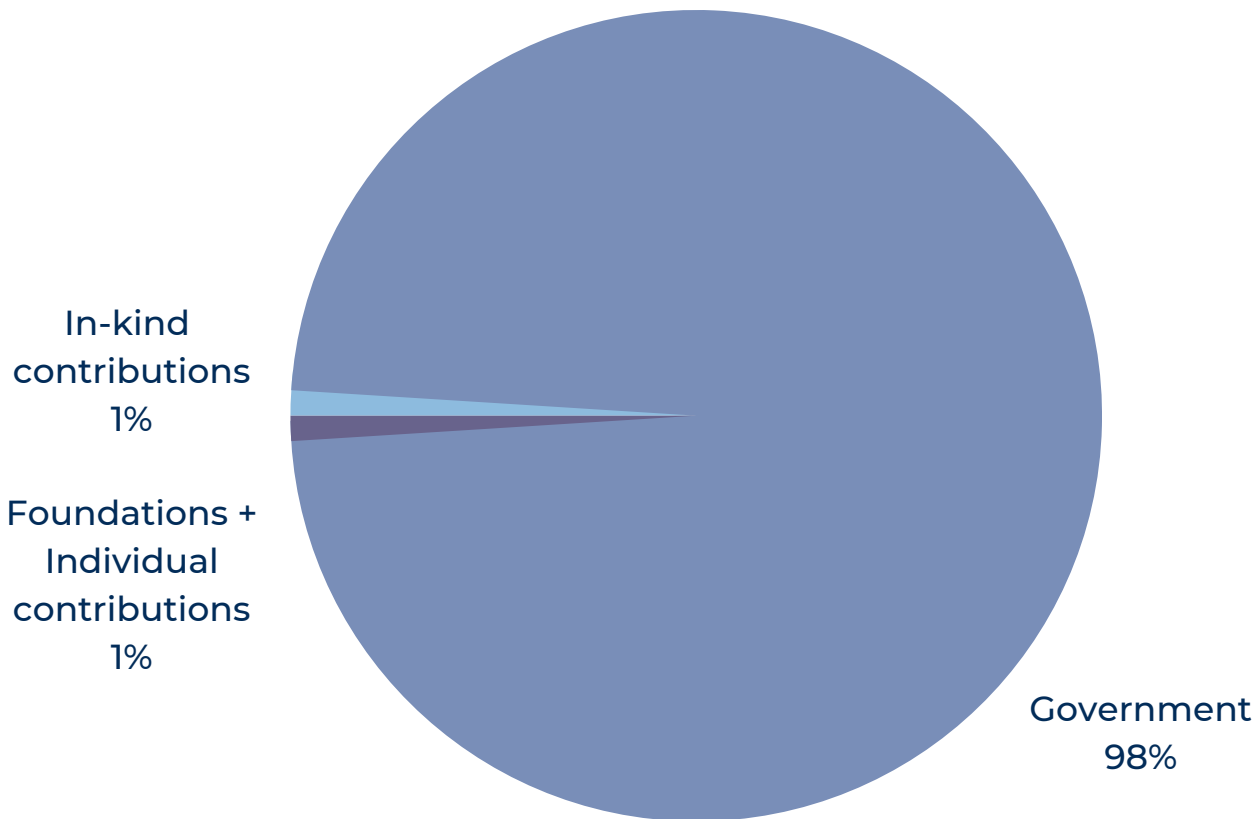
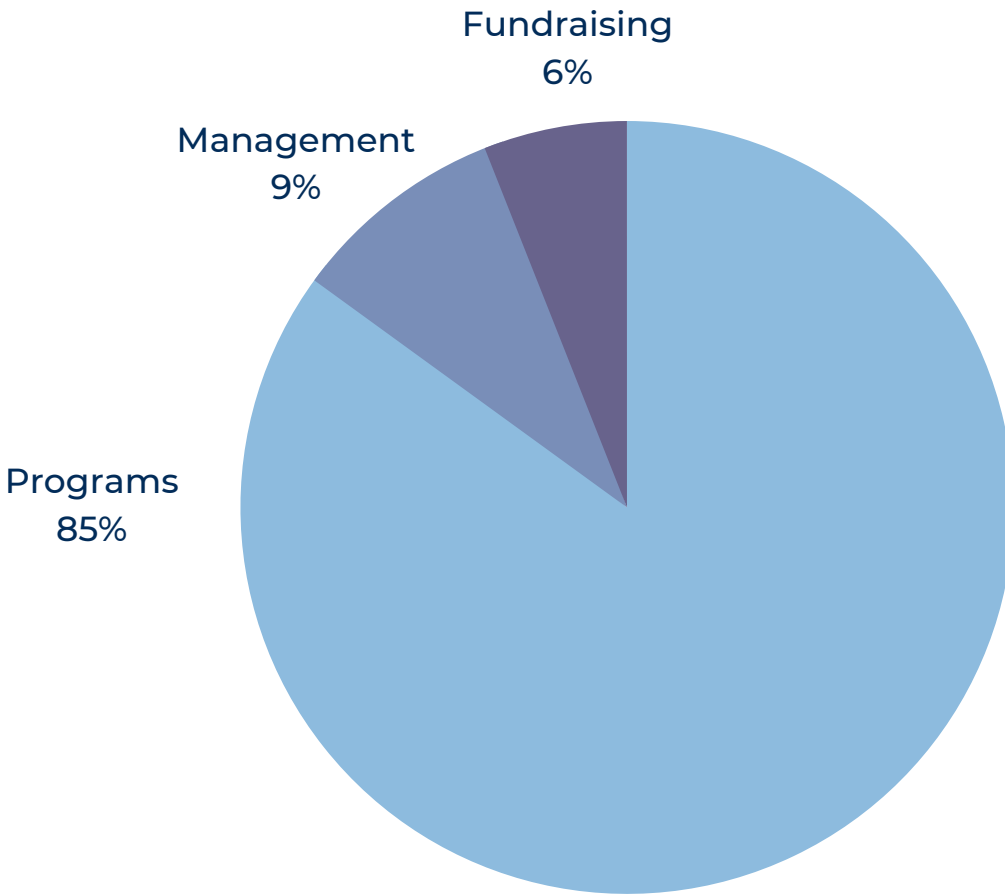
The Board is thrilled to welcome two new staff members. Sikander Rahman is our Research and Access to Information Coordinator and Amal Abuqawod is our Sustainability and Donor Relations Manager. We look forward to their contributions to this vital work.

The Board is proud of RSN's work in 2022 and looks forward to 2023. Thank you for your continued support and contributions.

Sincerely,

RSN Board of Directors

FINANCIALS AND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



RSN would like to acknowledge White & Case LLP, Baker Mackenzie LLP, and the United States Department of State, among all other individual donors, for their continued support of our work.

