

Boosting the effectiveness of asylum systems: the impact of legal advice and representation

Concept note and Agenda

Date: 2 October 2024

Time: 3:30 to 5:00 pm CET (with English, Arabic, French and Spanish interpretation)

Format: Virtual

Background and objective

In the face of continued high numbers of asylum applications and the challenges of mixed and onward movements, it's crucial for asylum systems globally to boost their efficiency while maintaining quality. While legal assistance is well recognized as playing a crucial role in supporting the fairness and quality of asylum procedures, it is often less recognized for the contribution it can make to efficiency. Effective legal assistance can lead to improved understanding of the process by asylum-seekers, shortened adjudication timelines, better decision-making due to improved quality of information provided to asylum authorities, and fewer appeals and reapplications.

Globally, there is still a long way to go before the majority of people seeking asylum have access to legal assistance and the impact that legal assistance has on efficiency can be fully assessed. However, recognizing the benefits of legal assistance in asylum procedures, some States have adjusted procedures and enhanced the availability of legal services. Providers of legal assistance have actively engaged in asylum procedures, offering a range of services including information provision, counselling, and legal representation for some time, however, resourcing and modalities of collaboration with national asylum systems remain issues in numerous States. Notably, the legal community's 2023 GRF pledge includes a commitment to expand access to legal services and information for refugees and displaced individuals.

The Asylum Capacity Support Group is hosting this event to discuss the impact of legal advice and representation on the effectiveness of asylum systems. The event will explore different approaches adopted by States relating to the provision of legal advice and representation with a view to enhancing the efficiency and fairness of asylum procedures. It will feature State experiences of collaborating with legal assistance providers to improve asylum processes, highlight challenges, lessons learned, and key considerations for integrating legal aid more effectively into asylum systems.

Draft Agenda

The event will be co-moderated by the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The discussion will be interactive with panelists sharing experiences and insights of working with legal partners as well as offering legal advice and representation in asylum procedures. There will also be time for more informal comments and feedback. The programme will be structured as follows:

- I. Opening remarks
- II. Presentation by Switzerland
- III. Presentation by Legal Aid Board, Netherlands
- IV. Presentation by Danish Refugee Council, Denmark
- V. Presentation by Ecuador
- VI. Floor opens for questions and comments
- VII. Summary and closing

Outcome

UNHCR will produce an outcome document which draws from the good practices and lessons learned showcased during the event with the goal of enabling States to adapt them to their own contexts. The

document will be circulated to all States and other relevant stakeholders and will be available on the ACSG Portal.

Asylum Capacity Support Group, September 2024