



2025/26 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

IAFL is a worldwide association of practising lawyers who are recognised by their peers as the most experienced and skilled family law specialists in their respective countries.



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FOREWORD

For over forty years we have been bringing the best family lawyers in the world together: connecting colleagues, cultivating knowledge, and making a positive difference to the practice of law and the administration of justice in divorce and family law throughout the world. We are practitioners, academics, leaders of civil society organisations and current and former members of the judiciary from 128 different jurisdictions - 82 nations around the world.

Our reach has expanded significantly in the last decade, which has allowed us to protect the sustainability of the Academy and do important work to benefit our Fellows, our communities, and individuals, families and children around the world. This Report covers some of that work and our collective achievements during 2025-2026. Thank you to the Fellows, sponsors, and other lawyers and sister organizations who have partnered with us. We look forward to our continued collaboration over the next year.

ABOUT IAFL

Since we were formed in 1986 IAFL's mission has remained unchanged- "to improve the practice of law and the administration of justice in the area of divorce and family law throughout the world". During that time we have steadily expanded our global reach, and from a handful of jurisdictions and only 5 nations to now we have Fellows in 82 nations, and 128 different jurisdictions:

- 42 states in the US
- 36 nations in Europe
- 14 nations in the Asia Pacific region
- 6 Canadian territories and provinces
- 30 countries from across Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and South and Central America.

We now have 4 Chapters, in the US, Canada, Europe and Asia Pacific and, at the time of going to press, the Board of Governors has held a meeting to discuss the application for a provisional Chapter for Africa which has been the result of incredibly hard work by a number of people over many years.

The IAFL has 9 substantive Committees each of which addresses a different area of family law, a Judicial Network which provides a forum for networking for our increasing number of Judicial Fellows and an Academic Liaison Group for our academics.



PRESIDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

My name is Heather Hostetter, and I'm the President of the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

Forty years ago, on October 10, 1986, family lawyers gathered in London, England to hold an organizational meeting of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. The minutes of that meeting include a list of the founding fellows - 47 lawyers from five countries: England, United States, Ireland, France, Sweden and Germany. Fast forward 40 years and our association is now 1,114 Fellows from 82 countries, 128 jurisdictions, and we are steadfast in our commitment to growth in areas of the world where we are unrepresented or underrepresented to be a truly worldwide organization. The breadth of our organization will be on full display at our next Annual General Meeting in Dublin where we will have over 460 participants, of which more than 300 attendees are

Fellows from over 41 jurisdictions joining together in September of 2026 – our biggest meeting ever.

In my past year as President, I've been fortunate to travel for the IAFL to Nairobi, Mumbai, Geneva, Hong Kong, Barcelona, Cape Town, Kuala Lumpur, Montreal and soon Dublin. Included herein are some photos from those trips. I can truly say I have increased my book of international family law business by being a Fellow in this organization and even more important to me personally, I have made wonderful friends, who I meet up with all over the world and with whom I share special memories. The camaraderie and genuine affection that the Fellows have for each other and our organization is tangible.

In addition to meetings abroad, there are many other opportunities to participate in the IAFL. We have several substantive committee, the Amicus Committee – we



submit amicus briefs in important family law cases around the world each year (see article on page 23), an academic liaison committee, a 1980 Hague Convention committee, a domestic abuse, family violence and intimate partner violence committee, a dispute resolution committee, a pensions committee, a forced marriage committee, a relocation of children committee, the pro bono committee, a parentage committee and the sexual orientation and gender identity committee. Please find the reports on this year's activity from many of these committees in this report.

We create exciting new opportunities such as the program our academic liaison committee chair, Professor Jens Scherpe, is making happen this summer which is sponsoring 5 Kenyan law students to study comparative law in Denmark this summer courtesy of the funding of our fellowship. We hosted our first Institute for Further Learning. We have our third cohort of Early Career Award winners. We hosted/are hosting four introduction to family law meetings this year around the world – Philadelphia, Montreal, Tirana, Albania, and the Philippines. Our International Discovery Working group launched its effort to compile information on

discovery procedures worldwide to create a resource for all Fellows to access. We will have hosted over 27 online webinars between September 2025 and September 2026. We partnered with sister organizations with similar missions to co-host events for our fellows, such as with the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, Law Asia, AIJUDEFA, the Malaysian Bar Council, and the East African Lawyers Society to name a few. You will find reports on our activity with these organizations in this report.

We maintained good governance. We have a comprehensive meeting planning guide that we continuously update. Chapters now have archives. The leadership of the Academy at the global and chapter levels will sharpen their skills in tackling systemic change with Dr. Felicia Henderson in Dublin, Fort Lauderdale, and New York as requested and advised by the IAFL Respect and Representation working group. Suzanne Todd with William Sloan and Meighan Harmon will lead a discussion with global and chapter leadership about the Academy's 3-5 year strategic plan based on a draft Suzanne and I prepared for consideration. We are a dynamic and engaged organization of fellows who want to learn from one another and



others. No one knows how hard it is to be a family lawyer the way other family lawyers do – especially the best of the best. The practice of law is changing. The mobility of clients is changing. Governments are changing. We need all need a resource for information and fellow professionals for our international family law work and I think this year showed, as has been true for the 39 years that preceded it, the IAFL can be that resource.

Warmly, Heather



INTRODUCTION TO THE INCOMING PRESIDENT

I was born in Holywood, at the height of “the Northern Ireland Troubles”

Conflict and conflict resolution has been part of my DNA since birth. I grew up as the daughter of an Anglican Priest surrounded by people’s stories. Even as a small child I knew that what was shared in the family home was always confidential.

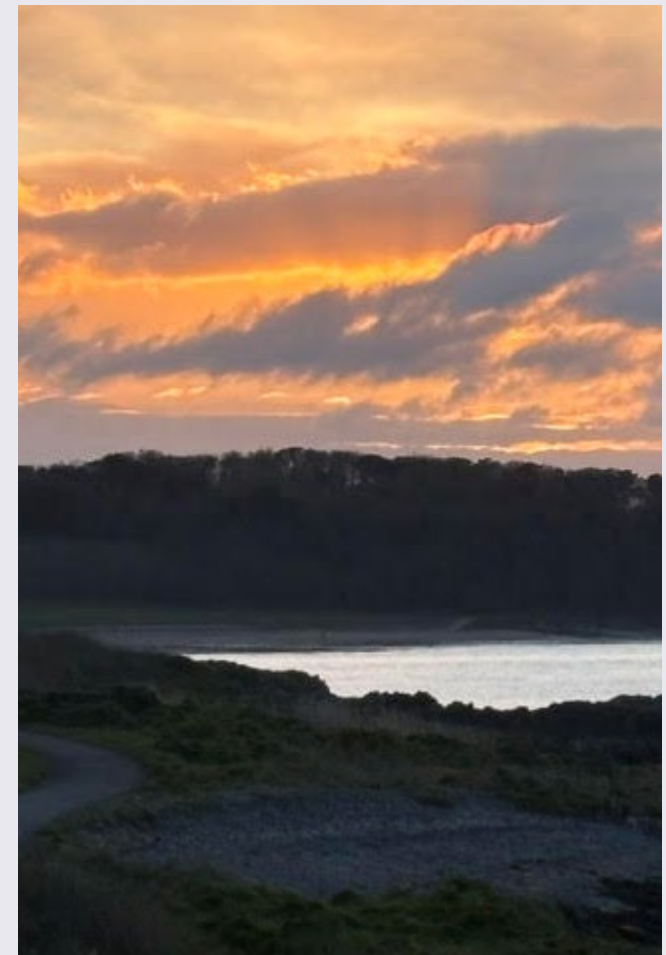
Many of you will know about my love of languages. I studied French, Spanish, Greek and Latin at school. I au paired in Spain for two summers. When the opportunity arose at university to spend a year in Italy, I jumped at the chance. I did not realise at that time the huge impact that year would have on my future career. It has had many Italian ‘highlights’, including securing my training contract at Withers as the first Italian-speaking trainee in 1995, as well as speaking in the Supreme Court in Rome in Italian.

I have been at Withers since 1997, and have

practiced family law exclusively since 1999. I have been lucky as a family lawyer based in London to have been involved in international family law work since I qualified in 1999; one of my first cases as a trainee involved a child abduction between England and Brazil.

Many Fellows of the Academy were my teachers, such as Gill Doran, Diana Parker, Marcus Dearle and Mark Harper. I watched as they headed off to what sounded like exciting conferences, so submitted my application for fellowship. I didn’t tell anyone in my team, as getting into the Academy in the London market has always been tough. I was accepted in 2011 aged 39. My first conference was William Longrigg’s in Strasbourg. At his request, I planned five of the European “Introduction to Family Law” conferences with William Healing in Berlin, Madrid, Milan and Kyiv twice as the first one was pulled as Covid hit.

I joined the global Executive Committee of



the Academy in 2020 as Secretary. I now find myself stepping into the role of global President in Dublin after 6 years. This is incredibly special for a number of reasons: it is in my home country; I am the first English-based female Fellow to hold this role; and I am passionate about guiding people through one of life's toughest journeys with empathy.

My three pillars for my term, 2026/2027, are as follows.

- To build on the Academy's strong foundations of the past;
- continue to grow the Academy for the future; and
- focus on the wellbeing of family lawyers in this frenetic global world in which we operate.

All being well as I step in to follow Heather, our provisional African Chapter will be established. One of my responsibilities will be to build on the incredible work of our past presidents over many decades to embed this provisional Chapter into the fellowship of the Academy.

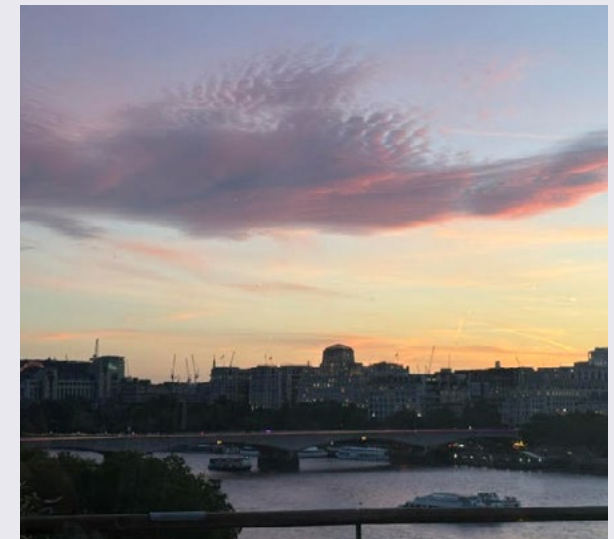
In Brisbane in February 2024, the Asia Pacific Chapter agreed that one of their key focuses would be to expand the fellowship in India, so we agreed that IAFL would host an Annual General Meeting there in September 2027. In the run up to this, we have put on a series of webinars with an 'Indian' base to share the work of the Academy in India before we arrive.

My second pillar will not be achieved in my term, but I will work towards at least doubling the size of the number of Fellows in the Academy in India shortly after we host a conference there.

I have seen firsthand what happens when someone suffers adrenal fatigue, which happened to my dad not once but twice. I know I am not always the person who practices what I preach, but the wellbeing of the profession is something which I am and have always been passionate about. Client and court demands on our time continue to increase exponentially, impacted by technology and our overflowing inboxes. The new revolution in our midst is AI – is Claude now drafting letters for your client

for you to send? We must not just roll with it as it becomes normal, but rather proactively manage the boundaries for the benefit of our families, friends, clients and importantly ourselves.

I have been married to Steven, an IT expert, for 26 years, which is probably why my IT skills are not great. We have two boys - Matthew aged 21 who has just graduated from UCL, and loves all things drama and film-related, and Daniel aged 17 who wants to be the next Rory McIlroy golfer.



I am passionate about all things Italian. I love walking, swimming, playing field hockey and sunsets as evidenced in the photos!

To quote Jet Li, 'I believe the world is one big family, and we need to help each other'. This perfectly encapsulates the essence of our global family. It highlights the connection, compassion and shared responsibilities that each of us have that stretch far beyond the borders of our own jurisdictions.

Suzanne Todd

**"I believe the world
is one big family,
and we need to help
each other."**

Jet Li



INTRODUCTION TO THE INCOMING IAFL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Suzanne Todd
President
England and Wales



Jorge Cestero
President-Elect
Florida, USA



Corinne Remedios
President Elect Designate
Hong Kong, China



Mudita Chawla
Treasurer
New York, USA



David Allison
Secretary
England and Wales



Heather Hostetter
Immediate Past President
Maryland, USA



Jason Naimi
First Vice President
Nevada, USA



Zenobia du Toit
Vice President
South Africa



Inger Blackford
Asia Pacific Chapter President
New Zealand



Kim Keiller
Canadian Chapter President
Ontario, Canada



Alice Meier-Bourdeau
European Chapter President
France



Frederic Siegel
USA Chapter President
Connecticut, USA



Hachem El Housseini
Counsel
Lebanon



Marzia Ghigliazza
Parliamentarian
Italy



Meighan Harmon
Assistant Treasurer
Illinois, USA

OUR FELLOWSHIP

Current total fellowship is
1,114 Fellows

↑ +378 from 2016

comprising...

**1,009 Full
Fellows**

↑ +316 from 2016

**44 Judicial
Fellows**

↑ +24 from 2016

**27 Associate
Fellows**

↑ +19 from 2016

**34 Non-Practicing
Fellows**

↑ +19 from 2016

**New jurisdictions added in the
last year:**

- 📍 Democratic Republic of Congo
- 📍 Oregon, USA
- 📍 North Dakota, USA

**We have grown by 50% in a
decade.**



MEETINGS AT A GLANCE



3 Continents / 4 Meetings

**Nairobi, Kenya, Annual
meeting**

September 2025

**Asia Pacific Chapter,
Hong Kong**

December 2025

**European Chapter,
Barcelona, Spain**

February 2026

**Asia Pacific Chapter,
Malaysia**

May 2026

2025-2026 was the second year when we organized four main meetings, reflecting the growth of the organization and a recognition that providing regional meetings for Fellows, potential Fellows and their guests would provide more opportunities for participation. Meetings in Hong Kong and Barcelona sold out, and the Annual Meeting in Dublin looks set to be the largest meeting ever. These meetings, along with the meetings that Chapters organize for potential IAFL Fellows, are a vital part of our networking, connecting colleagues and sharing expertise

**182
Speakers**



**958
Participants**



**53
Fellows
attend
their first
IAFL meeting**



**80
Lawyer guests
welcomed**



**40
Sessions**



**100%
Networking**



WEBINARS



23 Webinars



4 Onboarding
sessions for
new Fellows

FUTURE MEETINGS

12 October 2026	Asia Pacific Chapter: Introduction to International Family Law Manila, The Philippines
15-16 October 2026	European Chapter: Introduction to European Family Law Tirana, Albania
2-5 December 2026	USA and Canadian Chapters Fort Lauderdale, USA
17-21 February 2027	Asia Pacific Chapter Auckland, New Zealand
12-16 May 2027	USA and Canadian Chapters New York, USA
15-19 September 2027	Annual Meeting Mumbai, India

IAFL GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND REACH

Our perspective has always been international, and
our mission unchanged - to improve the practice
of family law and the administration of justice
throughout the world



USA CHAPTER - KEEPING CONNECTED

The USA Chapter had a productive 2026, marked by a major recruitment event, sustained outreach between meetings, and continued substantive education for Fellows.

Philadelphia Recruitment Conference — January 2026

The Chapter opened the year with an Introduction to International Family Law conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — a location chosen for its place in American history and in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The program brought together leading family law practitioners from around the world to introduce prospective candidates to the IAFL, covering Hague Convention and UCCJEA issues, interviews with established Fellows, the enforcement of prenuptial and postnuptial agreements across borders, jurisdictional differences among U.S. states and countries, and the impact of U.S. executive orders on international family law

practice. On separate evenings, attendees were welcomed with a dinner and a social event, giving them a firsthand sense of IAFL congeniality.

The conference drew 73 attendees, reflecting strong geographic reach: participants came from 16 U.S. states and the District of Columbia — with the largest contingents from New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Virginia — as well as from England, France, and Canada.

Sustaining Connections Between Meetings

With an 18-month gap between the 2025 and 2026 Chapter meetings, the Chapter prioritized keeping Fellows engaged in the interim. Fellows in several jurisdictions organized dine-arounds pairing current Fellows with prospective applicants, with notable gatherings in Los Angeles, Boston, and a combined Virginia–Washington, D.C.–Maryland event.



Continuing Education

The Chapter also offered a range of webinars for Fellows, including sessions on common errors in business valuations and on child marriage and forced marriage.

Closing

Looking ahead, the USA Chapter remains committed to building on this momentum — welcoming new Fellows, deepening ties among

current members, and continuing to bring the IAFL's expertise to family law practitioners across domestic and international jurisdictions.

Katharine Maddox
USA Chapter President



EUROPEAN CHAPTER - SUPPORTING EDUCATION & INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

During 2025–2026, the European Chapter continued to advance the Academy's educational and charitable objectives by strengthening international collaboration, expanding access to family law education and supporting participation from jurisdictions that are traditionally underrepresented within the Academy.

A key focus has been fostering relationships with European legal institutions and professional networks that shape family law policy and practice. Through engagement with organisations such as the European Judicial Network, the European Law Institute and the Academy of European Law (ERA), the Chapter has sought to ensure that the experience and expertise of IAFL Fellows contribute to wider discussions on international families, cross-border disputes and the development of family justice across Europe.

As part of this commitment, the Chapter

has supported IAFL representation at ERA's annual Conference on European Family Law in Trier, Germany, which brings together judges, academics and practitioners to consider developments in European and international family law. Participation in these events helps strengthen professional links, share best practice and raise awareness of the Academy's work within the wider legal community.

The Chapter has also continued to invest in legal education through its successful Introduction to European Family Law programme. Following the success of the Hamburg conference, preparations are well advanced for the next conference at the University of Tirana, Albania, in October 2026. Designed for lawyers from emerging and developing family law markets, the programme promotes cross-border knowledge sharing, professional development and engagement with the Academy, while supporting the growth



of family law practice in the region. The conference forms part of a broader strategy to expand the Academy's reach in underrepresented jurisdictions across Europe, particularly within the Balkans.

Improving access to Academy activities has been another important priority. At the European Chapter meeting in Barcelona, the Chapter provided financial support to enable two Kenyan Fellows, Patricia Mundia and Ruth Juliet Gachanja Nyambura, to attend and participate as speakers. Their involvement enriched the educational programme and ensured that African perspectives were represented within the discussions.



This initiative complemented wider efforts to support legal education and professional development in Africa, including support for Kenyan students attending the comparative law summer programme at Aalborg University in Denmark.

Together, these initiatives reflect the European Chapter's commitment to cultivating knowledge, strengthening international collaboration and widening access to professional opportunities. Through education, outreach and targeted support, the Chapter continues to build connections across jurisdictions and contribute to the development of a truly global family law community.

Emma Hatley
European Chapter President



ASIA PACIFIC CHAPTER

The Asia Pacific Chapter has had a big year reaching out to unrepresented or underrepresented jurisdictions. As Chapter President, I am very proud of our efforts and report on three initiatives (two past, and one upcoming), as follows.

Outreach meeting in Shenzhen, China, March 2026

In March, five Chapter Fellows went to Shenzhen, China, having been invited by a local lawyer, Li Wei, who attended our Symposium in Hong Kong in December 2025.

My predecessor, Kai Yun Wong, had had various outreach meetings in China during her term, including in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. As a result of these efforts, the number of Fellows in China has increased and we now have our first Fellow in Guangzhou.

The next Outreach meeting took place on 17 and 18 March 2026 in Shenzhen. Five Fellows from the Chapter attended; myself, Kai Yun Wong (Singapore), Eleanor Lau (Australia), Rita Ku (Hong Kong), and Mingyue Gao (Shanghai, China).

On the afternoon of 17 March, Kai Yun, Eleanor, Rita and I were met by our gracious host, Li Wei, at the Justice Department in



Shenzhen. There, we learned more about the nature of this vibrant city, its diversity, its strong embrace of foreign investments and expatriates, and its willingness to have foreign law firms establish offices there.

The next day, 18 March, involved a one day seminar involving all five IAFL Fellows, and attended by about 35 local lawyers. I introduced the Chapter and the IAFL and encouraged participation by any local and specialist family lawyers in the area.

Kai Yun, Eleanor and Rita presented, as a group, on several family law topics, including marriage, parenting issues and forum disputes, discussing the different approaches in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

After being hosted to a generous lunch by the locals, the three of

them were back in the afternoon, and joined by Mingyue and myself. Mingyue had prepared a very engaging case study about a couple from Shenzhen who might then go to a jurisdiction of one of the panellists, and what legal issues would arise for them in each? Which country would have jurisdiction to determine property disputes? Would orders by one be enforced in another? Would any of them apply the law of China, given that the parties and the children all came from there?

The local attendees gave us feedback it was a fascinating and engaging discussion. It was also a lot of fun. As both Eleanor and I are from Australia, we were able to play the opponent of the other and indicate how we might approach the matter if acting for either party.

I hope that it will be the beginning of the IAFL spreading to this part of China and the continuation of the promotion of the IAFL within China.



International Family Law Symposium in Kuala Lumpur, May 2026

Before our 2026 main Chapter meeting began, on Tuesday 19 May, 2026 the Chapter and the Malaysian Bar co-hosted a Symposium in Kuala Lumpur on International Family Law.

It was a truly successful day. Approximately 50 IAFL Fellows attended, but with the number of local Malaysian lawyers and judges attending we had an impressive attendance of 173.

What was particularly heartening was the presence of distinguished local Malaysian judges who attended and spoke at the event.

Our three sessions were each co-chaired by a members of the Malaysian Bar, featured 21 speakers from 15 jurisdictions and covered hot topics in Property Division in Cross Border disputes; Parenting Matters in Cross Border Disputes and Jurisdiction and Forum Matters in Cross Border disputes.

All sessions were of excellent quality, and I thank the generosity of the speakers and moderators. We hope this will lead to new applications from Malaysian judges and lawyers.

Manila, the Philippines, October 2026

I am delighted that approval has been given for the Chapter to conduct a one day Introduction to International Family Law event on 12 October 2026 in Manila.

Currently, we have no Filipino Fellows. We had both a judge and a local lawyer from the Philippines, however, attend our Chapter conference in Kuala Lumpur in May. I am hoping this is the start of interest in that country.

With the help of my President-Elect, Inger Blackford, and two Fellows from Hong Kong, Jaerey Velasco and Stephen Peaker (each of whom have strong ties to the Philippines), we are planning this event. It is expected we will have a local Senator speak about the possibility of divorce reform in this country, followed by three educational sessions, involving both Fellows and local lawyers.

I am very much looking forward to it and hope this will lead to applications from qualified Filipino judges and lawyers.

John Spender

Asia Pacific Chapter President



CANADIAN CHAPTER

IAFL Montreal Introduction to Family Law and National Family Law Conference

IAFL's Introduction to International Family Law meeting in Montreal took place on 12 June 2026 at Lavery, Montreal. The one-day programme was aimed at family lawyers interested in developing their international family law practice and learning more about IAFL Fellowship.

Sessions covered the practical and strategic issues that arise in cross-border family matters, including why international family law is increasingly relevant, the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, pre-nuptial and separation agreements in international cases, jurisdictional differences, and modern families. Speakers joined from Canada, the USA, France, England, Scotland and the Netherlands. The meeting ended with a drinks reception and dinner.

IAFL's participation in the National Family Law conference, scheduled for 13–16 July 2026 in Kelowna, British Columbia is an opportunity to build on the momentum from Montreal by raising awareness of IAFL's international network, encouraging engagement from Canadian family law practitioners, and highlighting the value of specialist cross-border expertise. The National Family Law conference is Canada's largest

and most prestigious family law conference, attracting practitioners, judges, government representatives and academics from across the country.

Caroline Harnois



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR COMMITTEES

AMICUS COMMITTEE

The Amicus Committee is tasked with filing briefs in principled matters of significance in international family law proceedings. Since 2012 the Committee has filed briefs mostly at appellate level courts, including Supreme Courts, of several countries. We have also filed a brief in the Inter American Court of Human Rights, located in Costa Rica.

While submitting amicus curiae briefs is a recognized procedure in most common law jurisdictions, civil law countries generally have no provision for such briefs. In addition, the nature of amicus briefs varies according to jurisdictions. In the UK, for instance, the purpose of such briefs is more of an informative nature, rather than arguing for a particular side. In the US, amicus briefs are generally submitted in support of one of the litigants.

The purpose of filing a brief on behalf of the IAFL is to assist courts in applying a uniform interpretation of international law principles. The IAFL is uniquely situated to provide an international perspective on issues which may otherwise not be presented to the court.

Some jurisdictions have no formal requirements for the submission of the brief while others have very strict guidelines as to format. While US briefs are sent to specialist printers, UK briefs are typed on plain blank pages.

The success of the Committee depends on close teamwork. The Executive Committee approves all filings. We divide the work by jurisdiction, with members describing how the matter is dealt with in their country. Most countries require that briefs be submitted by a qualified member of the local Bar, so we sometimes need to reach out to Fellows to file on our behalf in the relevant jurisdiction. We also ask for input from Fellows Academy members in the country in which the proceeding is being litigated in cases where no Committee member is familiar with the law of that jurisdiction.

The Committee becomes aware of a pending matter mostly by informal means. We rely on Academy members or associates in the field to inform us of interesting cases as they develop. The vast majority of the cases that are referred to us concern the implementation of the Hague Abduction Convention.

The first amicus brief that we filed was in the United States Supreme Court, *Lozano v. Montoya*, 572 U.S. 1 (2014).

The Committee has filed several briefs in the United States Supreme Court and Federal Appellate Courts, as well as in the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom and the Cours de Cassation of France. Additional countries in which we filed briefs include Portugal, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

The brief which we filed in the Lisbon Court of Appeal in *Perez v. Shtark*, a Hague Abduction matter was sufficiently of impact that one of the judges quoted a full page of our brief verbatim.

An issue which is becoming more contested is the interplay between the Hague Abduction Convention and the Refugee Asylum Convention. This highlights the unique contribution that the IAFL can make in developing a uniform interpretation of international treaty obligations.

An example of a non-Hague Abduction case concerns the use of child bearing surrogacy that was heard in France.. France has no amicus guidelines and has become very unwelcoming to applications to submit amicus briefs. Displaying IAFL ingenuity, Fellow Alice Meier Bourdeau circumvented what would have been definite court rejection

of our brief by attaching it as an appendix to her own brief. The court's opinion referred to the contents of our brief without having ruled on whether it may be submitted.

The Amicus Committee is hoping to expand its reach and become involved in legislative deliberations as well.

IAFL briefs can be found on the IAFL website.

Committee members are Edwin Freedman (Israel), Michael Gration KC (England & Wales), Caroline Harnois (Canada), Ian Kennedy AM (Australia), Richard Min (New York, USA), Alice Meier-Bourdeau (France), Rahima Nato-Kalfane (France), Jacqueline Renton KC (England & Wales) and Konstantinos Rokas (Greece)



Edwin Freeman
Chair of Amicus Committee

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI) COMMITTEE

The IAFL Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Committee has continued its work with local activists in the jurisdictions where IAFL has held meetings.

In Nairobi, we worked with the National Lesbian & Gay Human Rights Commission of Kenya who we hosted for a private dinner and whose members Rachael invited to the President's Dinner. Following the meeting, we issued a press release in conjunction with them in which we stated that "The IAFL re-affirmed its support for full equality of LGBTQ+ individuals and families and we call for the elimination of laws that unfairly discriminate against LGBTQ+ citizenry and criminalize countless couples based solely on who couples love in Kenya and globally". That release can be found on our web site at <https://www.iafl.com/media/rn5bxklp/statement-in-support-of-lgbtq-kenyans-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>.

In Hong Kong, we similarly worked with local lawyers campaigning for reform and held a meeting with them to discuss reform. We drafted a press release with the help of local lawyers and particularly IAFL fellows Azan Marwah and Caroline McNally in which we said "The IAFL applauds the Hong Kong Judiciary and Government for affirming the fundamental human rights of same-sex couples. We welcome the ongoing efforts to



introduce legislation to recognise such relationships. We encourage the Hong Kong Government to consider the introduction of marriage equality for same-sex couples, as the best mechanism to protect families". The release is on the IAFL web site at <https://www.iafl.com/media/2unjdnux/20251208-press-release-support-for-equal-marriage-in-hong-kong.pdf>.

In Kuala Lumpur, we met with activists at Legal Dignity <https://legaldignity.org/> and Jejaka <https://jejaka.org/>. On this occasion a press release was not thought to be helpful, but we talked to them about ways that the IAFL can support their work in family law related

issues. Our intention is to establish a network of rights organisations to continue supporting their work with practical legal help.

SOGI's contribution to the IAFL's 40th anniversary was the brilliant webinar "Through Courts to Marriage Equality? Cupriak–Trojan & Trojan (C-713/23) and Its Limitations" presented by Artur Kula (KMA Law Firm) & Jakub Urbanik (University of Warsaw and IAFL associate fellow). The webinar was a perfect example of the sort of strategic litigation we have discussed at meetings, and we are incredibly grateful to Jakub and Artur for sharing their expertise with us.



David Allison
Co-Chair, SOGI Committee

DISCOVERY WORKING GROUP

Global insights into asset discovery

Information is key when dealing with complex matrimonial property disputes and high-stakes financial litigation. However, the rules for uncovering and preserving assets vary wildly from one country to the next.

We have launched a comprehensive project to support our community by gathering insights from IAFL Fellows globally. Our guide will address the most critical questions regarding:

- Publicly accessible registries for real estate, corporate interests, and bank accounts.
- Pre-litigation discovery and international evidence-taking under the Hague Convention.
- Asset preservation measures, including freezing orders and lis pendens registrations.
- Liability for asset dissipation and the legal consequences of fraudulent transfers.

This database will serve as a vital tool for any fellow navigating the complexities of international asset tracing. The working group's projected completion date is December 2027.



Dr Anita Vimlati
Working Group Co-Chair



Ivan Cheung
Working Group Co-Chair

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

The IAFL Dispute Resolution Committee has been working on some exciting projects over the past year. Under the guidance of Editor, Sarah Anticoni, the Committee has been producing a high-quality e-newsletter for fellows on a range of dispute resolution topics from a span of jurisdictions. The Committee continues to explore options for programming and training for fellows, and is working on webinars that will build on its successful series of webinars in recent years focused on dispute resolution in Africa.

In addition to webinars for fellows, the Committee is hosting a webinar in October to introduce dispute resolution processes to the law students at Durham University (UK), and is discussing a more intensive institute for law students globally in dispute resolution.

The Committee is further examining jurisdictional and regional differences in dispute resolution processes to build its own expertise, global reach, and to serve as a clearinghouse for fellows in dispute resolution. The Committee continues its liaising with the Domestic Abuse, Family Violence and IPV Committee and the Academic Liaison Committee to coordinate holistic projects for all fellows.

On top of this significant work product, the Committee enjoys carving out time at each in-person IAFL meeting to ensure its members can meet face-to-face, discuss their dispute resolution practices, and appreciate the camaraderie.



Melissa Kucinski
Secretary of the Dispute Resolution Committee

Dispute Resolution Committee Officers

Co-Chairs: Geoff Wilson and Suzanne Kingston

Secretary: Melissa Kucinski

Newsletter Editor: Sarah Anticoni

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

IAFL EARLY CAREER AWARD

Launched in 2024, the IAFL Early Career Award Program provides the opportunity for young family lawyers to apply for a bursary to attend the IAFL Annual Meeting.

There are specific criteria for applicants which include: 6-8 years practice experience, with a significant amount of time being devoted to family law. Priority is given to applicants from lower and lower-middle income countries, this year particular emphasis was given to applications from Central and Eastern Europe. And thus for the Annual Meeting in Dublin this September, awards have been granted to a family practitioner from Serbia and two family practitioners from Ukraine.



Our group of Early Career Award alumni is expanding. In 2024, three awards were granted to young lawyers from Ghana, India and Kenya and, in 2025 we were able to grant eight awards to young lawyers from Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

We are enormously indebted to the Fellows who scrutinize the applications and have the unenviable task of selecting the winners: Corinne Remedios, Soma Kolcsensyi, Pat Moodley and James Stewart. Particular thanks to James who for the past couple of years persuaded Thomson Reuters to give each winner a copy of the Blue Book (Family Law: A Global Guide 6th Edition) to which so many IAFL Fellows contribute.



IAFL INSTITUTE FOR FURTHER LEARNING

The IAFL Institute for Further Learning completed its inaugural academic year in June with expressions of gratitude from the cohort for the opportunity presented by the program. The curriculum was a successful range of topics of universal importance to our diverse group of lawyers from Poland, Switzerland, Argentina, Hawaii, England, Malaysia, Australia, Iowa, and New York. The curriculum has been updated for the next academic year to include ethical issues related to artificial intelligence.

The faculty was wonderful and deserves our thanks - providing written materials for reference, offering continuing availability for questions, and leading interactive discussions and conversations with the lawyer students. As the curriculum indicates, we addressed both the intangible and tangible aspects of our family law practices in order to support both personal and professional development in the law. The ease of collaboration between the two faculty members for each session reflects the commonality of our experience as family law practitioners.

Our thanks to Annie Dunster, whose hard work and contribution to the smooth running of the Institute cannot be overstated. We look forward to our next academic year and thank our returning faculty members.

Jill Hersh
Institute Director

Many thanks to our 2025-2026 Institute for Further Learning Faculty:

The Intersection of Family Law and Psychology

Jill Hersh and Rebecca Robbins PhD

Domestic Violence and Safety

Gretchen Rubel and Luz Beazer

Addiction and Impulse Control

Gretchen Rubel and David Kan MD

Modern Families and Assisted Reproduction

Jemma Dally and Gary Debele

Jurisdiction and Enforcement in Divorce and Financial Provision

Sandra Verburgt and Eleri Jones

International Conventions and Jurisdiction in Child Law Matters

Frances Goldsmith and Melissa Kucinski

Premarital Agreements

Jill Hersh and Charlotte Butruille-Cardew

Property Valuation, Taxes, Pensions and Inter-Disciplinary Work with Other Professionals

Elizabeth Carson and Jacky Campbell

Dispute Resolution

Judge Ruth Lumbongo Mbambi and Jill Hersh

Self-Care as Family Practitioners

Adelaide Benneh Prempeh and Yet Ngo Foo



Jill Hersh
Institute Director



KENYAN STUDENTS: AALBORG UNIVERSITY SUMMER PROGRAMME

The IAFL has very generously provided funding for five International Academy of Family Lawyers Comparative Family Law Scholarships which will enable students from different universities in Kenya to attend an intensive course on Comparative Family Law at Aalborg University in Denmark in August 2026. The scholarship covers the costs for travel, accommodation, health insurance and visas as well as some subsistence. The students will be hosted by the Nordic Centre for Comparative and International Family Law (NorFam; www.norfam.org) and the University of Aalborg who will cover the remaining costs, including those for the communal cooking which is scheduled for (almost) every evening!

The intensive course will be taught by Prof. Jens Scherpe, IAFL Fellow and Director of NorFam, from 13-21 August and cover a range of family law topics from a comparative perspective, including the legal recognition of adult relationships, legal gender, matrimonial property, marital agreement, divorce, parenthood, surrogacy and parental responsibility. The students will be taught together with the local Danish students and Danish legal practitioners and IAFL Fellows Anne-Heide Jørgensen and Maryla Rytter Wróblewski will join the course as well. The Kenyan students will thus not only be taught comparative family law but also introduced to their local peers and to leading Danish practitioners. Moreover, an excursion to and tour of the Vestre Landsret, one of the two Danish High Courts is planned where

the Kenyan visitors get to speak to high-ranking Danish judges and gain insights into the Danish legal system.

The visit to Denmark is an incredible opportunity for these young Kenyans and undoubtedly will make a huge difference to their future lives. This only is possible thanks to the generosity of the IAFL and the fellows/chapters who have contributed.

Professor Jens Scherpe





Bobby Dhiman
Riara University, Fourth Year Student

I take a lot of interest in the institution of family and the laws governing it, particularly when the family unit is under conflict or facing the adverse effects of climate change. I am deeply intrigued by how the law safeguards family structures and ensures justice and stability amid conflict, societal and environmental pressures. I fully resonate with the position by the late Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who beautifully stated, "I'm more trying to connect; I'm more listening to people. Whatever I get is very meaningful to me." If there is one decision I have taken with myself, it is to embrace this very spirit, to learn at any point and at any time, and to let every experience shape my understanding of life, law and humanity.

At the Student Symposium on 1 September 2025, Bobby won the award for Impactful Research and Persuasive Presentation



Muthoni Mwangi
Mount Kenya University, Fourth Year Student

I am passionate about family law, mainly matters concerning divorce, succession and child custody. They all fall under best interests of a child and I want to ensure children are always safe. I am a public speaker and it's really magnificent how simple speeches can change lives. I enjoy reading and reviewing books. I believe books are a pathway to understand society and arouse creativity.

At the Student Symposium on 1 September 2025, Muthoni won the award for Eloquence in Presentation.



Youngreen Peter Mudeyi
Kabarak University, Fourth Year Student

Youngreen is a published author and the 2024 Students CB Madan Awards Recipient. He is the President of the Law Students of Kenya and an alumnus of the University of Free States Winter School on Unconstitutional Changes in Government. He is the editor in chief of the LSAK Law Review and an editor at the East Africa Law Society Human Rights and Rule of Law Journal. He has great interest in Family Law with a focus on contemporary issues such as how AI and Climate Change is affecting families. Currently he serves as a researcher at Allamano & Associates and he is a researcher for the Committee selected by the Chief Justice to develop guidelines for court supervision of children committed to Charitable Children Institutions.

At the Student Symposium on 1 September 2025, Youngreen Peter was one of the Outstanding Moderators and Organisers.



Christine Mampai
Bachelor of Laws (LLB) student at the University of Nairobi

Driven by an unwavering commitment to justice, human dignity, and the rule of law, Christine Mampai is an ambitious Bachelor of Laws (LLB) student at the University of Nairobi whose academic journey is anchored in the pursuit of legal excellence and meaningful social impact. Her interests span international human rights law, constitutional law, family law, and public interest litigation, reflecting a vision of using the law not merely as a profession but as a catalyst for transformative justice. Christine believes that effective legal advocacy extends beyond courtrooms into communities, policy spaces, and institutions where the rights and dignity of every individual must be safeguarded. Through scholarship, leadership, and practical legal engagement, she continues to develop the skills necessary to contribute to a more just and equitable society. Christine was selected to represent the University of Nairobi and Kenya at the 35th Christof Heyns African Human Rights Moot Court Competition in the Côte d'Ivoire in 2026.



Belinda Mwende Nthiga
Mount Kenya University School of Law, Fourth Year Student

Belinda Mwende is a law student passionate about justice, governance, and child protection. She currently serves as the National Chairperson of Wakili Wa Watoto, a youth-led initiative under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) that empowers law students and young advocates to advance children's rights and access to justice. She has co-organized the East African Law Students Symposium on the Future of Family Law and contributed to the review of the Sexual Offences Bill under the NCAJ Committee on SGBV.

Interest in Family Law

I am drawn to family law because it connects law to humanity, to people's everyday realities, relationships, and dignity. Through my work in child justice advocacy, I've witnessed how family law can heal, protect, and empower the most vulnerable, especially children. I'm eager to keep learning and exploring how we can make family law systems more responsive, compassionate, and inclusive across different contexts.

At the Student Symposium on 1 September 2025, Belinda was one of the Outstanding Moderators and Organisers.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

COMMONWEALTH LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Avid readers of the Annual Impact Report last year will remember that we did a spotlight on the Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA), who we have the privilege to work with in recent years.

We have been busy planning a number of events with CLA this year. The first is a meeting which will take place between 28- 30 October 2026 in Kigali, Rwanda, which we are co-hosting with them and the Rwanda Bar Association. This will be the first meeting of the CLA Africa Hub, and will focus on, “Recent Developments in Corporate, Commercial and Family Law”. We have fourteen fellows from nine different countries coming to participate and support the meeting. There are twenty-one countries in Africa from the Commonwealth, and we only have fellows in six of those countries, so we are really grateful for this opportunity to meet with, and learn from, practitioners in places where we have not yet met people and to further raise the profile of the Academy in Africa.

We are also well advanced in the planning for another half day symposium that we have been invited to run before the CLA Annual bi-annual meeting in 2027. This meeting will be their Silver Jubilee 25th Anniversary Conference and will take place in Darwin from 9-13 May 2027. This symposium will be a follow up to the symposium we held in Malta in 2025 and will focus on three areas: the cross over between Family and Corporate Law; Arbitration in Family Law and issues that

arise when acting for indigenous and first nations peoples.

We have been very grateful to the CLA for their ongoing support, in particular publicising our webinars and meetings to their members through the year. We look forward to supporting them in return with these two meetings!

With thanks to the IAFL CLA relationship stewards for 2026: Shabina Begum (England and Wales), Sheridan Emerson (Australia), past President Rachael Kelsey (Scotland), Juliet Nyambura (Kenya) and TL Yap (Singapore).

Rachael Kelsey



EAST AFRICA LAW SOCIETY

The East Africa Law Society (EALS), through its Family Law Committee, partnered with the International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL) during the Society's 30th Annual Conference and General Meeting, held on 26th -29th November 2025. The collaboration provided an important platform for professional exchange, regional engagement, and dialogue on emerging and complex issues in family law.

EALS draws its membership from eight member countries, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. The Annual Conference also attracts participation from delegates representing bar organizations across the region and around the world, thereby enriching the breadth and depth of discussions.

IAFL Fellows Barbara Mills KC, Rachael Kelsey, Jemma Dally, Michael Wells-Greco, Prudence Mutiso, Zenobia du Toit and Patricia Mundia participated in four panel discussions. The panels addressed a range of family law topics and generated meaningful engagement among delegates. Key areas of discussion included the Hague Conventions on children, surrogacy and assisted reproductive technologies, asset tracing and recovery, and other contemporary family law issues of regional and international significance.



The partnership has resulted in continued collaboration between EALS and IAFL Fellows, through webinars that have attracted hundreds of members from the region and beyond. These engagements have provided valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing, professional development, and the exchange of comparative perspectives in family law.

EALS through its Family Law Committee looks forward to hosting another cohort of IAFL Fellows at its forthcoming conference, scheduled to be held in Zanzibar in November 2026. The continued partnership reflects a shared commitment to strengthening family law practice, promoting cross-border collaboration, and advancing professional discourse across East Africa and beyond.

Patricia Mundia



EPK

The International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL) was represented at the 54th European Presidents' Conference (EPK) in Vienna from 12–14 February 2026, immediately following the IAFL European Chapter Meeting in Barcelona. The IAFL delegation comprised Alice Meier-Bourdeau, European Chapter President-Elect, Rachael Kelsey, Immediate Past President, and IAFL Fellow Elodie Mulon.

The conference brought together presidents and senior representatives of European bar associations and international legal organisations to examine the theme “Freedom versus Security: The Rule of Law under the Strain of Modern Crime.” Discussions focused on the challenges of safeguarding fundamental rights and judicial independence while responding to evolving security threats and modern forms of crime.

IAFL's participation reflected its ongoing commitment to engaging with the wider international legal community on issues affecting the rule of law and the legal profession. The conference also provided valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships with bar leaders across Europe and to promote the Academy's work. In particular, the IAFL delegation met experienced family lawyers from Austria and several Eastern European jurisdictions, supporting the Academy's efforts to expand its network and encourage Fellowship applications from regions where IAFL is currently under-represented.



WHAT THE IAFL MEANS TO ME

Our Fellowship's strength comes from our Fellows -
the best family lawyers from around the world



"As a family lawyer based in Japan, IAFL has given me trusted connections with colleagues around the world, which I rely on in cross-border matters involving Japan and other jurisdictions.

Through IAFL, I have met many Fellows globally and am especially happy to have built friendships beyond our professional work, for which I am truly grateful."

Makiko Mizuuchi
Japan

I am so grateful to be a member of the IAFL. I have made lifelong friends, established professional relationships all over the world, and have learned so much about how family law is practiced in other countries. The IAFL is without a doubt my favorite professional organization!

Evan Marks
FL, USA

"The IAFL, for me, is where thoughtful, extroverted (at least for the most part) family law minds gather. It is a hub of knowledge and inspiration where our color, race, nationalities and differences fade, ideas grow, and the shared goal is advancing family law."

Ruth Juliet Nyambura
Kenya

"It is the combination of intellectual exchange and genuine collegiality that defines IAFL meetings. In a world where families and their assets are increasingly transnational, the value of these connections cannot be overstated."

Emma Hatley
England and Wales

"IAFL is much, much more than a professional organisation. To say that it is a professional organisation of international family lawyers would be reductive. This is because of the deeply held friendships which cross boundaries and time zones... the kind which keeps alive at 3 am to jump on a webinar or a committee meeting, or figuring out a problem for a fellow somewhere else in the world and promising them that they would have their answer by the time they wake up, or knowing their children by name.

That is IAFL."

Shu Mei Hoon
Singapore

What is IAFL to me:
In short words: Infinite opportunities all around the world, family bonds, legal depth

Natalia Olowska-Czajka
Poland

UPCOMING IN DUBLIN



At the Annual Meeting in Dublin, Organizational psychologist Brodie Riordan, PhD, will present on the topic “Rethinking communication to get your point across”.

Dr. Riordan is an industrial/organizational psychologist, executive coach and educator whose professional work sits at the intersection of psychological science, leadership development and high-stakes professional communication. She will address how lawyers can recalibrate their

communication choices so that their advice, advocacy and client-facing interventions are better matched to context, audience and objective. Her talk will invite attendees to move deliberately across a spectrum of communication behaviors—from directive interventions such as instructing, advising and structuring, to non-directive interventions such as questioning, listening and coaching—so that legal expertise is not merely delivered, but understood, retained and acted upon.

Dr Riordan holds an MA and PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron, completed leadership coach training at Georgetown University’s Institute for Transformational Leadership, and is an ICF-certified executive coach.

We are excited to hear her speak about the disciplined use of communication as a professional tool.

A second session in Dublin, **“Through New Eyes: Junior**

Practitioners on the Future of Family Law” will continue the discussion from the panel in Nairobi at last year’s Annual Meeting regarding changes in the practice of Family Law. The panel for Dublin will consist of new practitioners entering the practice and their views of the future of family law and discuss how young lawyers perceive the profession and general trends they see, things they think are antiquated and should change. We anticipate that the panelists’ insights will:

- Identify different generational expectations across legal practice in different jurisdictions
- Understand how future leaders might reshape practice norms, based on their own priorities and concerns about the profession and global events
- Identify shared pain points and opportunities for reform across national borders and
- Provide an opportunity for all attendees to reflect on their own jurisdiction’s traditions and whether they still serve clients effectively

We are looking forward to interesting discussions!

Frances Goldsmith

Jemma Mackenzie

Rhian McGrath

Education Co-Chairs, Dublin

JOINING AND SUPPORTING IAFL



JOIN IAFL

Fellowship of the IAFL is by invitation only. The criteria to become a Fellow of the IAFL are rigorous, but achievable for those with significant expertise in their own jurisdiction, and experience of international family law. You can find more information [here](#) or through our Executive Director, whose details are below.

CONTACT US

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Executive Director, IAFL

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SUPPORT OUR WORK

You can find out about the Sponsorship Opportunities to support the work we do and our meetings in our annual Sponsorship Prospectus, which can be found [here](#).



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