

Finnish Refugee Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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Diverse civil society forms a solid population base

COVID-19 CHALLENGED THE WHOLE WORLD – REFUGEES IN PARTICULAR

The year 2020 weakened the situation, well-being and rights of refugees who are in a vulnerable position to begin with. The number of displaced people once again approached record numbers; for the first time since World War II, almost 80 million people had to flee their homes. Of these people, 26 million were refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced people and 4.2 million asylum seekers.

Nearly 70% of all refugees in the world came from just five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Venezuela. The countries hosting the greatest number of refugees were Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda and Germany.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected, among other things, refugees' possibility to find safety in a new country. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), resettlement of refugees was at a record low in 2020 – only 22,770 refugees were resettled. For example, the corresponding figure in the previous year was 63,726.

In addition, the UNHCR estimates that COVID-19 poses a significant threat to the education and training of refugees. Prospects of millions

of young people in a vulnerable position are in danger of being seriously undermined, especially if the international community does not take decisive action to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

The most concrete and immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were reflected in the everyday lives of refugees: getting various forms of aid and workers to refugee camps and settlements was challenging. At times, it was utterly impossible when these areas were closed off and implemented restrictions forced action plans to be changed.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the number of quota refugees and applications for asylum and residence permits in Finland. In 2020, Finland received only 730 quota refugees, which is 120 fewer than planned. A total of 4,721 persons applied for asylum in Finland, 1,275 of whom were new applicants. In 2020, a total of 25,803 applications for residence permits were submitted, which is less than one-third of the figure recorded in the previous year. However, the public debate was characterised by COVID-19 and domestic interests, giving little attention to immigration and refugee issues.



Number of asylum applications
submitted in Finland:

3,209

Displaced people
in the world:

80 million

FINNISH REFUGEE COUNCIL IN 2020

The Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) is Finland's largest expert organisation specialising in the issues of displacement and migration. Each year, we support thousands of people in recovering from conflicts and integrating into new societies. For 55 years, our work has positively impacted lives in Finland, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. We are a politically and religiously independent organisation.



MISSION

We support the realisation of refugees and migrants' rights, and their equal participation as members and builders of societies.



VISION

Refugees and migrants are equal, participating members of their societies, and their fundamental rights are realised in a positive prevailing attitude.



VALUES

Fairness
Inclusion and equality
Transparency and responsibility

Exceptional circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 challenged our work both in Finland and in our operating countries. However, faced with an unprecedented situation and a rapidly changed world, we managed to adapt our plans and create new ways of working to ensure the continuity of our operations. This was made possible by our committed and persistent employees. The Finnish Refugee Council and a key group of our operators demonstrated their ability to adapt, and their strength to take action when faced with a state of emergency.

During the year, we developed our online training, reduced group sizes and organised remote meetings. In our operating countries, our work to combat COVID-19 was very successful, capitalising on our existing experience, for example, in raising awareness about Ebola: we carried out extensive information campaigns to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and distributed, among other things, personal protective equipment.

In 2020, our humanitarian work expanded to Gambela in Ethiopia, when we launched an adult education project for South Sudanese refugees and members of hosting communities. The launch of operations was enabled by the humanitarian aid funding we received from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the first time.

Similarly, a new major international funding partnership with the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) was launched in Uganda involving financial literacy.

In 2020, our operations were audited using strict evaluation indicators on an international scale. Strategic and goal-oriented organisational development and strengthening resulted in an excellent evaluation result of 9.7/10. Today, the FRC is a high-quality operator that invests in quality, effectiveness and the functionality of processes. On this basis, our certificate for the new partnership period 2021–2027 of ECHO (EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) was also confirmed.

Telecommuting introduced changes to our organisation's everyday operations everywhere, but we managed to adapt to it by developing our internal modes of operation. We monitored the well-being of our staff both in Finland and in our operating countries during the COVID-19 period. Despite COVID-19, we also took strategic steps to strengthen the greatest resource of our expert organisation – the expertise of our staff: we identified core competence areas of our staff through competence mapping, implemented staff training sessions and built employee ambassadorship in a goal-oriented manner.

Especially in tough times the strength of the organisation is measured. The FRC's unique team and knowledgeable group of operators is our greatest success factor at all times. COVID-19 brought along new and unpredictable challenges, but, even during the state of emergency, we made preparations for the new operating year of 2021, which will be the greatest in terms of operational volume in the history of the FRC.



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The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the flexibility of our operations and our staff, speaking volumes about the FRC's ability to change and adapt, even in difficult times. Our work has continued.

Annu Lehtinen, Executive Director of the Finnish Refugee Council

FRC'S 55TH ANNIVERSARY

Helvi Sipilä founded the Finnish Refugee Council in 1965. With the campaign 'Mitä Helvi tekisi?' (What would Helvi do?), we celebrated the lifework of this wonderful woman and the successful journey of our organisation so far. During the jubilee year, we reminded people that people like Helvi and the work of the Finnish Refugee Council are still needed today, even more so than ever.

Helvi Sipilä, also called the 'Empress of the World', was a pioneer: she was the first woman to serve as the Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations and to run for President of Finland. Helvi was also a lawyer, Master of Laws and a minister. Throughout her life, Helvi worked tirelessly for human rights and emphasised the improvement of women's status as part of refugee work. That is what Helvi would do today as well. We at the Finnish Refugee Council ensure that Helvi's important work continues.

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As a matter of fact, the Finnish Refugee Council was founded out of a desire to educate refugees. When women are educated, the benefits are widespread. Education is an opportunity and opportunities must be provided to refugees.

Helvi Sipilä



UNHCR'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2020, 70 years had passed since the foundation of the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR. Since 1950, the organisation has promoted the rights and well-being of refugees all over the world.

The Finnish Refugee Council was founded 55 years ago, and its founder Helvi Sipilä's mission was to raise funds for the UNHCR's work for the good of refugees. Today, the Finnish Refugee Council acts as the UNHCR's official communications partner in Finland. A key part of this partnership is our advocacy work: we monitor and promote the implementation of the UNHCR recommendations and the Global Compact on Refugees at the national level. The UNHCR has called on Finland to promote family reunification more intensively and to develop child-friendly asylum and immigration procedures in the best interests of the child. Good integration, employment and resilience of refugees are matters in which the UNHCR wants to support Finland.

In celebration of the 70th anniversary, we co-wrote an article with the UNHCR, which was published in the newspaper Turun Sanomat, among others.

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The UNHCR needs Finland's strong partnership and will continue to do so in the future.

FRC'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The year 2020 was a year of many changes in the Finnish Refugee Council's work abroad. Restrictions on mobility and assembly brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult and partially prevented the planned activities. In all our projects, however, we were able to find new alternative ways to continue working: we reduced group sizes, trained group leaders individually and developed online training. At the same time, we sought ways to combat the spread of the virus. In Liberia, Myanmar and Uganda, we implemented extensive awareness-raising campaigns, with the help of which nearly 283,000 people were informed of the methods of preventing its spread. In Uganda and Turkey, we included to ongoing training awareness-raising about the pandemic. We also distributed things like masks and other personal protective equipment, soap and food to quarantine centres.

Our vocational training in Myanmar was hit the hardest by restrictions on assembly, as schools remained closed until the end of the year. In addition to contact teaching, which took place at the beginning of the year, we organised online training that enabled us to continue our activities, albeit with fewer pupils than planned. In addition, we continued teacher training with a particular focus on online training.

In Uganda, we continued the adult education project by reducing group sizes and taking into

account safety distances and hygiene. In response to the decline in food security caused by the pandemic in refugee settlements, we promoted the cultivation of vegetables through training and distribution of seeds. In addition, we started extensive coordination of financial literacy training in Uganda aimed at all refugee households receiving cash allowances.

The FRC's humanitarian work expanded significantly during 2020, as we also received humanitarian aid funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the first time. This enabled us to launch an adult education project for refugees from South Sudan and members of the hosting communities in Gambela, Ethiopia. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we were able to get started in autumn 2020. In Myanmar, our humanitarian work focused on preventing gender-based violence and supporting those who have experienced it.

Our long-term work to expand our financing base paid off and, in addition to Finnish funding, our programme was funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT).

During the year, the activities of the FRC reached a total of 25,700 people, and the work related to COVID-19 reached more than 282,000 people.



Civil society was supported
by strengthening



In addition, 9,928
participated in financial
literacy training.

ECHO AUDIT PROVED THE QUALITY OF THE FRC ACTIVITIES

In 2020, the European Commission awarded the Finnish Refugee Council with the humanitarian aid partnership certificate for 2021–2027. We are one of seven Finnish organisations that are official partners of the EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), which further strengthens our role as a humanitarian operator. In the event of a disaster or humanitarian crisis, ECHO provides emergency assistance through more than 200 partner organisations.

In 2020, our operations were audited, on the basis of which we were able to have the certificate confirmed for the new ECHO partnership period. The audit was extensive and the results were excellent: our operations proved to be of high quality and reliable and all aspects of our internal and external processes functional. The ethicality of our operations, project management and implementation, risk management and human resources management are examples of areas of our operations that received excellent evaluations.

NEW TRAINING FORMS INTRODUCED IN UGANDA

The restrictions on mobility and assembly related to COVID-19 slowed down our operations in Uganda but did not prevent them: we were able to complete all the courses offered to adult refugees and Ugandans living in the vicinity of refugee settlements.

Our volunteer guidance counsellors adapted in an exemplary manner to the COVID-19 restrictions and spent weeks touring students' homes teaching basic hygiene, such as proper hand washing and setting up small-scale washing points. In addition, they volunteered

for additional work for a period of few months in order to teach several small groups instead of one large group. As a result, 74% of the students are now able to put what they have learnt to good use and teach other members of their community the basics of good hygiene.

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After the spread of COVID-19, we were able to react quickly and distribute soap and horticultural seeds to all students. With the help of these, families were able to grow nutritious vegetables. Many of our students became passionate about agriculture and expanded their garden in order to sell crops.

An important achievement was the increase in the number of students with disabilities. The target group expanded considerably when we introduced a new disability strategy and trained all the instructors involved in our activities.

In November, we launched a new project with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP), which aims to teach 141,000 refugee families financial skills, such as saving, budgeting and mobile money and banking

services. The first training period involved 4,800 families. The project will continue in 2021.

As usual, we also continued our literacy, entrepreneurship and English courses. In 2020, there were a total of 10,000 new students, 65% of whom were women. 84% of the students in the literacy course and 79% of the students in the English language course achieved basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and foreign language. 85% of those who started the entrepreneurship course completed it.

Studying in a group strengthened the adult students' self-confidence. At the beginning of the studies, only 7% of the English language course students said that they express their opinions at meetings, while at the end of their studies, 61% said they are active participants and propose new solutions to problems in their community.



SUCCESSFUL COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS IN MYANMAR

Also in Myanmar, 2020 was completely different from previous years. The COVID-19 pandemic affected every aspect of our operations. Access to refugee camps and communities was restricted and vocational schools, for example, were closed, which forced us to cancel many of the planned activities and made it difficult to reach the target groups.

Despite the challenging situation, however, we managed to develop our modes of operation. We developed distance vocational education and converted the motorcycle service and maintenance course in Loikaw to an online course, which was attended by a small group of students. In addition to this, we also converted small-entrepreneurship and life-skills courses related to working life to online courses, and refugee camp youth attended the courses using their phones also in Kachin. Development work is part of our wider-extending work to improve the quality of vocational education, and we also distributed the online training materials for use by our partners.

Training related to the partner's project management, monitoring and preparation of syllabuses was effective. The women's crafting courses carried out by the partner organisation also continued as planned and significantly improved the financial standing and self-esteem of the participants.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence was at the core of our activities in the states of both Kayah and Kachin. Through

training, we strengthened the capacity of key operators, such as health care personnel and police officers, and increased awareness of gender-based violence among internally displaced people and hosting communities. Protection of violence victims was improved with a 24/7 helpline, maintaining two shelters and providing legal assistance. The work reached a total of 1,675 people in different ways with the help of humanitarian aid funding from the UNFPA and Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

This time, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign was implemented by organising theme-related writing and photography competitions and a cycling event on Facebook. The campaign reached out to young people in particular, and more than 10,000 viewers watched the live show.

In Myanmar, we supported work combatting COVID-19 in the conflict-affected states of Kayah and Kachin. Through our local partners (Karenni National Women's Organization and Htoi Gender and Development Foundation), we were able to get help also into areas not under the control of the country's government. We supplied local hospitals with respiratory protective equipment, protective gloves and other hospital supplies that were in dire need. In addition to an extensive awareness-raising campaign, we also provided food and respiratory protective equipment for quarantined people and delivered water, soap and hand washing points to communities most in need of help. Our work combating COVID-19 was one of the most significant successes of the year. We reached over 258,000 people with it.

SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY CONTINUED

The FRC continued its project to support Syrian refugees in Kırıkhan, Hatay Province, near the Syrian border, and in Istanbul. The Turkish NGO Yuva implemented the project as the FRC's partner. According to the plan, Kırıkhan Community Centre was closed at the end of August and the activities were transferred to municipal operators and other organisations. Cooperation and training for public authorities continued until August and, in addition to social sector activities, cooperation was close with the health authorities.

Training and other group activities started at the beginning of the year were converted to online training soon after the COVID-19 assembly restrictions entered into force. Both language and vocational courses were converted to online training. Due to insufficient technical skills, participants were initially trained in the use of software and an IT hotline was set up to provide technical advice to those enrolled. Despite the challenges, 232 adult students passed the Turkish language course and 238 people attended vocational courses.

In order to improve the prevailing attitude and strengthen social cohesion, the Community Centre worked to reach not only the Syrians

but also the Turkish population. Different kinds of joint training and recreational events were organised at the Community Centre and later online. In addition, events in five other city districts were launched early in the year in cooperation with local operators in order to extend participation opportunities. During the year, these events reached 2,000 people, 40% of whom were Turks and 60% Syrian.

In Istanbul, support for the education of Syrian children and young people continued by organising remedial instruction in the Turkish language and natural sciences. The closure of schools due to the pandemic put many children and young people at a greater disadvantage. In Turkey, distance education was mainly provided through television and the majority of Syrian children were not able to participate. The project produced remedial instruction materials, which were distributed to children to support independent study. The aim was to organise meaningful activities and to maintain children's interest in studying. In addition, an information package on COVID-19 was produced and distributed to children and their families, including not only information on infection prevention, but also guidance to support distance learning. The course in natural sciences and the

Turkish language aimed at young people was converted to online training and its implementation started towards the end of the year.

A total of 3,195 people participated in the activities in Turkey in the course of the year.



FRC'S ACTIVITIES IN FINLAND

The year 2020 was also exceptional in terms of domestic work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, with the exception of personal guidance, almost all activities were implemented remotely. After a few weeks of re-orientation and experimentation, our employees were able to adapt perfectly to the new and unexpected situation. The conversion of training from seminars to webinars increased the number of participants. This allowed the distribution of the good practices learnt from the projects and expertise of the staff to a larger number of people than targeted.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed the biggest challenges in domestic work for projects and activities based on personal guidance and face-to-face encounters. Providing support to young immigrant people and families was challenging

because we were unable to meet face to face, but had to provide guidance over the phone or through Teams meetings. Although we were able to reach those with whom we had already established a relationship of trust, it was challenging to find new people in need of support during the year.

In the course of the year, domestic work expanded to new areas. This was partly due to the fact that COVID-19 forced us to convert training to webinars and personal guidance was provided through electronic services, which allowed participation from any locality. As the activities expanded to new localities, we were able to introduce a larger group of people, including people with a refugee background and immigrants as well as professionals and experts working with integration and immigration, into our domestic work.



505

young immigrant adults received guidance and counselling.

156 families

13 day-care centres and

14 schools received cultural interpretation.

200

volunteers supported 250 immigrants and asylum seekers.

67

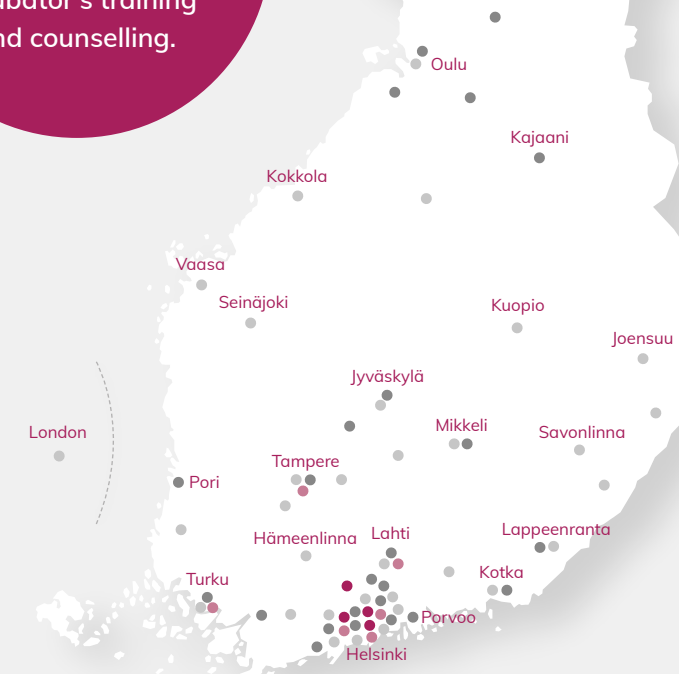
people participated in peer-counsellor training.

Employability coaching was attended by

30

people and 6 of them became employed during the same year.

A total of 248 associations and 638 individuals attended Organization Incubator's training and counselling.



FRC's activities in Finland

- Cooperation related to peer activities
- Partner municipalities of civic orientation and municipal training
- Participants in Organization Incubator's activities
- Volunteer activities



INTEGRATION IS A JOINT EFFORT

Peer support in 25 different native languages

At their best, peer activities promoting integration can increase the participant's positive self-image, provide factual information about society and support active participation in the new living environment. The FRC supports the organisation of high-quality peer activities in a diverse manner, and 2020 was no exception to this, against all the odds.

Our training Kaikkien vertaistoiminta (Everyone's Peer Activities) offering tools for reaching out to immigrants was attended by 15 organisations from outside the integration sector. For the first time, we organised easy language training for all the clients of the FRC's domestic activities, and we also provided organisational coaching and expert speakers.

The national VeTo-verkosto, network of peer-activity operators, coordinated by us, continued its monthly meetings and close cooperation

online. The network members organised the study module Käytännön kokemuksia maahanmuuttajatyöstä (Practical Experience on Immigrant Work) for students of the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

We organised peer groups for parents of school-age and day-care-age children and, in cooperation with the YWCA, for mothers of teenagers. COVID-19 impacted our work significantly and some of the groups had to be discontinued in the spring.

Peer counsellors are key to successful peer activities. During the year, 67 counsellors, speaking 25 different native languages, were trained. Distance training sessions received praise and participants from 15 localities attended the sessions. For the peer counsellors who had already completed the training, we organised mingling over coffee and further training. We also organised assistant-counsellor training for those

whose language skills were not yet sufficient for the actual peer counsellor training.

In the spring, we launched a peer operator database – a platform for finding trained peer counsellors with the needed language skills. At the moment, the peer operator database contains nearly 80 peer counsellors, who speak 53 different languages, seeking employment. Their number will increase by dozens every year with our training efforts.

Civic orientation as a path to integration

Civic Orientation is a course that supports integration and provides immigrants with basic information about Finnish society in their native language. In 2020, we continued to develop the course in the Navigaattori (Navigator) project by organising courses in cooperation municipalities, developing teaching materials and training native-language instructors. Civic Orientation was implemented in Arabic in Tuusula and in the Tigrinya language at Careeria in Kerava as part of integration training.

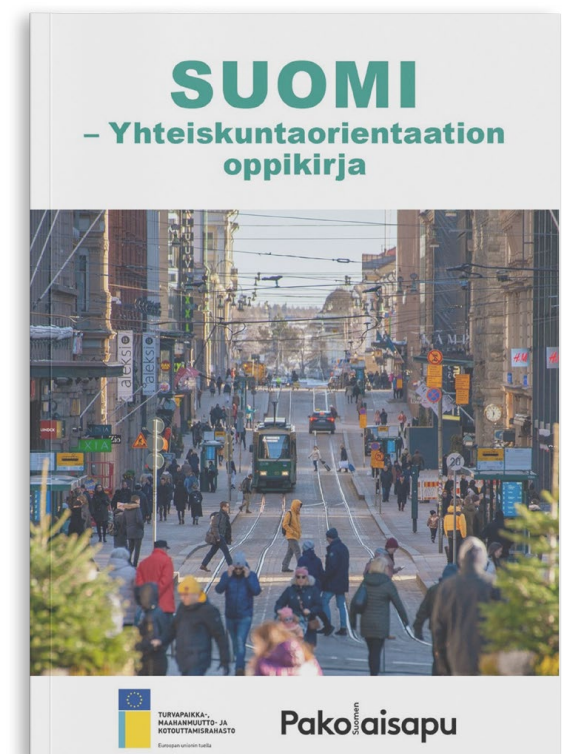
We published a French version of the Civic Orientation Textbook Finland and updated the Finnish version of the textbook. In the course of the year, eight new civic orientation instructors were trained.

To support two-way integration, we organised training courses Pakolaisen matka kuntaan (Refugee's Journey to the Municipality) in the Navigaattori project. This training course is aimed at municipal workers who encounter integrating refugees and other immigrants in their work. With the help of the course, the participants gained an overview of the reception and integration support measures of quota

refugees in the municipality, and tips on how to support everyday work with clients.

In the training, we utilized the infographic Quota Refugee's Journey to Finland and to the Home Municipality, which illustrates the journey of quota refugees to Finland and their first year in the home municipality. The infographic, which was created in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, was also published in Swedish and English in the course of the year.

The training Pakolaisen matka kuntaan (Refugee's journey to the municipality) was organised in Kerava and as a webinar in cooperation with the City of Hyvinkää. A total of 127 people participated in the training sessions, including staff from the education system, health care, social services and early childhood education, and people from the civic sector.



BUILDING A NEW LIFE IN FINNISH SOCIETY

Life situations of immigrants improved

The counsellors of the FRC's Kurvi operation support young immigrant adults by providing them with help, support and guidance on specific issues related to permits for foreign nationals and immigration. Due to COVID-19, the Kurvi operation was mainly organised remotely in 2020.

We provided service-guidance counselling 921 times to young immigrant adults and personal guidance 2,013 times to 45 different clients. In addition, we organised 24 training sessions for authorities, service-system employees and civic operators on the status and situation of immigrants in the Finnish service system. The total number of training participants was 769.

Through the Kurvi operation, the clients' knowledge and skills related to the Finnish service system and society increased and their situation in life improved. When the support ended, five of the clients received a flat, seven obtained a study place, 16 had their residence-permit matters sorted out, one was granted citizenship and six had their finance and debt matters sorted out.

Strengthening the interaction between families and the school system

In 2020, remote working was also introduced to the Linkki project, where we promote the everyday lives of immigrant families in Finnish society through cultural interpretation. Cultural interpretation increases understanding and interaction between families, day-care

centres and schools. We organised cultural interpreting for 56 immigrant families in meetings with day-care centre and school staff. Cultural interpretation was provided on 178 occasions.

Approximately 100 families received counselling related to the day care, school and service system, and the total number of counselling sessions was 487. With the help of our Linkki project, immigrant families and the staff of day-care centres and schools gained a better understanding of each other and their mutual interactions improved.

Improved employability skills and knowledge

In 2020, the Sauma project was no exception; the related employability activities were also largely carried out remotely. During the year, we organised four coaching periods for unemployed immigrants and immigrants at risk of unemployment. The coaching consisted of strengthening their job-seeking skills, employability skills, job-seeking motivation and job-seeking workshops.

The FRC's volunteers served as mentors in the job-seeking workshops and supported the participants in job-seeking efforts. A total of 30 people participated in the coaching, six of whom entered working life after the coaching period and five found a follow-up path to support their employment.

The last coaching period of the year was organised in cooperation with IKEA Finland, and two of the course participants were directly employed by IKEA's store in Espoo. In 2021, we will continue and improve cooperation.



DIVERSE CIVIL SOCIETY FORMS A SOLID POPULATION BASE



Towards a multi-voice civil society

Organization Incubator strengthened the competence and problem-solving capabilities of multicultural associations and civil society operators with unprecedented results. Despite the state of emergency brought on by COVID-19, the remote consultations, coaching and training of Organization Incubator reached a total of 638 participants from 248 different associations. Competence-level measurements and consultation surveys carried out as part of the training sessions, indicate very good success: nearly 90% of the association operators indicated that their competence had improved.

Volunteering in emergency conditions

The aim of our volunteering activities was to strengthen the integration capabilities of immigrants and to provide opportunities for empathetic encounters between different population groups. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the year was exceptional: face-to-face events could not be organised and other activities were mainly carried out remotely, which had an impact on the number of activities and people reached. Despite the challenges, forms of volunteering were successfully converted to the online form. More than 200 active volunteers trained for a new position, led Finnish-language discussion groups Puhutaan!, provided support in running errands as a Suomi-luotsi support person and started as an advocate volunteer. The activities reached nearly 250 integrating immigrants.

Global education provides tools for understanding global phenomena

As the COVID-19 situation and restrictive measures challenged schools, we were able to organise school visits remotely, but far fewer than planned. The focus of the activities was on the marketing and distribution of the digital photo exhibition and teachers' materials produced as part of the Frame, Voice, Report project and the materials produced by the UNHCR for children of different ages. We also participated in the development of teachers' sustainable development education as part of the Transformer 2030 project.

REFUGEES OF THE YEAR

The Finnish Refugee Council has been honouring the Refugee Woman of the Year since 1998 and the Refugee Man of the Year since 2016. Through

REFUGEE MAN OF THE YEAR KORDNEJAD EBRAHIMI

Kordnejad Ebrahimi was forced to flee Iran due to his political activity and he arrived in Finland with his family as a quota refugee in 2006. Ebrahimi trained as a bus driver, but had to retire on disability pension. After that he trained as a public service interpreter and was re-employed. Ebrahimi is also a member of several associations and acts as a voluntary mediator.

According to Ebrahimi, immigrants and their skills should be used more in the integration process of new arrivals. He uses his own YouTube videos to teach Finnish and Finnish customs to Kurdish-speaking people and translates COVID-19-related instructions into Kurdish.

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I noticed that topical information did not effectively reach the Kurdish community in Finland due to the language barrier. I felt that if at least one Kurd in Finland gets correct information through my channel, I have accomplished something important.

Kordnejad Ebrahimi

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I would like to set an example for refugee women and show that single mothers can cope, learn the language, bring up children and go to work.

Farhia Abdi

the award, we want to highlight people with a refugee background and support them in realising their goals and dreams in the new home country. In 2020, the choices emphasised the active and positive activities of refugees in everyday life and as members of Finnish society. Despite the challenges they have faced, both Refugees of the Year are, encouraging examples for other people through their perseverance and positive attitude to life.

REFUGEE WOMAN OF THE YEAR FARHIA ABDI

Farhia Abdi came to Finland as a refugee from Somalia with one of her children in December 2008. Despite the initial challenges, Abdi completed the basic course in the Finnish language, started to work as a kitchen helper and completed a basic qualification in the field of social services and health care. One year after being granted asylum, Farhia was able to bring her other seven underaged children to Finland through family reunification. Today, Abdi works as a carer and family worker for elderly people with memory disorders and runs her own well-being service company.

Farhia dreams of being able to provide services in the future to single mothers who have moved to Finland. According to her, they remain too isolated in Finland without grandparents and other support network.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS PROMOTE REFUGEES' RIGHTS

Impacts of climate change on refugees' lives

The COVID-19 pandemic that marked 2020 failed to weaken the strong communications by the Finnish Refugee Council. During the year, we strengthened our role as an expert by boldly expressing our views in public debate and in view of political decision-making, by intensifying

cooperation with other operators in the field and the media and by actively communicating the results of our activities.

Climate migration was highlighted in communications throughout the year. We were part of the Frame, Voice, Report project. As part of the project, we organised a seminar on

climate change and refugees in Helsinki Central Library Oodi in February. In addition to the FRC, the seminar speakers included experts from the UNHCR, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the University of Oxford.

On the same topic, we organised the photo exhibition Ilmastomuutos ja pakolaisuus (Climate Change and Refugees) in the Käytävägalleria of Sanoma House and in the Rikhardinkatu Library. The exhibition featured

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On 20 June, World Refugee Day, we raised people's awareness by sharing information about refugees on social media together with the UNHCR.

impressive photos taken by photographer Outi Neuvonen in Uganda in autumn 2019. We also realised an electronic and touring version of the photo exhibition, which can be booked for viewing at schools, libraries and other facilities.

On 20 June, World Refugee Day, we raised people's awareness by sharing information about refugees on social media together with the UNHCR.

In the autumn, our communications focused on festivity, as we celebrated the 55th anniversary of the FRC, the 75th anniversary of the UN and the 70th anniversary of the UNHCR. The praiseworthy journey of the Finnish Refugee Council was highlighted with the campaign 'What would Helvi do?' supported by many public figures.

Campaigns to improve effectiveness and fundraising

In our advocacy work, we focused on the issue of strengthening the quota refugee system. In the autumn, at a time of the government budget session, we campaigned for an increase in the refugee quota. Taking global responsibility for the weakest in the world, especially during the pandemic, has been an important message and one that we have also wanted to communicate to decision-makers.

We continued to strengthen fundraising, crucial to our operations. We launched the Empathy shirt designed by fashion designer Claudia Cifu, and the other Empathy support products were also popular. However, the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic made fundraising difficult. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our donors who supported our work at a challenging time.



TELECOMMUTING DEVELOPS AND ORGANISATIONAL UNITY IMPROVES

Responding to the staff-related and financial challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic was the main focus of organisational governance in 2020. At the same time, the growing need for the FRC's work, the changing operating environment and the expansion of foreign programme work required rapid development work.

In response to the pandemic, we developed new operating methods to support telecommuting, invested in the occupational well-being of the staff and cherished the communality and unity of the organisation under emergency conditions. Telecommuting of the staff became an established practice in Finland and partly in the other operating countries as well.

Strengthening the unity of the organisation between the operating countries continued by intensifying cooperation between the country offices and by laying out the key principles of human resources management in a code of conduct, which was implemented in all operating

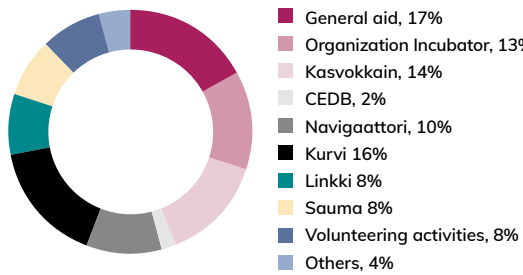
countries. As part of staff training, an expert ambassadorship programme was implemented in Finland, which supported the development of staff competence and encouraged the experts to engage in more visible communications and advocacy work.

We strengthened risk management and monitoring of responsible practices by creating a code of conduct for the association on conflicts of interest and a code of conduct focusing on the prevention of sexual abuse and by training the staff in all operating countries. During the year, we also updated the rules of finance and financial guidelines of the association to support our extended activities and to take into account, in particular, the needs of internal monitoring and increased international work.

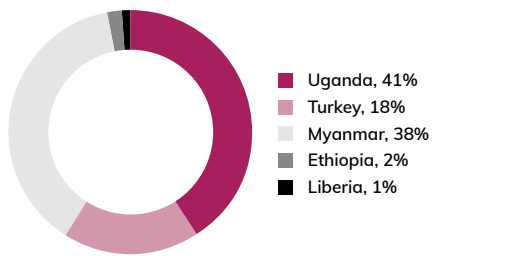
The FRC's work is carried out in all operating countries by a diverse and skilled team of experts. The staff of the country offices have been hired

locally, with the exception of country directors. In 2020, 37 staff members worked in Finland, 98 in Uganda, 24 in Myanmar and 4 in Ethiopia.

Domestic work per project



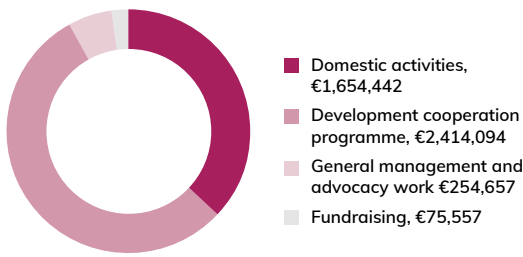
Development cooperation



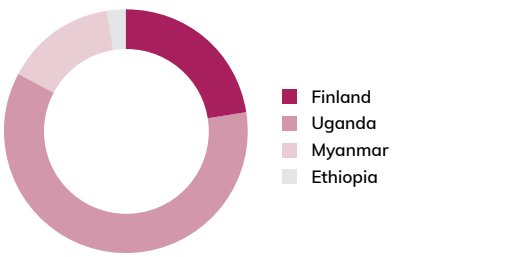
Income



Costs per operating area



Staff per country at the end of the year



- Members of the Board:**

 - Marjatta Rasi (Chairperson)
 - Pekka Sauri
 - Irma Ertman
 - Sari Koivuniemi
 - Mikko Laakkonen
 - Sofia Nevalainen
 - Eija Pitkänen
 - Maria Bernas-Hilli
 - Anne Rasskasov
 - Eva Tawasoli
 - Heta Räikkönen (alternate member)
 - Ansa Haavikko (alternate member)
- Member organisations:**

 - Svenska Kvinnoförbundet rf The Women's Organisation of the Swedish People's Party in Finland
 - Svensk Ungdom, Svenska folkpartiets ungdomsorganisation rf Swedish Youth of Finland
 - Finlands svenska Marthaförbund r.f. The Swedish Martha Association in Finland
 - Kokoomuksen Opiskelijaliitto Tuhatkunta ry Student Union of National Coalition Party
 - Suomen Nuorten Naisten Kristillisten Yhdistysten (NNKY) Liitto ry YWCA of Finland
- Nuorten Kotkien Keskusliitto - Unga Örnars Centralförbund NKK ry

Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö SAK ry The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions

Sosialidemokraattiset Naiset ry Social Democratic Women of Finland

Suomen Kansanopistoyhdistys ry

Business and Professional Women (BPW) Finland ry

Keskustaopiskelijat ry Centre Students Finland

Vihreiden nuorten ja opiskelijoiden liitto (Vihreät Nuoret) ry Federation of Green Youth and Students of Finland

Kansalaisopistojen liitto KoL ry The Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres

Sosialidemokraattiset Nuoret ry Social Democratic Youth of Finland

Vasemmistonuoret ry Left Youth

Aseistakieltäytyjiliitto ry Union of Conscientious Objectors

Kansainvälinen Solidaarisuustyö ry International Solidarity Work

DaisyLadies ry

MIELI Suomen Mielenterveys ry MIELI Mental Health Finland
- In addition to the member organisations, the association had 226 individual members.

Finnish Refugee Council

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