



Finnish  
Refugee  
Council



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023



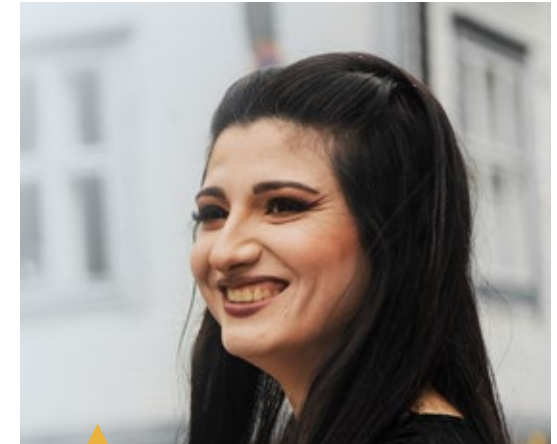
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## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

# GLOBAL CRISES CALL FOR ACTION

As of June 2023, there were more than 110 million displaced people in the world. According to estimates by the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, the figure could reach up to 114 million by the end of the year due to the wars in the Gaza Strip and Ukraine. Of those forced to flee, 62.5 million are internally displaced and up to 76% live in poor or middle-income countries.

The civil war that broke out in Sudan in April 2023 drove millions of people to seek refuge in neighbouring South Sudan. Despite internally displacing up to 7.1 million people, the conflict has not appeared in the news headlines.

The war in Sudan has also increased the number of refugees in Ethiopia, which is one of the Finnish Refugee Council's (FRC) operating countries. In addition to refugees from the surrounding areas, there are up to 4 million

internally displaced people in the country. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, suffering from not only conflicts but also extreme climate conditions. This threatens the future of traditional livelihoods that belong to agriculture and nomadism in the Somali region.

Uganda in East Africa is also one of the largest refugee host countries in the world. Most of the refugees are driven from the neighbouring countries by conflicts and poverty. We have been operating in Uganda since 1997 and, over the years, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of refugees from a few tens of thousands to 1.5 million. However, Uganda's refugee policy is very sophisticated, providing refugees with nearly the same rights and universal services as its citizens.

In Myanmar in Southeast Asia, the state of the

”

Away from the eyes of the world, the conflict in Sudan continues to rage. Across the country, an unimaginable humanitarian crisis is unfolding, as more and more people are displaced by the relentless fighting.

Comment of the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR on the escalating situation



Over  
**110 mil.**  
people displaced

In Finland:  
**19 000**  
applications for  
temporary protection

**1 342**  
quota refugees

**1 571**  
positive asylum  
decisions

**62,5 mil.**  
people internally  
displaced

country continues to deteriorate due to the fighting that was triggered by the 2021 military coup and the breakdown of public infrastructure. In addition to thousands of refugees, the country has up to two million internally displaced people. The conflict also hinders humanitarian and development cooperation in the region.

The attack in the Gaza Strip has shocked Finns. The conflict that erupted in October 2023 has already killed tens of thousands of people, a large part of which were children. Attacks on the most vulnerable populations, such as refugees, children and the ill, violate international law. Along with other Finnish organisations, the FRC has also taken a strong stand for a humanitarian ceasefire.

In 2023, immigration to Finland reflected the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the situation on the eastern border as well as the economic recession and labour shortage. Immi-

gration was one of the major issues in the parliamentary elections and government formation talks held at the beginning of the year. With the new government, racism also became a hot topic in public debate. In August, the Government gave a statement condemning racism.

According to the statistics released by the Finnish Immigration Service at the beginning of the year, more than 5,300 asylum applications were submitted in Finland during the course of the year. There were 1,571 positive decisions made on asylum applications, in addition to which 1,342 quota refugees arrived in Finland. During the year, more than 19,000 applications for temporary protection were also submitted in Finland. More than 18,000 people fleeing Ukraine were granted temporary protection.

At the end of 2023, the number of asylum seekers arriving on the Russian-Finnish border sparked public debate in Finland. The border between the two countries was closed in November after more than a thousand people crossed the border during the latter part of the year.



# FINNISH REFUGEE COUNCIL IN 2023



## Decades of experience in integration work

The Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) is Finland's largest expert organisation specialising in the issues of forced displacement. Each year, we support thousands of people in recovering from conflicts and integrating into new societies. Our goal is a world where the human rights of displaced persons are realised.

For close to 60 years, our work has positively impacted lives in Finland, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. In order to succeed in our important work, we continuously improve our expertise-based and focused work and adhere to good governance. Our work is facilitated by a comprehensive and well-functioning cooperation network. We are a politically and religiously independent organisation.

As an expert organisation on forced displacement, our work focuses on crises and conflicts that drive people to a state of emergency in their lives, where they need protection and to flee their homes, often beyond the borders of their country. In 2023, we also continued our work to support displaced persons both in Finland and in our operating countries Uganda, Ethiopia and Myanmar, where millions of people live under the strain of protracted conflict situations and challenging conditions. Our most important tasks include facilitating new beginnings and supporting displaced

persons. The figures speak volumes about the conflicts around the world: an estimated 1.2 billion, or 14% of the world's population, live in an area directly affected by war and conflict. During 2023, we also passed the sad historic threshold of 110 million displaced persons.

Although the operating environment posed considerable challenges to our work, we also achieved countless successes. We offered refugees capabilities for new beginnings in the form of functional literacy, financial literacy and entrepreneurship training, among other things.

Most of the participants in our training courses are women, and taking their particularly vulnerable position into account in our work is also reflected in the fight against gender-based violence. Indeed, the prevention of gender-based violence was established as a strategic goal that is part of the work in all our programme countries.

The violent civil war in Sudan has already forced millions of people to flee their homes. This is also reflected in the growing number of refugees in our operating areas in Ethiopia, where we carried out long-term development cooperation, including humanitarian work. The increase in the number of refugees was also evident in Uganda, Africa's largest refugee host country, where our projects over the past year focused on supporting refugee resilience and active agency. In Myanmar, violence intensified while poverty increased. Despite the very challenging operating environment, we reached out to a wide range of displaced persons and supported them by means of, for example, vocational training and awareness of gendered violence.

The annual priorities of our strategic roadmap invested programmatically especially in the construction of a cross-cutting programme entity, which was launched with the Paluu ("Return") project advising on assisted voluntary return.

In our domestic work, we broke into a new field when we launched the Sawian project to prevent gang formation and radicalisation in cooperation with Children of the Station at the beginning of the year.

The new initiatives further strengthened our expertise in the issues of forced displacement. At the same time, we continued to support the population relations, integration and employment of immigrants through our existing activities.

The most important asset of the FRC is our fantastic employees in all our operating countries.

Support for Ukrainian refugees also remained a strong part of our domestic operations.

Refugeeism was also discussed in the media; first, with regard to the parliamentary elections held at the beginning of the year. Then, it was due to the deepening crises in the world. Finally, in the autumn, it was also discussed concerning the situation on Finland's eastern border. In particular, our international media coverage increased significantly, and our expertise in forced displacement was also extensively utilised during the rest of the year.

We are stronger together, and in the past year, we have invested in the unity of the FRC through, for example, cross-cutting working groups, processes and the strengthening of a unified organisational culture.

The most important asset of the FRC is our fantastic employees in all our operating countries. Our international work community of multidisciplinary professionals and experts in forced displacement works together perfectly, with dedication and warmth to defend the rights of refugees and to promote recovery from conflicts.



**ANNU LEHTINEN**  
Executive Director of the Finnish Refugee Council

# HELPING REFUGEES ON THREE CONTINENTS

In 2023, we continued our work in Finland and our three operating countries abroad: Uganda and Ethiopia in East Africa and Myanmar in Southeast Asia. Although the operating environment in these countries is challenging in many ways, we achieved good results and supported a total of 116,878 people affected by forced displacement in improving their situation. Our work combines humanitarian aid for those needing immediate help with more long-term work that promotes a stable future, well-being and integration of refugees.

We provided tangible assistance with the acute needs arising from forced displacement by distributing cash grants to the most vulnerable households in Amhara, Ethiopia. We prevented gender-based violence, which becomes more prevalent in crisis situations, by increasing community awareness through training. We also supported female victims of violence through various activities in Ethiopia and Myanmar.

Strengthening the resilience and capabilities of refugees and supporting active agency are at the core of our operations, especially in situations involving prolonged forced displacement.

Education is a significant factor in promoting livelihoods and well-being, and it plays a key role in the work of FRC in all our programme countries.

Through our work, we offer young people and adults training in basic reading skills and agricultural techniques, among other things. Vocational short courses, combined with support for entrepreneurship and employment, improve opportunities to make a living and provide refugees with resources far into the future. Financial literacy courses, in turn, help households to use the cash grants they receive systematically, which improves the position of women and benefits the entire family. Improving resilience and self-sufficiency is increasingly important in all our countries of operation, especially now that the funds allocated to organisations working with refugees outside of Europe have significantly decreased. The reduction and even the discontinuation of support have a negative impact on displaced persons and their families.

We prevented gender-based violence, which becomes more prevalent in crisis situations, by increasing community awareness through training.

60%

of participants in training courses were women

We supported

116 878

refugees in integrating into new societies

We provided humanitarian assistance to

35 410

displaced persons



# ADULT EDUCATION GIVES REFUGEES THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO TAKE THEIR FUTURE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS IN UGANDA

During 2023, we continued to provide training in financial skills in Uganda. The training courses had a huge impact: The training courses held in May 2023 reached more than 86,000 refugees and were supported by the World Food Programme. We updated the training contents for the next year to also cover teaching in basic digital skills, such as money transfers using mobile phones.

During the year, we did a lot of development work in relation to our adult education activities: We developed adult education materials, created a new teaching package from them and updated the final exam of the literacy course. The updated exam not only corresponds better to our curriculum, but also measures the students' technical skills and ability to apply the acquired learning in practice.

With the help of education, increasingly more displaced persons have the opportunity to lead a financially stable life.

Long-term basic courses lasting 4–11 months were completed by 6,500 people: 3,500 in literacy, 2,100 in the English language and 900 in entrepreneurship. The participants included 53% women, 20% young people and 4% persons with disabilities. In addition, up to 61,000 refugees completed our financial literacy course. They also included 53% women.

With the help of education, increasingly more displaced persons have the opportunity to live a financially stable life and influence their own future. The accumulation of knowledge and skills also gives those who have participated in training a better opportunity to communicate and solve problems peacefully in different communities.

The reduction in funding for organisations working with refugees was reflected in our work in Uganda in very concrete ways, including a decrease in direct food aid and cash assistance. As a result, in order to survive, refugees had to spend more time supporting themselves and their families with insecure livelihoods dependent on external factors, such as farming. For many, the time spent on survival meant less time for education, which would provide refugees with a more secure future in the long term.



Our training courses reached more than **86 000** refugees and they were supported by the World Food Programme in 2023



## REFUGEES STRENGTHEN THEIR CAPABILITIES WITH FUNCTIONAL LITERACY IN ETHIOPIA

In 2023, the climate crisis and the disasters, droughts, floods and diseases caused by it as well as the escalating conflicts have all increased the number of refugees in Ethiopia. Humanitarian aid and development cooperation were indispensable for up to 20 million Ethiopians. Ethiopia is the third-largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. During the year, we worked in the capital Addis Ababa and in the South Wollo and Gambella regions. The World Food Programme's (WFP) food aid was interrupted for more than five months in 2023, which also hindered the FRC's projects.

In Addis Ababa, we supported the livelihoods of the refugee population by organising various training courses. In Gambella, we worked with South Sudanese refugees to strengthen their literacy and business skills. In South Wollo, in the Amhara region, we carried out humanitarian work, including delivering groceries, developing sanitary facilities and supporting opportunities

for schooling. In addition to displaced persons, vulnerable Ethiopians also participated in our activities. In line with our strategy, our work focused especially on supporting the most vulnerable, such as women and people with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

During the year, 75% of the 2,000 displaced people who participated in our training passed the final exam. The training opened up new kinds of opportunities for the graduates, such as understanding medical prescriptions, managing finances and reading their children's school reports. The graduates included 1,047 women (69.8%) and 194 persons with disabilities (12.9%). At the end of the training, up to 96% were functionally literate in their own language or in English versus close to zero at the start of the course.

We also updated the curriculum and developed related materials as part of our work.



## COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROVIDING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN MYANMAR

In 2023, the already challenging situation in Myanmar deteriorated further. At the end of the year, the UN reported 2.6 million internally displaced persons in the country, almost 800,000 of whom had been forced to leave their homes due to the violence at the end of October. The increasingly tense security situation was also reflected in our daily work, as, for example, the disconnection of the internet and telephone service in the operating area made it difficult to carry out our projects, and it also caused security problems for our employees.

Despite severe operating restrictions and difficulties in getting humanitarian aid to those needing it, we were able to continue our work with flexible practices and partners. The financial support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) played a crucial role in the continuation of operations.

We supported the internally displaced population affected by the conflicts. Our work reached 11,351 displaced persons, mostly women and girls as well as those with disabilities. In addition, we provided vocational training in the states of Kachin and Kayah, strengthening disadvantaged young people's faith in the future. The success rate of the training was high, as up to 75% of the participants found employment through the training.

As part of our work in Myanmar, we also fought gender-based violence by establishing women's



and girls' shelters and collaborating on opportunities for women-led civic organisations. In addition, we raised awareness in our communities through various training programmes and services. A total of 4,949 women and men participated in the training programmes.

In the spirit of this theme, we celebrated the international campaign 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence in November. We organised events in six localities during the campaign. Through these events, we increased community engagement in anti-violence efforts and highlighted the important role that local communities play in eradicating the phenomenon.

# HELPING REFUGEES IN FINLAND

## TOWARDS VERSATILE AND COMPREHENSIVE EXPERTISE



The Paluu project, which supports voluntary return, was launched in May.

In 2023, we continued on the path indicated by our strategy renewed the previous year.

With the support of the EU Internal Security Fund (ISF), we started work on the prevention of gangs and radicalisation in the form of the Sawian project. We also started to update the social orientation learning material online with the support of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). With the new projects, we were able to diversify the funding base of our domestic work with two new funders. This increases the stability of our operations and enables comprehensive work to support displaced persons.

In addition to the projects launched, we came up with new themes for our work across unit and department boundaries: We designed new concepts for anti-racist work, preventing honour-related violence and supporting women's employment as well as applied for funding for them. Funding for anti-racist work from AMIF

We started the Sawian project to prevent gang formation and radicalisation at the beginning of the year.

was confirmed, starting at the beginning of 2024, and decisions on two other funding applications are expected in spring 2024.

The three thematic units of the domestic department – resilience and adaptability, employment and economic development as well as population relations – carried out important work to meet the needs of vulnerable people. During the year, the war in Ukraine continued to affect our work in Finland, and we provided counselling to those who fled Ukraine and guided them more towards our ongoing operations. In order for the work to continue to meet the needs of those fleeing Ukraine in the future, we investigated development points in the form of

a needs assessment and applied for funding for the activities from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).

The first AMIF-funded project related to assisted voluntary return, which combines domestic and international operations, was launched in May.

There were changes in the management positions of the domestic department, and during the year, our domestic management team became established. We also continued to develop the competence of our personnel towards comprehensive and deeper expertise.





## SUPPORT FOR YOUNG IMMIGRANTS

The year 2023 was productive and full of changes for the Kurvi (“Curve”) operations. We made changes to our operations by developing operating methods and updating job descriptions to better meet the needs of our work. As a result of our strategic planning work, we decided to focus on young immigrants under the age of 30 from 2024 onwards. In 2023, we provided the target group with individual guidance and support and low-threshold advice on services. In addition, we trained professionals, co-ordinated the Mare network that tackles the structural barriers faced by immigrants and offered consultations.

**24**

immigrant clients at risk of social exclusion received individual support for their integration.

We strengthened the confidence of

**802**

immigrants in the Finnish service system through individual meetings.

We supported

**1 422**

customers in matters related to their everyday lives.

We trained

**397**

professionals and improved their ability to interact with immigrants

The expertise of our operations was utilised by providing consultancy

**74**

times.

## OUTREACH WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS AGAINST GANG FORMATION AND RADICALISATION

In 2023, we launched a new Sawian project aimed at preventing the gang formation and radicalisation of young people in cooperation with Children of the Station. At the beginning of the work, we focused on creating networks, and we reached young people and their parents extensively: The amount of work aimed at parents exceeded the goals many times over. We reached out to young people comprehensively, for example by strengthening cooperation between homes and schools, supporting parents and focusing on the individual challenges faced by young people.

The cooperation with schools started successfully, as we worked at the grassroots level by participating in various events and educational institutions in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In addition, we participated in parent meetings. The activities of the project also attracted a lot of interest in the media.

We provided advisory services to young people aged 10–22 a total of

**528**

times



## WORKING-LIFE COACHING OFFERS PRACTICAL HELP IN JOB SEARCH

During the year, the working-life coaching in our Sauma (“Seam”) operations provided immigrants with tools for finding employment. Throughout the year, we organised month-long courses where immigrants learned about Finnish work culture and working-life practices, practised for job interviews and made resumes and application letters. Many people enrolled for the courses over the course of the year, and we selected 71 applicants to participate in our activities. Forty-seven volunteer working-life mentors who we trained also attended job search workshops to help the participants write job applications and CVs. During the 2023 follow-up period, up to 58% of the participants found a job after taking the course.

”  
Life is good.  
A course participant comments after securing a job

We also maintained old employer partnerships and found new employers to add to them. Together with our partners, we create sustainable employment relationships and more diverse work communities. We also collaborated more with the employment services of different cities, especially in customer guidance, thanks to which increasingly more people in need of services were able to access them.



A total of  
**392**  
immigrants applied for our working-life coaching



**WE ORGANISED INFORMATION SESSIONS**  
around Finland, for example in Helsinki, Tampere, Forssa, Joensuu, Kirkkonummi and Pori.

## INTRODUCING FINLAND TO DISPLACED UKRAINIANS



The year 2023 provided a lot of work and lessons in our Ukraine project. The types of support needed by displaced Ukrainians changed a lot during the year and were different from 2022. We provided them with advice on a wide range of topics: Most commonly, displaced Ukrainians needed support in matters related to immigration permits, livelihood, employment and housing. In the work, we noted in practice how quickly many Ukrainians learned to navigate the Finnish service system and society. Information flowed well between Ukrainians, which reduced their need for support towards the end of the year.

**677**  
individual counselling sessions in 2023

**87%**  
of counselling sessions ended with the customer receiving the support they needed from us and with no need for further guidance.



23

counselling sessions for persons considering voluntary return

## ADVICE ON ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN

In accordance with the new FRC strategy, the operations of the cohesion department began with the AMIF-funded Paluu project in May. The aim of the project is to increase the availability of reliable information and support on assisted return for third-country nationals and members of diaspora communities. The aim of our training, in turn, is for the authorities and civil society organisation (CSO) actors to have sufficient expertise on the subject.

Although the activities only got off to a good start in the second half of the year, we were able to train 114 officials and CSO actors who

meet third-country nationals in their work as well as members of diaspora communities. We provided counselling 23 times to persons eligible for assisted voluntary return.

114

actors trained for assisted voluntary return

## ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

In 2023, we continued our work to promote a more equal working life. In 2023, our Reilu työelämä (“Fair Labour”) project reached a total of 465 customers all over Finland through advisory services, outreach work and information sessions. A total of 81% of the customers we interacted with were able to access the support services they needed.

Thanks to our long-term operations, victims of labour exploitation can better identify their own rights and report the labour exploitation they have experienced to the authorities, thus getting the support they need. In addition to the Helsinki metropolitan area, we also deployed staff to Joensuu, Pori and Tampere.



## SOCIAL ORIENTATION LEARNING MATERIALS RESPONDS TO THE CHANGING ACT ON THE PROMOTION OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

The new Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration will make social orientation a statutory service from the beginning of 2025. In response to the need created by the new act, we launched a joint project with the Finnish National Agency for Education in May 2023 to update the learning materials previously produced by the FRC. In the two-year project, we updated the materials throughout. In addition, we will put the learning materials online so that they are easily accessible to everyone.

”

You organised great information sessions for our customers. Special thanks for the interactive approach. The feedback from customers was positive. We hope to continue working together next year!”

A partner

# INTERACTION AND TWO-WAY INTEGRATION



In 2023	<b>170</b>	volunteers
	<b>365</b>	immigrant encounters in Suomiluotsi activities
	<b>1 496</b>	participants in Puhutaan groups

Our volunteer activities complement public sector immigrant services by supporting integration customers with everyday skills, such as the Finnish language, information retrieval, studies and job search. During 2023, a total of 170 volunteers participated in our activities. Our volunteers worked both in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and online.

In 2023, our volunteer activities reached a total of 916 immigrants.

Our volunteer Suomiluotsi (“Finland pilot”) guides supported the integration customers, for example in handling everyday matters, job searching and studying the Finnish language 365 times. During the course of the year, the Puhutaan (“Let’s Talk”) groups led by our volunteers had a particularly high number of participants; volunteers led over 100 group sessions

where integration customers could practise spoken Finnish. All in all, 1,496 immigrants participated in our groups during the year.

In addition, our operations focused on supporting those fleeing Ukraine moved from the Ukraine Help Center to become part of the Finnish-Swedish operation, where volunteers give individual support to immigrants.

”  
The Puhutaan group is the only place where I can speak Finnish.  
Feedback from a Puhutaan group participant

# TOWARDS A MORE WELCOMING SOCIETY THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER ACTIVITIES

In 2023, we continued our high-quality work in our Kasvokkain (“Face-to-face”) peer-to-peer activities by offering peer counsellor training, training sessions and advisory services for organisations, expert speeches and coordinating the Veto network for peer-to-peer and societal receptivity promoting integration. Nearly 1,200 people participated in our activities throughout the year.

We organised 11 peer counsellor training courses with more than 100 new peer counsellors participating. Our peer counsellor team now includes 261 qualified counsellors who speak 65 different languages. We advised organisations and organised trainings on the themes of cultural sensitivity and easy-to-read language. We also gave various expert speeches on the themes of peer-to-peer activities. In addition, we developed a new kind of training programme based on the themes of empathy and trust.

The national peer-to-peer network we coordinate, Veto, continued to grow and had a total of 119 members at the end of 2023. Late in the year, we organised a celebration of the Veto network’s 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary together with the Kurvi operations.

”  
The peer activities of the Finnish Refugee Council opened up the world to me, and so now I also want to help others.  
Feedback from a participant in peer counsellor training

In 2023	<b>1 200</b>	customers, volunteers and experts reached through our work
	<b>11</b>	peer counsellor training courses
More than	<b>100</b>	trained new peer counsellors, 90% of whom were satisfied with our training
	<b>261</b>	counsellors on the peer counsellor team who speak a total of 65 different languages





## GLOBAL EDUCATION INCREASES KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GLOBAL PHENOMENA AND ENCOURAGES ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In 2023, we exceeded the goals of global education in terms of both reaching students and teacher training. In January, we participated in the national Educa trade fair, where we launched new learning materials for global education on refugeeism in Finland and abroad.

We received more requests to visit schools than before, which indicates a need for information and a growing awareness of us. Our global educators visited a total of 30 different lower and upper secondary schools in different parts of Finland. Through the visits, we reached a total of 1,034 young people and 42 teachers from all over Finland.

In 2023

**1 034**

we reached 1,034 young people on school visits to 30 different educational institutes

We organised global education visits in 10 different cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kirkkonummi, Oulu, Janakkala, Nokia, Rauma, Jyväskylä ja Tampere



In 2023

**312**

CSO actors trained

**206**

associations supported

**17**

different localities where CSO actors were reached

”

I learned things here that you cannot read in law books or on Google, but which the association is expected to do according to a certain formula. Very important stuff.

Training feedback



## LONG-TERM SUPPORT FOR A MULTI-VOICED CIVIL SOCIETY

We continued our successful work at Järjestöhautomo (CSO incubator) and added to the competence, inclusion and active citizenship of multicultural CSO and civil actors. The CSO incubator offered training programmes to CSO actors on a variety of topics. In 2023, we also piloted a new entity where multicultural civil actors were given guidance on social advocacy.

We organised a total of 15 CSO incubator training sessions throughout the year with 312 participants from the CSO field. We held a total of 291 advisory sessions, and through our work, we also supported 206 associations. Overall, our activities involved 671 participants from all over Finland.

During the year, we also reached new customers, significantly strengthening the role of a multicultural civil society in Finland.



## MEDIA VISIBILITY, FOCUS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND MORE DIVERSE BRAND WORK

In 2023, our communications focused on strong media cooperation, more strategic planning and implementation of communications, highlighting key work themes and implementing our renewed brand throughout the organisation in the previous year.

We carried out media work throughout the year, responding to media requests for interviews and background information. Especially in the autumn, cooperation with both Finnish and international journalists intensified after the Finnish government decided to close the eastern border, and the expertise of the FRC was visible in the media more than 260 times. We also organised an annual journalism course for media representatives to increase the media's understanding of the diverse themes of refugeeism and migration.

The expertise of the FRC was visible in various media was **more than 260** times.

We produced a wide variety of content from our work on our websites, social media channels and newsletters. Domestic communication strengthened with new themes, such as gang formation and voluntary return. We also started working on a communication and advocacy strategy in Uganda, and diversified communications in Ethiopia and Myanmar with new stories and images.

In 2022, we strengthened our reformed brand with, among other things, updated communication materials and support for our employees' communications. At the end of the year, we looked at the upcoming website rebuild and found a new partner for the project, with which we will start work in 2024.

### REFUGEE OF THE YEAR

## BERIVAN SULEIMAN DEFENDS THE RIGHTS OF DISPLACED WOMEN

For several years, the Finnish FRC has wanted to highlight the different experiences of people with a refugee background by choosing the Refugee Woman and Man of the Year. In 2023, we awarded the prize for the first time to a single person of refugee background, regardless of gender. The aim of the choice is not only to support the implementation of refugees' rights, but also to increase people's understanding of the diverse topics related to forced displacement.

In 2023, we chose Beriva Suleiman, a Helsinki resident from Syria, as Refugee of the Year. At just 27 years old, Berivan has gone through numerous traumatic events in her life. However, the determined woman has not been discouraged by intimate partner violence, a life-threatening escape across the Mediterranean, a cancer diagnosis and the loss of a child.

Based on all her experiences, as Refugee of the Year, Beriva wants to speak out about the violence experienced by women and thus empower women and instil faith in them. Berivan has already spoken openly about her experiences in the past, and many women from all over Finland in the same situation have contacted her and asked for support.

”

When I shared my story on social media, other women who have experienced similar things saw that they are not alone. This is exactly what I want to emphasise as Refugee of the Year: If women suffer from control and threats of violence, help is available and they can and should talk about it.

Berivan Suleiman

# ADVOCACY WORK IN FINLAND AND ABROAD

The Koko kuva (“The Whole Picture”) project, which was carried out in cooperation with photographer Julius Töyrylä in 2022, resulted in a spectacular photo exhibition at the Stoa cultural centre in Helsinki in early 2023. The well-received photo exhibition on stories behind immigration reflects on belonging to Finnish society and the importance of interpersonal relationships for integration into a new country. The exhibition was seen by audiences all over Finland at various exhibition venues in Helsinki, Kotka, Rovaniemi, Simo and Tervola.

Our advocacy work at the beginning of the year focused on the spring parliamentary elections. Together with other organisations working in the field of forced displacement, we carried out an immigration and asylum policy survey for the candidate parties, which we used to find out the parties’ positions on topical issues. In



March, we helped organise an election debate on immigration and human rights in the Helsinki Cathedral Crypt. We continued our cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR and forwarded the updated UNHCR recommendations for Finland to the new members of Parliament.

In June, we were featured prominently in the SuomiAreena in Pori, where we organised speeches on complementary immigration routes. During the year, we also improved our international visibility and participated, for example, in the largest international event on forced migration at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva as part of the Finnish delegation.

Five episodes of the Welcome To My Backyard podcast dealt with, among other things, the phenomena of juvenile delinquency and gang formation, the health care of undocumented people and gender-based violence. The podcast has gained a dedicated audience, and we are delighted to have also gained new listeners during the year.



## LAUNCH OF OUR EMPATHY- THEMED SHIRTS BOOSTS FUNDRAISING FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR

At the end of the year, we launched our new Choose Empathy shirt, which reminds us of the importance of empathy and encourages everyone to support displaced persons both in Finland and abroad. The launch was a success, and by the end of 2023, hundreds of shirts had been sold.

During the year, we focused on the long-term strategic development of fundraising. In 2023, our total fundraising income was EUR 457,500. We received significant support from both numerous individuals and businesses – together we are stronger, and even a small act can have a big impact.

**We want to extend our sincere gratitude to all our supporters – thank you!**



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND CLOSER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In terms of finances and administration, the main mission of our work, also in 2023, was to enable sustainable growth and high-quality programme work. We strengthened the organisation's administrative competence and capacity in Finland and other operating countries in accordance with the revised strategic roadmap for the previous year. We further developed the systems and processes of our operating countries to better correspond to our new and increased funding base. We also intensified cooperation between offices in different countries as well as unified reporting and cooperation practices, thereby strengthening the interaction and identity of the entire FRC as an international operator.

In Finland, we followed the strategy in viewing our organisation as a constantly learning and developing organisation. We trained our employees on many of the themes of our work and, during the year, formed multidisciplinary and cross-unit teams of experts with the aim of making comprehensive use of the entire organisation's expertise in different areas of our work. In Finland, we also introduced a new performance assessment system.

In addition, security planning was one of the key development areas of the year, especially for the safety of our employees in Uganda, Ethiopia and Myanmar. We improved the security of

our organisation by centralising information management and organising related training; we also introduced an electronic whistleblowing channel for risk management purposes. In terms of environmental responsibility, we created a common environmental code for the organisation.

Our work in all our operating countries is carried out by a diverse and skilled team of experts. In all of our operating countries, staff has been hired locally, with the exception of the country directors of Ethiopia and Uganda. At the end of 2023, we had 48 employees in Finland, 86 in Uganda, 32 in Myanmar and 36 in Ethiopia.

## MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

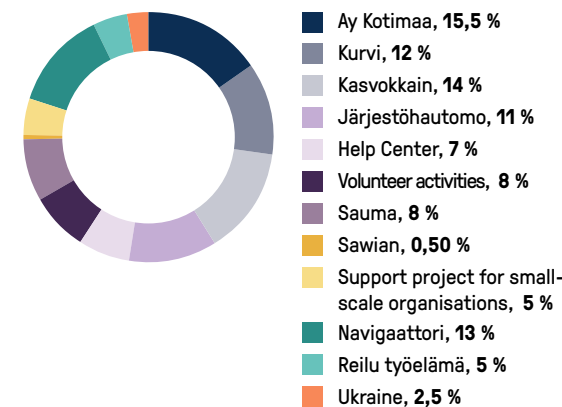
- The Women's Organisation of the Swedish People's Party in Finland
- Swedish Youth of Finland
- The Swedish Martha Association in Finland
- Student Union of National Coalition Party
- YWCA of Finland
- Unga Örnars Centralförbund NKK ry
- The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions
- Social Democratic Women of Finland
- Suomen Kansanopistoyhdistys ry
- Business and Professional Women (BPW) Finland ry
- Centre Students Finland
- Federation of Green Youth and Students of Finland
- The Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres
- Social Democratic Youth of Finland
- Left Youth
- International Solidarity Work
- MIELI Mental Health Finland

In addition to the member organisations, the association had 171 individual members.

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

- Liisa Jaakonsaari (Chairperson)
- Anne Rasskasov
- Irma Ertman
- Suvi Purhonen
- Maria Bernas-Hilli
- Lea Rankinen
- Merja Vihersalo
- Mojtaba Qanezadeh
- Ozan Yanar
- Ramieza Mahdi (alternate member)
- Päivikki Kumpulainen (alternate member)

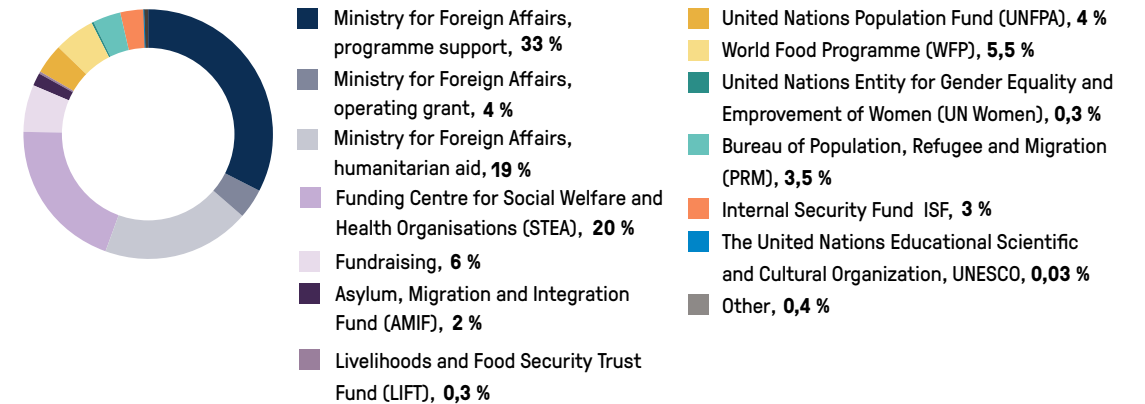
## Domestic programme work by project



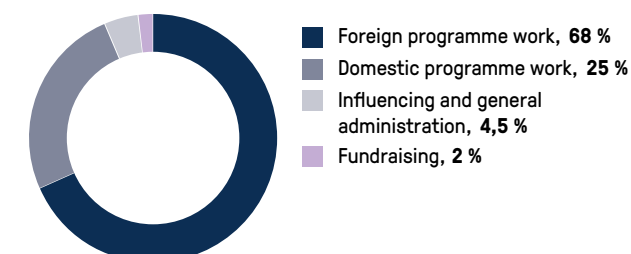
## Foreign programme work by project



## Income



## Costs per operating area:







**Finnish  
Refugee  
Council**

Finnish Refugee Council  
Elimäenkatu 15  
FI-00510 Helsinki  
toimisto@pakolaisapu.fi  
pakolaisapu.fi  
refugeecouncil.fi



**SISÄISEN TURVALLISUUDEN RAHASTO**  
- POLIISYHTEISTYÖ, RIKOLLISUUDEN  
EHKÄISEMINEN JA TORJUMINEN SEKÄ  
KRIISINHALLINTA  
Euroopan unionin tuella



Tuettu Suomen  
kehitysyhteistyövarain



Euroopan unioni  
Pelastuspalvelu ja  
humanitaarinen apu



World Food  
Programme

LINGONEER