



2022

impact report



report overview

This report presents the community, systemic and ways-of-working impacts of the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative (RRLI) during 2021-2022.

© *Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative / Asylum Access, 2022*

Cover image: Photo collage with images from RRLI coalition members and grantees.

about RRLI

RRLI's mission is to resource refugee-led organizations (RLOs) to uplift communities and combat systemic exclusion within the refugee response sector. We believe when we center the people who have been forcibly displaced, we also center innovations, solutions and movement-building, leading to immediate and long-term improvements in communities. Through these efforts, RRLI envisions a world in which all people who have experienced forced displacement have agency over their lives and access to solutions that rebuild their lives with dignity.

www.refugeeslead.org | [@refugeeslead](https://twitter.com/refugeeslead)

acknowledgements

RRLI would like to thank Chris Larsen, Lyna Lam, Lever for Change, ICONIQ Impact, Open Society Foundations, David and Samantha Karp, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation, Bosch Foundation, Porticus Foundation, the Global Whole Being Fund, and the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) for their support during RRLI's launch and inaugural year. We couldn't have done this without you!



contents

Letter from the RRLI Coalition	4
Executive Summary	5
Impact Overview	8
Introduction	10
<i>Combatting the Exclusion of Refugees</i>	10
<i>About RRLI's Strategies</i>	11
2021-2022 Impact Reflection	13
<i>Community Impact</i>	13
<i>Systems Impact</i>	25
<i>The Impact of RRLI's Ways of Working</i>	28
Challenges and Reflections	32
Looking Forward	33
2022-2023 Partner Profiles	35
Join Us!	41



Photo by St Andrew's
Refugee Services
(StARS)

letter from the RRLI coalition

At the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative (RRLI), our work revolves around one central question: *how do we get resources to initiatives and organizations around the world that are refugee-led and operating at the frontline of their communities?*

As a coalition of refugee-led organizations (RLOs) ourselves, we know firsthand what it is like for our visions to be overlooked, to see significant funding in our own locales be awarded to large-scale, non-local organizations, and to feel like we have to do twice the work as any other organization in order to prove ourselves to major donors and stakeholders in this sector. RRLI was created to address those systemic issues, and after going through our first year of supporting RLOs, we could not be happier to say: funding RLOs is not as complicated as it's made out to be.

At the start of the initiative, we realized that the effectiveness and impact of RLOs in their communities is under-researched

and underacknowledged. We struggled with the lack of evidence around this, so we decided to actively create it. Through learnings from other movements, external evaluations, tracking our grantmaking cycles, and engagement with stakeholders, we now have ample new evidence to support what we already know to be true: RLOs are extraordinarily effective at supporting their communities – meeting basic needs and enabling long-term solutions alike.

We could not be happier to say: funding RLOs is not as complicated as it's made out to be.

More importantly, the evidence shows that the trust that is built and maintained by RLOs in their communities is unparalleled, showing firsthand that if you need to provide services for an affected community, it is integral that those providing the services and programming to also be of that community. Our coalition, and our funding mechanism

for RLOs, is a practical and direct example of shifting power to local actors, and we hope through this evidence we will be able to counter the misconceptions that exist in our sector around resourcing refugees and refugee-led organizations directly.

We understand that our work is at its inception and that we are actively and continuously learning as our process unfolds. What we do know is that our own work should set a precedent in our sector and be implemented in different contexts — our own coalition, being as global as it is, is living proof of that. We invite you to reach out to us to amplify the refugee leadership movement, and we look forward to more open, honest and proactive conversations around directly resourcing RLOs in their communities.

In solidarity,

The RRLI Coalition

executive summary

In May 2021, the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative (RRLI) received a significant investment through the Larsen Lam ICONIQ Impact Award – an initial 10 million USD – to undertake a bold solution for refugees globally. RRLI's approach was simple: invest in high-impact organizations led by people of forced displacement, regardless of their programmatic focus, in a long-term, relationship-based and collaborative way. The 2021-2022 RRLI Impact Report

Photo by St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)

covers the results of that approach during the period of May 2021 - August 2022.

RRLI's first task was to get money out to refugee-led organizations (RLOs) equitably, efficiently and safely. To do so, it established the first of its kind RLO-to-RLO Fund, a grant-making mechanism designed to combat the systemic exclusion of RLOs from international funding streams. In its first year, the RLO-to-RLO Fund committed **five-year grants totaling 8.84 million USD to its coalition RLOs (Basmeh & Zeitooneh, StARS, RAIC, Refugiados Unidos and YARID)** in order to resource both their incredible ground-level work and their participation in RRLI activities. In July and August of 2022, **the RLO-to-RLO Fund issued a total of 1.18 million USD to 12 new RLOs**, chosen for their demonstrated impact on their communities'

wellbeing and futures. This coming year, these RLOs will also benefit from RRLI's new Strengthening RLOs Partnership Program, a peer-to-peer support model designed to

identify and address organizational, operational and programmatic concerns, together.

This report will show that these investments – and investments like them – are already making a significant difference in people's lives and in building the movement of refugee leadership. Five of the coalition RLOs **reached approximately 189,486 people in a recent one-year period¹ with comprehensive support, including humanitarian aid, education, health services, economic empowerment, legal aid, and resettlement.** Among other impressive achievements, YARID prepared and enrolled over 1,400 children into Ugandan schools, RAIC submitted 19 applications for private sponsorship to Canada, StARS reached over 10,000 children with holistic wraparound

¹ In order to not add undue labor to the organizations to align their reach calculation practices, we have allowed organizations to provide reach numbers during different timeframes within reason. Basmeh & Zeitooneh and YARID reported numbers between January and December 2021; RAIC, Refugiados Unidos and StARS reported reach numbers between July 2021 and June 2022.

“The world that refugees have in mind is a cruel world without justice. RAIC is changing that bad picture bit by bit so refugees feel seen, understood and heard.

—Saba from Afghanistan, RAIC program participant

services, Refugiados Unidos supported 317 families to submit their applications for legal status, and Basmeh & Zeitoneh provided 9,810 community members with comprehensive protection services including legal community-based services, case management, and psychosocial support.

The numbers only tell half the story. In early 2022, RRLI contracted five external researchers to evaluate the impact of each of the coalition RLOs. In addition to sharing information about the breadth and depth of programming, evaluators found that **community members of all races, ethnicities, religions, gender identities and abilities typically felt safe, understood, and respected while receiving services from their respective RLO.** In short, these RLOs offered more than services or solutions – they offered community and belonging.

These kinds of transformative wins are predictable when high-impact organizations²

² RRLI's grantmaking model identifies "high-impact" organizations as those that can demonstrate their impact on

are adequately funded. With this in mind, **RRLI has a goal of unlocking at least 40 million USD for local RLOs during its first five years.** In addition to growing the RLO-to-RLO Fund, RRLI is collaborating with more influential and powerful funders to increase the amount of high-quality and flexible funding they grant to RLOs in order to reach the 40 million USD goal. In 2021-2022, RRLI met with 41 key stakeholders (government, multilateral agencies, foundations and international NGOs) to offer both the rationale and the practical pathways for engaging and resourcing RLOs. Last year, **RRLI made 80 connections between RLOs and donors; this has already translated to 1.7 million USD in new funding to 3 high-impact RLOs.**

More change is coming. Building on the efforts of many partners and movement leaders, RRLI has supported **two**

community members' daily lives clearly and convincingly, addressing specific needs in a distinct and compelling manner. For more information about RRLI's selection criteria please visit <https://www.refugeeslead.org/apply>

major foundations to establish new refugee leadership funding priorities, led calls alongside other advocates for UNHCR to increase the size of grants for RLOs from 12,000 USD to 50,000 USD, and joined three prominent funding initiatives: the EU-UNOPS Grant Facility advisory board, the Collective for Refugee Leadership in MENA (CRLM), and the Women in Forced Displacement Action Network at GIZ. These actions and invitations demonstrate there is a growing will to fund RLOs, the fruits of which will be seen in the coming years.

Underpinning these successes is RRLI's commitment to inclusion. Thanks to a highly accessible grant application process created by and for RLO leaders, **30% of grantees report this is their first grant ever and 70% report it is their largest grant ever.** Because the requirements are flexible, the RLO leaders have the freedom to spend on core costs (like salaries and rent), fostering organizational sustainability and longevity. These approaches mean that key community

Photo by Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID)



leaders and their organizations will be able to grow their impact and participate in strategizing and decision making spaces, some for the very first time.

Thanks to a highly accessible grant application process created by and for RLO leaders, 30% of grantees report this is their first grant ever and 70% report it is their largest grant ever.

Because of RRLI's inclusive hiring practices, **each of its five new staff hires brings a lived experience of forced displacement to their roles and the project, in addition to expertise gained through education and previous jobs.** Their familiarity with experiences of forced displacement leads to practical approaches that respond to the RLO experience and barriers. It also leads to more empathetic and equitable collaboration. These successes highlight why the

internal journey toward inclusion supports the external journey toward impact.

Despite progress, the year also held challenges. RRLI continued to field concerns from donors that financing RLOs was risky and/or complex. These experiences have taught RRLI **that it must not just focus on funding modalities, but also on dismantling the biases that feed problematic misconceptions,** one piece of evidence, educational initiative and partnership at a time. Changing this narrative is therefore also one of RRLI's main priorities and areas of work.

The impact articulated in this report is just the beginning. Looking forward into 2022-2023, RRLI will focus on fundraising for grant renewals and the next cohort of RLO-to-RLO Fund recipients, supporting and

connecting its new grantees, and collaborating with other donors who wish to join RRLI in uplifting refugee leaders to support their own communities.

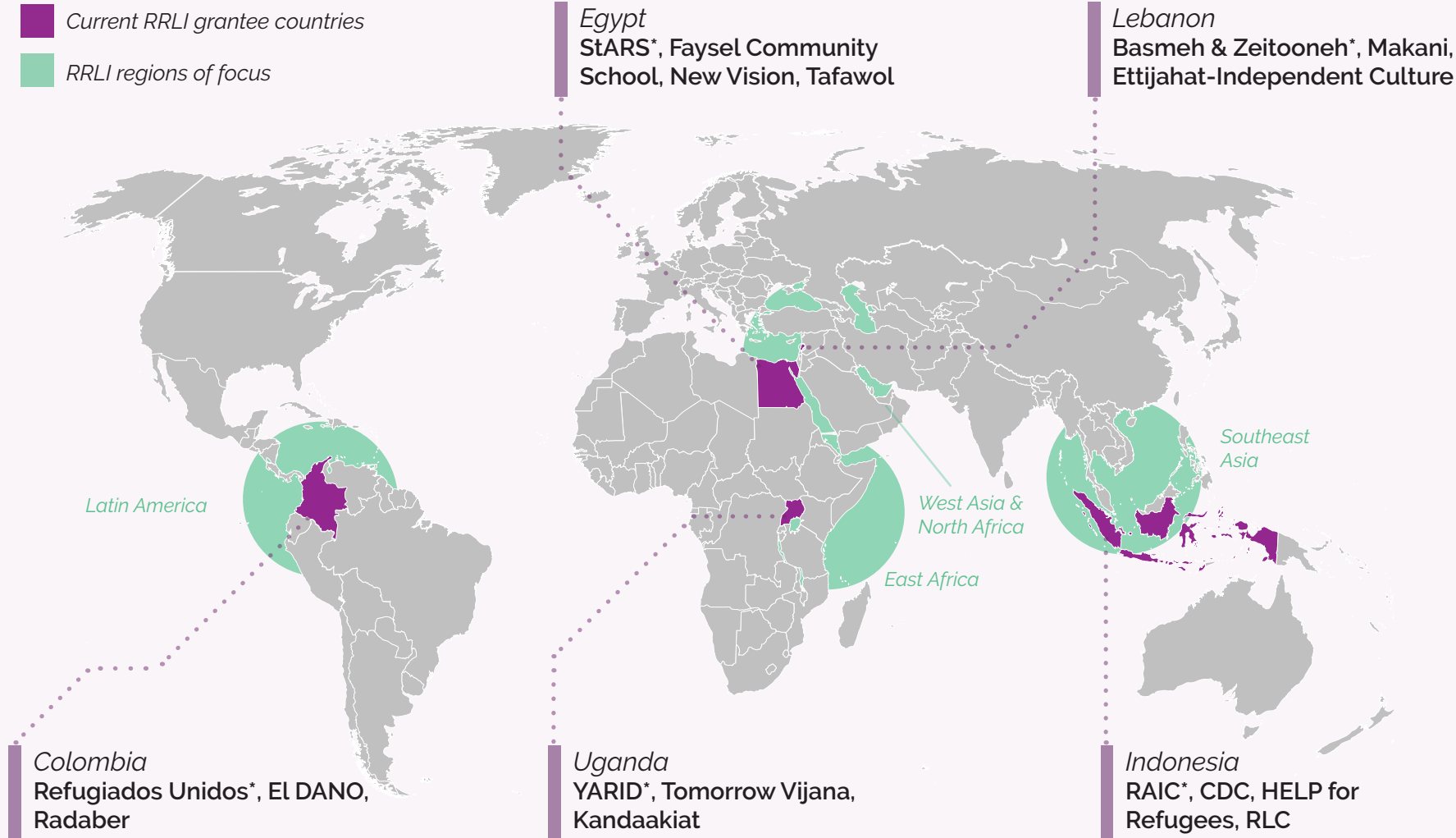
RRLI invites potential grantees to watch our website for information about the next funding cycle and to email RRLI at grants@refugeeslead.org with questions. RRLI also invites allied organizations, philanthropic donors, government and multilateral agencies to reach out at info@refugeeslead.org to explore potential partnerships. Together, we can feed the success of the refugee leadership movement.

impact overview

RRLI grantees

**Coalition RLOs in receipt of funding 2021-2026, all other grantees in receipt of renewable funding 2022-2023.*

- Current RRLI grantee countries
- RRLI regions of focus



RRLI's Overall 2021-2022 Impact by the Numbers

Photo by Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID)

17

RLO-to-RLO
Fund grantees

\$11.7m

USD in direct funding
unlocked for RLO
grantmaking: \$10 million in
RLO-to-RLO fund commitments
and \$1.7 million instigated
grantmaking through other
donors

11

key mindset shifts amongst
influential actors, including
more inclusive grantmaking
practices, larger grants and
changed funding priorities

189,486

reached through
grantees last year

58

RLOs supported
with mentorship,
collaboration, network
development and
more

introduction

The [Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative \(RRLI\)](#) is a coalition of six refugee-led organizations (RLOs)³—[Basmeh & Zeitooneh](#) in Iraq and Lebanon, [Refugees and Asylum Seekers Information Centre](#) in Indonesia, [Refugiados Unidos](#) in Colombia, [St. Andrew's Refugee Services](#) in Egypt, [Young African Refugees for Integral Development](#) in Uganda, and Asylum Access, a global advocacy organization, family of local refugee rights organizations in Malaysia, Thailand and Mexico, and host organization for RRLI's staff and programmatic budget. RRLI came together in 2020 to instigate a systemic transfer of power and resources to refugee leaders and refugee-led organizations within the current international humanitarian and development system. In May of 2021, RRLI was the

³ We define an RLO as any formal or informal initiative/organization that is founded and run by people of forced displacement background and/or any formal or informal initiative/organization where people of forced displacement are in major leadership positions and able to influence the work of the organization.

recipient of the 2021 [Larsen Lam ICONIQ Impact Award](#) for presenting “a bold new solution for refugees.”

RRLI's idea was simple. By articulating the value and importance of RLOs to key partners, and by providing pathways for safe and reliable grantmaking, **RRLI hoped to dramatically increase the amount of high-quality funding that reaches high-impact RLOs.** Through these investments, RRLI expected that RLOs would cost-effectively and rapidly support their communities in a way external actors are simply not positioned to do. As funding streams and practices change over time, and RLOs have the resources they need to thrive, RRLI hypothesized that millions of forcibly displaced persons worldwide would enjoy community-based programming, participate in the discussions that impact their lives, and access long-term solutions.

This report contributes to a growing body of evidence that shows **this hypothesis is correct.** RLOs are holistically and cost-effectively addressing their communities'

needs⁴. People's lives are being improved, enhanced, and sometimes saved. Importantly, this report also shows that when RLOs are well resourced, their impact grows.

Combating the Exclusion of Refugees

The evidence and impact articulated in this report inspire RRLI to do more to tackle the troubling reality: of the \$31.3 billion flowing through the humanitarian system annually, only 1.2% of total international humanitarian assistance was given to local and national actors in 2021. RRLI estimates that RLOs receive just a fraction of that funding.⁵ Com-

⁴ In addition to the evidence provided here, please find other available evidence at the RRLI website: www.refugeeslead.org/evidence.

⁵ See Development Initiatives (2022). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022. Retrieved from https://devinit.org/documents/1193/GHA2022_Digital_v6_dcYRQ4X.pdf. This figure is estimated using the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022 and gutchecked by consulting with RLO partners around the world, who confirm that this is a reasonable estimation. RRLI recognizes that this data point

RRLI STRATEGIES

The RLO-to-RLO Fund:
Grantmaking for RLOs



The Strengthening RLOs Partnership Program: Supporting the systems and the leaders of RLOs through peer collaboration and partnership



Advocacy: Encouraging influential institutions to directly fund RLOs and to include people of forced displacement in decision-making and strategizing processes



Evidence generation: Deepening understanding of the roles RLOs play in their communities



munity-driven, refugee-led solutions are being excluded from the current system.

Key actors see this disconnect. UNHCR's commitment to the "[meaningful participation](#)" of refugees in the 2018 [Global Compact on Refugees](#), the [strong emphasis on localization in the Grand Bargain](#), and USAID's commitment to financing local organizations⁶ are just a small sample of the growing commitments from institutions of power to address the exclusion of refugees. Despite these commitments, progress toward localized funding has actually decreased over the last year.⁷ RLOs, as a subset of local organiza-

insufficiently captures funding flows. It does not take into account development funding, funding from development banks, the way funding flows through agencies down to RLOs, or hyper-localized funding from churches, for example. Nevertheless, RRLI believes the statistic captures the spirit of the problem well, which is to say, that RLOs are not included meaningfully within funding streams.

⁶ See USAID's Localization Vision. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.workwithusaid.org/blog/usaid-s-commitment-to-advancing-localization>.

⁷ See ODI. (2022). The Grand Bargain in 2021: an independent review. Retrieved from <https://odi.org/en/publications/the-grand-bargain-in-2021-an-independent-review/>.

tions, continue to be arguably the least likely to receive financial support or be meaningfully included in key strategizing and decision-making processes. Institutional barriers such as lack of access to legal status and bank accounts, lack of relationships with key donors, and bias against the idea of refugees as leaders disproportionately exclude RLOs. Often, RLOs are only seen as implementers instead of drivers of community-led solutions and strategic agents of change.

RRLI's four strategies are designed to tackle this systemic issue both by helping to set an agenda for change (through advocacy and evidence generation) and building the roadmaps that enable change (through the RLO-to-RLO Fund and Strengthening RLOs Partnership Program).

[publications/the-grand-bargain-in-2021-an-independent-review/](https://odi.org/en/publications/the-grand-bargain-in-2021-an-independent-review/). ODI's 2021 independent review The Grand Bargain in 2021 shows that proportion of direct funding to local actors halved from 4% in 2020 to 2% in 2021.

About RRLI's Strategies

RRLI uses four interconnected strategies to tackle the systemic exclusion of RLOs:

1) RLO-to-RLO Fund

The first-of-its-kind global [RLO-to-RLO Fund](#) is a fund for refugees by refugees, governed by the RRLI Coalition and housed at Asylum Access in the United States. The fund aggregates and safely distributes funding to RLOs globally. The fund has two types of grants: seed funding up to 25,000 USD for high-potential but smaller RLOs, and scaling funding of 100,000 to 200,000 USD annually for organizations with demonstrated ability to grow their impact. Currently, the RLO-to-RLO Fund makes grants in Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon and Uganda. RRLI intends to extend its efforts into Ecuador, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia and South Sudan within the next two years.



Photo by Refugiados Unidos.

2) Strengthening RLOs Partnership Program

Through the Strengthening RLOs Partnership Program (or “Strengthening Program”), RRLI coalition members support new RLO-to-RLO Fund grantees to build systems, develop leadership, and, most importantly, overcome location- and context-specific barriers to funding and growing their impact. For example, Refugiados Unidos in Colombia is the Strengthening Program partner for 2022-2023 grantees El Derecho A No Obedecer and Fundación RadaBer, both of whom are also based in Colombia. Coalition members and grantees come together to co-design and implement plans to work on specific organizational needs.

Among other activities, the Strengthening Program focuses on including each RLO grantee in useful networks: the relevant coalition partner connects the new grantee with relevant local civil society networks, donor

networks and advocacy initiatives so they can better sustain their work and promote their agendas. Crucially, the Strengthening Program is built on the principles of co-design, mutual learning, accountability and flexibility to ensure equity, mutual knowledge-sharing, and fruitful collaboration between RRLI coalition members and new grantees.

3) Advocacy

RRLI engages with numerous governmental and intergovernmental institutions, UNHCR and philanthropic donors to build pathways for partnering with and financing RLOs directly. Pathways often include improving internal ways of working that promote inclusion and combat bias, advancing accessible and inclusive approaches to grantmaking, building equitable partnerships with RLOs, and including people of forced displacement as leaders in decision-making and strategizing processes.

4) Evidence Generation

The sector cannot act on what is not well understood or misunderstood. RRLI identifies gaps in sector understanding and fills them with findings learned from high-quality, unbiased research. To do so, RRLI partners with researchers and academic institutions. In its first year, RRLI produced five external evaluations of high-impact RLOs and a meta-synthesis of those studies. In the next 2 years, RRLI will be focused on the development of a baseline study which better tracks how and when funding reaches RLOs in key countries. This information will be used to support the evolution and success of the first three strategies.

2021-2022 impact reflection

Between May 2021 and June 2022, RRLI launched its grantmaking program, advocated for significant systems changes, built a diverse team, and enshrined inclusive ways of working that reinforce impact. Those successes are highlighted here in three sections:

- **Community Impact:** How have lives been improved in the places grantees work?
- **Systems Impact:** How has RRLI successfully encouraged other actors to start their journey of transferring power and resources to RLOs?
- **Ways of Working Impact:** How have RRLI's inclusive practices reinforced impact?

Community Impact

How have lives been improved in the places grantees work?

Within RRLI's first year, its RLO-to-RLO Fund committed **8.84 million USD over five years** to five coalition members as the pilot phase grantees. RRLI also selected 12 new RLOs to receive a collective 1.18 million USD in one-year grants (grants that RRLI intends to renew, pending successful fundraising). Given that the second round of grants were distributed in the summer of 2022 and their impact has not yet been analyzed, this section will discuss the community-level impacts of the first round of grants only. More information about all RLO-to-RLO Fund grantees is available in the Partners Profile section.

The community-level impacts presented here are culled from several sources. First, between January and June 2022, RRLI funded five external impact evaluations of a program(s) designed and implemented by its

first round of grantees: Basmeh & Zeitooneh, StARS, RAIC, Refugiados Unidos and YARID. RRLI also funded the production of a metasynthesis of these impact evaluations.⁸ This evidence is supplemented with information provided by the coalition grantees through their year one grant reports.

The impact reported here is not tied exclusively to the investments made through the RLO-to-RLO Fund, but rather is an analysis of what impacts are possible when RLOs have at least the minimal funding they need. **This section will cover four of the most prominent community-level impact trends that emerged across the work of Basmeh & Zeitooneh (B&Z), StARS, RAIC,**

⁸ See Essex-Lettieri, D., (2022). *Understanding RLO Impact: A metasynthesis of five impact evaluations covering programs run by Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)*. The metasynthesis and the external impact evaluations of Basmeh & Zeitooneh, RAIC, Refugiados Unidos and YARID are available on the RRLI website at www.refugeelead.org/evidence. To request access to StARS impact evaluation, please contact RRLI at info@refugeeslead.org.

Refugiados Unidos (RU) and YARID. The top trends emerged as:

- 1. RLOs are offering holistic programs** that respond to the realities of refugees;
- 2. RLOs are unlocking long-term solutions** for their communities;
- 3. RLOs are cost-effective** in reaching large numbers of community members; and
- 4. RLOs create accessible programming** and reach those with intersectional experiences of marginalization.

COMMUNITY IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

a one-year sampling of grantee impact

- RAIC prepared, submitted and/or financed **19 private sponsorship applications** to resettle refugees residing in Indonesia to Canada.
- YARID helped prepare and enroll **1,419 children into public school** through its Bridge to Formal Schooling program.
- StARS supported over **10,500 children and youth with psychosocial assistance**, education services, and/or direct humanitarian assistance.
- RU supported **317 families to apply for legal status**, which results in the right to stay, work, attend school and access health care.
- B&Z provided **40 refugee-led or refugee co-led organizations with training, support, and coaching** on topics from finance and governance to human rights and democracy.

*Photo by St Andrew's
Refugee Services (StARS)*





THE POWER OF HOLISTIC SUPPORT: A RAIC CASE STUDY

RLOs are offering holistic programs that respond to the realities of refugees

The RLO grantees are providing holistic services for their communities, spanning efforts like access to services, community organizing, humanitarian aid, livelihoods programming, protection services, resettlement, advocacy and support to other RLOs. This contrasts with a common practice of siloed and highly specialized responses prominent in international service delivery.

In many cases, the RLO grantees have added new approaches and services year-over-year in order to support emerging needs of community members and fill longstanding protection gaps. Wraparound and holistic services are a hallmark of RLO approaches because RLO leaders know solutions are born of comprehensive case management.

For example, YARID added income generation opportunities for parents whose kids are enrolled in their Bridge to Formal Schools

Shahin was an 18-year-old refugee living in Indonesia for nearly seven years with his family of six. Because Indonesia does not recognize refugees, Shahin lived without any basic rights or access to proper medical care. This was particularly challenging for Shahin, who has cerebral palsy. Over time, without care, his condition worsened and he began to lose his ability to walk.

Shahin's father faced practical and logistical barriers when trying to engage with UNHCR and other organizations regarding Shahin's situation; as an older man from a minority group, Shahin's father struggled to be heard and seen.

When RAIC Indonesia became aware of Shahin's situation, they supported him with legal aid, urgent medical care, and basic needs assistance. They prepared a narrative document demonstrating his eligibility for resettlement and ensured UNHCR understood his specific situation. They also completed medical assessment forms for him and had them validated and signed by specialists and hospitals. These forms proved his condition was urgent, a prerequisite for expedited resettlement. Every step of the way, RAIC was there, providing interpretation, advocating for his current needs, and paving the way for a fruitful future. In 2019, Shahin and his family were resettled in Canada.

RAIC has stayed in touch with the family and continued providing advice in their new country of residence, providing connections to key services and guidance for navigating ongoing processes. Today, Shahin has the medical care he needs, and he and his siblings are all enrolled in school. For the first time in nearly 10 years, Shahin and his family have safety, stability, and hope for the future.

This story illustrates the nature of RAIC's services: solutions and support require full case management and deep personal connection. Whenever a new issue emerged, RAIC worked with Shahin and his family to figure out the right next steps.

STRATEGIES	Basmeh & Zeitooneh	RAIC	Refugiados Unidos	StARS	YARID
Sustained or enhanced access to services (education, health care, mental health)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community organizing and community action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Humanitarian aid (food, hygiene and cash assistance)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Livelihoods and economic wellbeing	✓		✓	✓	✓
Delivering legal services and other "protection" programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Facilitating resettlement/ private sponsorship		✓		✓	
Advocating/ litigating for enhanced national governance frameworks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting other RLOs through programming and network management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

program in order to support the payment of school fees once placed in the Ugandan School system. RAIC added its private sponsorship program after its legal aid program was able to reveal access to resettlement for the vast majority of its clients. Refugiados Unidos added entrepreneurship training and job placement services after seeing that work rights on paper were not resulting in enhanced economic wellbeing in practice.⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*

RLOs are unlocking long-term solutions for their communities

Among holistic services provided, **all five RLO grantees are enabling long-term, durable solutions for refugee communities either by helping them access legal status or resettlement opportunities, or by creating sustained access to public services and economic opportunities within their country of operation.**

The following is just a sample of how the five grantee organizations are changing lives:

Table 1: Holistic Services Chart. (Essex-Lettieri, 2022)

YARID has multiple programs designed to promote sustainable income generation for communities, including three skills training programs (tailoring, arts and crafts, and briquette making), provision of grants for entrepreneurs to launch their businesses, and investments in five village saving and loan associations (VSLAs) that use the YARID office as a meeting space. YARID is also piloting a job training program in which they help refugees from all backgrounds grow skills relevant to the private sector, such as English language acquisition, resume building, cover letter development, interviewing skills and more. Finally, YARID offers a comprehensive information communications technology program which helps start-up businesses and promising entrepreneurs thrive through training on topics such as computer literacy, internet security, smartphone use, website development, and use of services like Google Suite.



Within Colombia, refugees have access to temporary legal status, but because the process is complex and burdensome, many refugees are unable to engage in this process. **Refugiados Unidos** helps refugees overcome access barriers through direct legal assistance, mobile clinics, strategic litigation, legal empowerment and supportive advocacy. Through these services, Refugiados Unidos is helping hundreds of people per year access the legal status necessary to legally stay, work, attend school and access health care.

RAIC's private sponsorship program began in 2021 and has allocated \$158,000 USD to privately sponsor 19 applicants for resettlement from Indonesia (where refugees have no rights) to Canada (where they can enjoy the vast majority of rights on par with citizens). RAIC's role has been to coordinate the process with partners in Indonesia and Canada, to prepare applications, and/or financially sponsor the applicants. Where resettlement

BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESSES: A YARID CASE STUDY

Awol Tracy is a person of forced displacement from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who is now living in Uganda. She was one of the winners of a YARID business grant for her excellent performance in the Information Communications Technology (ICT) training program. Awol chose to spend her grant on an industrial oven, which increased her output significantly. The smart phone training through the ICT program helped Awol establish a presence on social media, build a website and take professional product photos. As a result of these inputs, Awol increased her monthly profit 5X from 200,000 Ugandan shilling to 1,000,000 Ugandan shilling monthly (52 USD to 261 USD). You can follow Awol on instagram at [@tabletoss_donuts](https://www.instagram.com/tabletoss_donuts).





COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES: A REFUGIADOS UNIDOS CASE STUDY

When Refugiados Unidos met Ana, age 27, she was 32 weeks pregnant and living in a single room with her 5-year-old, her 2-year-old, her mother, and her stepfather. The kids were not in school, and the family did not have access to health care; this was especially important for Ana, who needed prenatal care. Although Ana had a degree in early childhood education and was a branch manager for a shipping company in Venezuela, she was unable to work because she didn't have legal status. Her former partner had been psychologically and physically violent with her, and Ana did not have the support she needed to access mental health services.

Refugiados Unidos has supported Ana and her family in many ways. RU has helped the family initiate their temporary legal status applications and has supported the oldest child with accessing education. Ana has participated in Refugiados Unidos' entrepreneurship workshops and is working on starting a business in the food industry. With her legal status imminent, Ana can now legally launch her business.

RAIC targets individuals for this program who otherwise would not have access to resettlement, such as single men with heightened vulnerabilities or people of forced displacement from certain countries. RAIC's criteria for this program are clear and significant. They understand the tremendous opportunity of private sponsorship to Canada; with so few spots, they seek to act with the utmost integrity.

With recognition of the interest around the Private Sponsorship program, RAIC has published a YouTube video that explains the process in both English and Farsi. To date that video has received over 25,000 views.

is elusive in Indonesia, RAIC is fundamentally changing lives with this program. One community member explains:

"It has been a totally new life, and it's a new hope for us [their family]. Being a refugee is so mentally tiring in Indonesia. Having that [resettlement],

hope is reborn for me." (Male program user, 26-year-old, interview on April 19, 2022)^{10 11}

¹⁰ Lightly edited for clarity.

¹¹ See Masardi, Realisa., M. (2022). *External Evaluation Final Report Refugees & Asylum Seekers Information Center (RAIC) Programs*.

StARS' close connection with communities means it is able to identify people who might be eligible for expedited resettlement. For example, their Refugee Legal Aid Department is referring those with chronic health conditions for resettlement. Because StARS witnessed a disruption in UNHCR's resettlement programs during COVID-19, StARS



Photo by Refugees and Asylum Seekers Information Centre (RAIC)

connected with UNHCR in Geneva to advocate for a continued and steady review of resettlement applications.

Even in the midst of economic collapse (where currency has lost 90% of its value¹²), **Basmeh & Zeitooneh** is finding ways to promote sustainable livelihoods for women that go far above and beyond standard

¹² See World Bank. (2022). *Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Great Denial*. The World Bank. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/01/24/lebanon-s-crisis-great-denial-in-the-deliberate-depression>

income-generating activities. B&Z is currently supporting 60 Syrian and Lebanese women and their families to launch 6 dairy products businesses – a market chosen for cultural relevance and far-reaching community needs. B&Z has developed and issued theoretical business training and hands-on practical training on how to make dairy products (like cheese and yogurt) and on various topics such as food safety, storage and preservation. B&Z also purchased and delivered the required equipment, covered construction costs of the rented facilities, supported

identifying suppliers with the necessary legal documentation, provided funds for transportation, and helped the women open their bank accounts (Essex-Lettieri, 2022). At the time of writing this report, the women are developing their brand strategy and entering the market.

Throughout this project, the economic environment in Lebanon has challenged the project. The cost of equipment increased from \$8,000 to \$13,000 per dairy business, government-imposed restrictions on generator use required B&Z to purchase additional tools for manual production, and safety concerns resulted in the need for ongoing protection services in order to create safe spaces for those participating in the project. Now, B&Z is in the process of installing solar panels for some participants with especially limited access to power in order to generate sustainable energy for the project. These contextual factors are outside of B&Z's control, but every step of the way, the team has

Table 2: Total Reach by Organization

Organization	Total Reach	Direct Adult	Direct Child (Under 18)	Dependents Reached	Time Period Tracked
<i>Basmeh & Zeitooneh</i>	105,184	23,926	15,025	66,233 ¹	Jan - Dec 2021
<i>RAIC</i>	1,659	1,170		489	July 2021 - June 2022
<i>RU</i>	6,699	1,292	107	5,300	July 2021 - June 2022
<i>StARS</i>	67,521	21,980	10,563	34,978	July 2021 - June 2022
<i>YARID</i>	8,423	1,097	1,841	5,485	Jan - Dec 2021
Total	189,486	49,465	27,536	112,485	

¹ This is an estimate based on household size. Basmeh & Zeitooneh have a large food and hygiene box delivery program, and a smaller program for home renovations, that reached 14,650 households between January and December of 2021

called upon their local connections and deep environmental knowledge to find solutions.

RLOs are cost-effective in reaching large numbers of community members.

During a recent one-year period,¹³ the five grantee organizations directly reached

¹³ In order to not add undue labor to the organizations to align their reach calculation practices, we have allowed organizations to provide reach numbers during different timeframes within reason. Basmeh & Zeitooneh and YARID

approximately 77,001 people with holistic and life-changing services; they reached 189,486, in total, when including dependents. In many cases, community members received multiple services from their RLO.

StARS and Basmeh & Zeitooneh provide their services to large numbers of people, given the size of their budgets and longevity as community-based organizations. Their role

reported numbers between January and December 2021; RAIC, Refugiados Unidos and StARS reported reach numbers between July 2021 and June 2022.

as large-scale service providers challenges the dominant narrative that RLOs are too small to be major implementing partners. On the contrary, RLOs are often well positioned to reach communities at scale, even during emergencies, given their understanding of, and proximity to, community experiences and needs.

In a sector that often has multiple layers of overhead costs caused by regional and international staffing and offices, it is essential to highlight the reach of these services in relation to the allocated budget. Table 2

Table 3: Cost Per Person Reached (USD)

Organization	Annual Budget (USD)	Total Reach	Cost Per Person Reached
<i>Basmeh & Zeitooneh</i>	\$10,431,012	105,184	\$99
<i>RAIC</i>	\$515,643	1,659	\$311
<i>RU</i>	\$437,000	6,699	\$65
<i>StARS</i>	\$4,538,441	67,521	\$67
<i>YARID</i>	\$427,935	8,423	\$51
Total	\$16,350,031	189,486	
Average Cost Per Person Reached Across Organizations		\$86	

shows that the cost per person reached was between 51 USD and 311 USD, **with an average of 86 USD per person**. The average is pulled higher due to RAIC’s cost per person – a cost explainable by their investment in private sponsorship: a profound and long-term solution requiring substantial financing per family. Importantly, this cost per person is typically not for a single service, but instead, the kind of comprehensive case management articulated above that leads to life-changing outcomes.

Ideally, RRLI would be able to provide a clear picture of value-for-money, taking into account quality of services and providing comparative data from relevant international organizations. This kind of an analysis was outside the scope of this impact report. RRLI has identified the importance and utility of working with partners, especially international partners, to conduct this kind of robust research in the future, but also notes the difficulty in securing international organizations’ participation in such a comparative study.

Nevertheless, cursory investigations¹⁴ into the size of budgets for larger international organizations, including INGOs and UN bodies, provides a sense of the profound discrepancy between the costs presented here and the costs of running multi-layered international organizations.

RLOs create accessible programming and reach those with intersectional experiences with marginalization

The external evaluations found that the holistic services provided by the five coalition grantees are highly accessible and culturally aware – including with regards to those who face multiple access barriers (e.g. unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities

¹⁴ To learn more about UNHCR budget breakdowns, consider reviewing their Global Focus website, which includes budget breakdowns by country at <https://reporting.unhcr.org/budget-expenditure>. Another helpful tool for the investigation of who is donating how much to which locations within the field of humanitarianism is OCHA’s Financial Tracking System, found at <https://fts.unocha.org/>.

COST-EFFICIENT SERVICES: A StARS CASE STUDY



The evaluator for StARS explored the cost efficiency of its COVID-19 Quick Impact Project.

The COVID-19 Quick Impact Project aimed to help the displaced communities of the Greater Cairo Area to weather the impacts of COVID-19. Between June 2020 and June 2021, StARS collaborated with five other refugee-led organizations who have a significant presence in particular areas of Cairo. With the support of StARS, the RLOs delivered multi-purpose cash grants, food and hygiene boxes, and referred people to comprehensive services, including protection and resettlement services, psycho-social support and economic empowerment programming.

Together with these RLO partners, **StARS reached 2,985 families supporting 10,808 individuals, issued 2,004 multi-purpose cash grants (most of which reportedly was spent on rent to keep people housed), and distributed 1,785 food and hygiene boxes. 94% of program users reported satisfaction with the program.**¹

The evaluator for this project considered the cost efficiency of StARS by looking at its unit costs (the operational cost per person). The evaluator found the unit cost analysis to be extraordinarily low: 1.80 Euros per person reached in the first phase of the project and 2.85 Euros per person reached in the second phase of the project. The evaluator compared this to the World Food Programme, whose unit costs ranged from 14 - 24 Euros² per person reached for their cash grants in Niger, Ecuador and Ethiopia.

Importantly, this comparison doesn't take into account the holistic nature of the referral services provided by StARS and its RLO partners, which added significant value to the project beyond the cash, food and hygiene packages.

¹ See Goldie, E., (2022). *Coping with COVID-19: Evaluating the impact of StARS Partnership with Community-Based Organizations*.

² Converted from USD for comparability.

and chronic illnesses, those who identify as LGBTIQ+ and beyond).

RLOs' accessibility and cultural awareness is born of personal awareness, shared lived experiences, and community embeddedness. The staff of the RLOs have had many of the same experiences as the people they are working with, including persecution and exclusion. They also have been on the receiving end of services and support that were not contextualized to meet their needs. RLO staff often live and work in the same locations, fostering an understanding of lived realities that cannot be taught. The resulting programming leads to feelings of being understood, and creates trust and community. The following were mentioned within the RLO impact metasynthesis produced in 2022:

- Community members described Basmeh and Zeitooneh as "credible and honest" and expressed they feel "respected" by project staff. They also

EXAMPLES OF ACCESSIBILITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

A grassroots organization established by Syrian activists, Basmeh & Zeitooneh, operates five community centers in Lebanon that are grounded within the neighborhoods where displaced people and their hosts reside. Altogether, the centers reach approximately 30,000 people per year and strive to support the needs of the whole family unit where applicable. Each center provides some combination of the provision of temporary food, cash and non-food items, vocational and life skills training, individual and group psychosocial counseling for women, girls and children at risk, legal assistance, and educational programs for Syrian children. Each program housed at a B&Z community center was born of a self-pronounced community need. As the community centers have expanded, Basmeh & Zeitooneh has been able to offer many community members employment and job creation opportunities, transferring skills and knowledge. This model – neighborhood-based centers that focus on local hiring – ensures community

members can access and eventually own the work of the community centers, generating increasing trust over time.

RAIC's food distribution packages are mindful of various cultural practices and responsive to feedback. When one recipient shared that the sanitary napkins had irritated their skin, the next package carried a new brand. One recipient of RAIC's packages praised RAIC for customizing for cultural preferences:

"The package from RAIC is always really nice and in good quality. But other organizations didn't care. For example, they gave a pair of sandals for you. They didn't care whether you could wear it or not, whether it fits for you or not. Some food materials, they gave ingredients like Chinese food. Afghan people do not use it and they don't know how to use it. It is like that they don't throw it, so they give it to refugees. RAIC is not like that. They gave what we use and important for us" (Essex-Lettieri, 2022).

Of those reached through StARS' COVID-19 Quick Impact Program, 41% had a

chronic disease, 38% were single mothers, 14% had a disability, 30% were survivors of torture, 23% were survivors of gender-based violence and 2% were victims of trafficking. Where other organizations may require UNHCR-recognized refugee status, StARS' more flexible approach promotes broad access and ensures those who need assistance receive it regardless of status. As one program user explains:

"Last year, I had a huge problem with my housing and paying my rent. I tried to approach many organizations, but no one responded to me or helped me. When I approached the CBO [RLO], someone helped me immediately, and they gave me a cash grant for my rent. Also, they went with me to the place I rented and supported me in talking to the landlord. They were very effective and efficient and helped me stay in my house; otherwise, I could have been homeless" (Essex-Lettieri, 2022).



Photo by St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)

expressed that this treatment has been foundational to the success of B&Z's recent economic empowerment project, which is helping women launch dairy production businesses, even in the midst of an economic crisis.

- Community members described being on-site with one of StARS' refugee community-based partners as feeling "like home," and that receiving their services made people feel "less like a victim." One of StARS partner

organizations summarized why it feels that way for community members:

"We are refugees. We feel what they feel. We are from the community. We are the community."

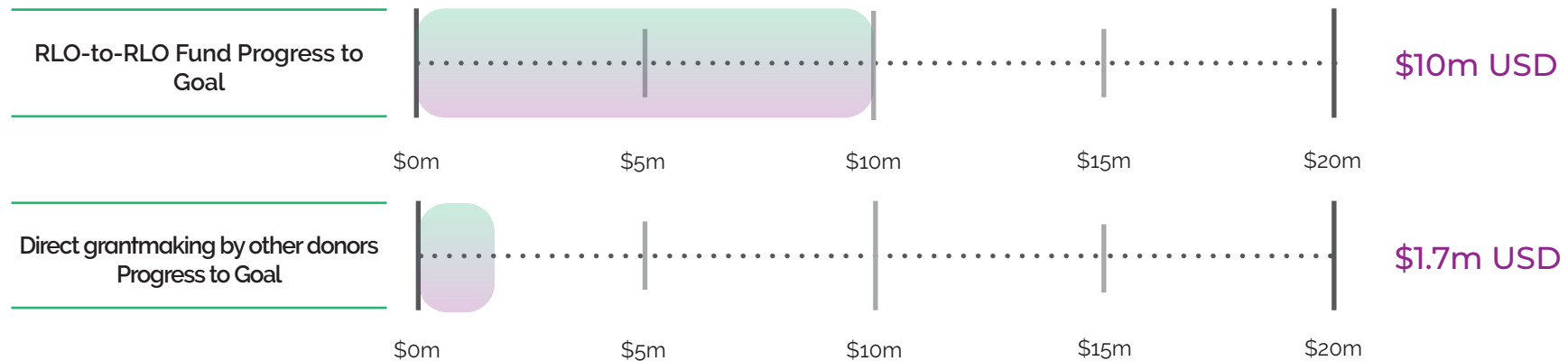
- Within the survey conducted by RAIC's evaluator, respondents described RAIC's staff as "friendly and helpful." Another said that RAIC makes

refugees "feel seen, understood and heard" even in terrible situations. The evaluator explains this sentiment by articulating RAIC's embeddedness within the community (Essex-Lettieri, 2022).

RRLI looks forward to sharing the community-level impacts that will be born of its second year of grantmaking to 12 new RLOs.

UNLOCKING 40 MILLION USD

Progress toward 5-Year Goals



Systems Impact

How has RRLI successfully encouraged other actors to start their journey of transferring power and resources to RLOs?

In order to scale community-level impact, RRLI has set a goal to unlock at least 40 million USD within its first 5 years for high-impact RLOs operating around the world. Approximately half of this goal RRLI plans to raise and distribute through its RLO-to-RLO Fund. RRLI hopes to “unlock” the other half of the goal through engagement and collaboration with other donors; instigating direct grantmaking between other donors and RLOs

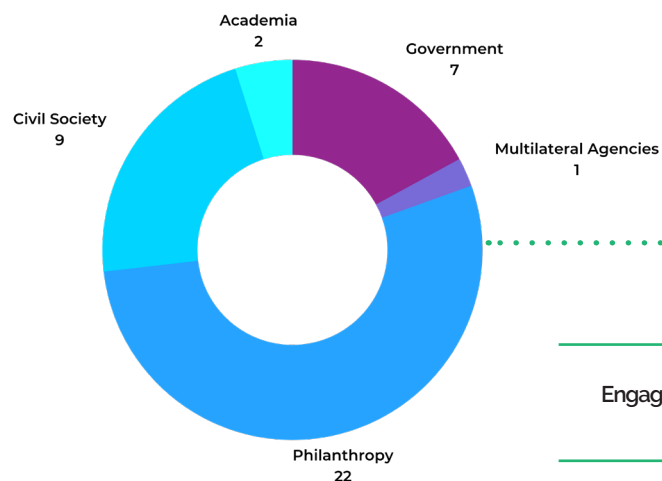
helps promote more sustainable sector-wide changes.

In 2021-2022, RRLI made progress toward this ambitious goal by engaging with 41 influential stakeholders (UNHCR, 7 governmental and intergovernmental stakeholders, 22 philanthropic donors, 9 civil society organizations, and 2 academic institutions). As a result, **there has already been an increase in funding for refugee-led organizations. This advocacy also led to key mindset shifts amongst influential actors, increased influence for refugee leaders over funding flows, and more equitable partnerships with refugee leaders and**

refugee-led organizations. See the box below for more details about this progress.

RRLI is part of a greater ecosystem that includes other global refugee-led initiatives such as the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN), R-SEAT and their allies, who have significantly contributed to the progress articulated here. RRLI believes in the power of collective action and movement-building to make change happen.

RRLI'S ENGAGEMENT



12 panels or events presented on, reaching thousands of people

Covered in 5 media outlets



Engagement with 41 influential stakeholders

84 connections facilitated between RLOs and donors

CONCRETE PROGRESS TOWARD SYSTEMIC CHANGE

1. Philanthropists increased their funding for RLOs: In 2021-2022, RRLI coalition members facilitated over 80 connections between RLOs and philanthropists (foundations and individuals), calling on key partners and convenings to amplify efforts. For example, in May of 2022, RRLI co-organized, with the Collective of Refugee Leadership in MENA (CRLM), the first ever Funders and Refugee-Led Organizations Convening in Amman, connecting 5 RLOs in the MENA region with 8 major donors in the refugee response sector. RRLI has also influenced, supported and capitalized on the aligning strategies of two major foundations,

Porticus and Luminate, who aim to prioritize lived experience and refugee leadership within their grantmaking and programming, including by connecting them to the CRLM. The impact of these new agendas and initiatives on foundations and individuals giving will be visible in future impact reporting. To RRLI's knowledge, through RRLI's extensive work connecting RLOs to donors, at least 1.7 million USD in new commitments to RLOs have been made (not passing through the RLO-to-RLO fund).

2. UNHCR increased its funding for RLOs: RRLI and key partners successfully advocated for UNHCR to provide a higher amount of funding to RLOs (50,000 USD) through its [Refugee-Led Innovation Fund](#),¹ and to make its eligibility criteria

¹ See Refugee-Led Innovation Fund website at: <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/refugee-led-innovation-fund/>

more inclusive, including by offering a broad definition of person of forced displacement, no requirement for organizations to be registered to apply, and no limit on what thematic or impact areas applications should address. This call stands in contrast to previous UNHCR calls, such as the first Refugee-led Innovation Fund call, which provided a maximum of 15k USD, and the UNHCR Grant Agreement for Persons of Concern (PoC)-led organizations,² which offered a maximum of 12,000 USD, defined refugee-led strictly and numerically, and required organizations to be legally registered.

- 3. Setting the stage for improved government funding:** In 2021-2022, RRLI engaged with 7 governmental and intergovernmental bodies regarding their approach to financing and partnering with RLOs. Following these engagements, RRLI's team and coalition members were invited to participate and provide strategic advice as Advisory Board members for the [EU-UNOPS Lives in Dignity Grant Facility](#) and the German government's [Action Network on Forced Displacement – Women as Agents of Change](#). RRLI recognizes that changes to government flows will take time and plans to use these platforms and continued bilateral engagement to influence government funding priorities and practices.
- 4. Instigated more equitable partnerships:** Through various interactions, including an [open letter](#) to the High

Commissioner,³ RRLI joined partners in urging UNHCR to commit to moving away from their problematic usage of the term 'Persons of Concern' when referring to people who have experienced forced displacement. RRLI's open letter, which outlined five recommendations to improve UNHCR's treatment of and partnerships with RLOs, was acknowledged openly by UNHCR's High Commissioner and has led to a request by UNHCR to support them in improving their partnerships through a trauma-informed lens.

- 5. Educated key actors on how to fund RLOs:** RRLI has received requests from a variety of government donors, multilateral agencies, and philanthropists to better understand how to equitably and sustainably fund RLOs, as well as how to hire people of forced displacement. RRLI responded to those requests by presenting and participating in 12 major events including events on the margins of the [2021 High-Level Officials Meeting](#), as well as at the [MIT Migration Summit](#), [Skoll World Forum](#), African Union Extraordinary Summit, Brussels VI Conference for Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, and UNHCR Global Consultations with NGOs. RRLI also engaged in several bilateral meetings to discuss the mechanics of grantmaking and hiring. Over the past year, RRLI has also broadly educated readers through international media coverage in the [Foreign Policy](#), [Reuters](#), [Lever for Change](#) and [Philanthropy Age](#).

² See UNHCR. (2022). Grant agreements with organizations led by persons of concern (PoC) – Briefing Note. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/61b28c784/unhcr-grant-agreements-organizations-led-persons-concern-poc-briefing-note.html#:~:text=The%20new%20UNHCR%20Grant%20Agreement,projects%20and%20build%20their%20capacity>

³ Please see RRLI's letter to UNHCR here: <https://www.refugeeslead.org/unhcr-open-letter>.

UPLIFTING REFUGEE LEADERSHIP INTERNALLY

5 person implementation team hired, all with lived experience of forced displacement



Decisions about grants made by coalition members



Peer-to-Peer support model resulting in joint plans of action



The Impact of RRLI's Ways of Working

How have RRLI's inclusive practices reinforced impact?

The community-level and systems-level successes were possible because RRLI remained values-driven at every level of operation. As RRLI hired its implementation team, organized its governance structure and built and deployed its grantmaking mechanism, it ensured **inclusion and refugee leadership were woven into the project within every process. Refugee leadership is not just a "what." It is also a "who" and a "how."** This section covers four prominent connections between RRLI's ways of working and the impact they've had on RRLI's work and outcomes.

RRLI Way of Working 1: A diverse set of people with lived experience of displacement lead the implementation of RRLI.

During its first year, RRLI hired a [five-person implementation team](#) of individuals with lived experience of forced displacement, consisting of a Coalition Lead, Communications Coordinator, Finance Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, and Program Officer. This team sits on the Asylum Access payroll (who is the host for RRLI's staff and programmatic budget) but is accountable to the full set of coalition organizations that govern the project. This new team complements the efforts of the coalition representatives, which is also composed of a diverse group of people of forced displacement.

Within this growing leadership body (implementation team and Coalition), there is a diversity of experiences of displacement

– no two stories are alike – adding nuance to what is often depicted as a singular experience. Each person brings unique contributions in other ways as well, calling upon their specific skills, and multi-layered identities of geography, race, gender and socio-economic status.

Impact of Way of Working 1 on RRLI's work and its outcomes:

Many positive impacts stem from the fact that RRLI is run by a diverse group of people of forced displacement:

- RRLI's engagement with RLOs **starts from a place of personal connection, shared local experiences, and therefore respect.** For example, within the Strengthening Program (which is designed to help RLOs overcome context-specific barriers to scaling impact), RRLI uses highly relational and

“Going to the event changed my life. It came at the right moment, food, baby food and clothes, various workshops and then came the support to start our shoe making enterprise.

—Zujani from Colombia, *Refugiados Unidos* program participant

localized peer-to-peer methods that do not assume community or organizational needs, but rather build and act upon a joint plan of action that everyone agrees upon. This method stands in contrast to one-way information sharing or so-called capacity building – a method within the humanitarian and development system that wrongly assumes outsiders possess the talent and skills necessary for change. The approaches born of personal connections and shared local experiences made RRLI's launch people-centric and impact-focused.

- Moreover, because of team diversity, **there is a strong collective understanding of the benefits of different ways of working.** There is little time spent on translating life experiences or fighting against hegemonic Euro-American cultural preferences, also known as white dominant

professional culture, which prioritizes perfection in the written word, embraces competition over collaboration, and often falls into either/or thinking.¹⁵ RRLI is able to benefit from the wisdom of each of its teammates, even when ways of working or communications preferences operate outside of white and/or western standards.

- The leadership of those with lived experience **has also led to stronger advocacy.** Because advocacy asks were informed by a vast number of forced displacement experiences, and made by an ambassador with lived experience, they resonated with others as legitimate and noteworthy.

¹⁵ Other characteristics of white dominant professional culture can be found in this worksheet adapted in 2019 by ACCE to capture the work of Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones. Retrieved from: <https://www.cacgrants.org/assets/ce/Documents/2019/WhiteDominantCulture.pdf>.

- Finally, because the coalition members and many of the implementation team members are running/have run RLOs, they have been on the receiving end of exclusionary funding practices, have experienced bias, and have worked hard to correct misconceptions that refugees are unable or ill-positioned to respond to community needs. These experiences **have taught the RRLI team members what it means to equitably partner with RLOs and the importance of making funding accessible, inclusive and high-quality – lessons which have informed the approaches and mechanics of the RLO-to-RLO Fund.**

RRLI Way of Working 2: RLO-to-RLO Fund grantmaking is accessible, transparent, and high-quality, centering impact and action.

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE GRANTMAKING

Accessible application materials:
No jargon; simplified application questions and budget templates



Flexible requirements: RLOs do not have to be registered or have their own bank account



Applicants can submit in any language



No thematic restrictions for programming



Funding can be used for core costs



RRLI developed a set of criteria for its RLO-to-RLO Fund to ensure RLOs of all shapes and sizes could access it. Organizations are not required to be registered in their country of presence, do not require a bank account, and can submit application materials in the language of their choice. RRLI also does not require any specific thematic focus.

RRLI's basic requirements for applicants are that applicant organizations are led by people of forced displacement and have adequate financial management practices, ethical delivery of services, presence in the community, and interest in the refugee leadership movement. If an otherwise impactful organization does not meet some of these criteria, RRLI will not automatically disqualify the organization, but instead consider how it can support the organization to develop missing policies and systems. These criteria and relevant application materials are published in the RRLI website in English, Spanish and Arabic.

RRLI also strives to provide high-quality funding, meaning highly flexible and multi-year grants. In contrast to the common practice of providing project funding, RRLI provides core and flexible funding for organizations to quickly, efficiently and sustainably respond to the needs of their communities and build their organizational infrastructure to promote sustainability. RRLI seeks to provide multi-year funding to enable RLOs to demonstrate their impact over a longer-term period, to allow time for donor network development, and to maintain and grow crucial community services. These approaches center impact and action.

Impact of Way of Working 2 on RRLI's work and its outcomes:

The proof of the impact of RRLI's approach is in the numbers. Some of the Fund's grantees have been in operation for 10+ years (see Partner Profiles to learn more

about our grantees), and yet, for **30% this is their first grant. For 70% this is their largest grant.** In this way, RRLI is uplifting crucial actors in the community whose efforts have largely lacked basic support or the opportunity to scale. Grantees also report that the ability to spend the money on core funding has allowed for crucial staffing and infrastructure investments that would otherwise go unfunded.

RRLI Way of Working 3: A diverse set of people with lived experience govern the RLO-to-RLO fund.

During its first year, the RRLI Coalition and Asylum Access's Board of Directors worked to establish the RRLI Coalition **as the formal governance body for the RLO-to-RLO Fund.** Though the Fund is hosted by Asylum Access, its Board of Directors has delegated authority to the RRLI Coalition to approve grants and disburse funds. Asylum

Access's Board of Directors reviews RRLI grantmaking in alignment with its fiduciary responsibilities but does not select grantees.

Impact of Way of Working 3 on RRLI's work and its outcomes:

All stakeholders agreed that the Coalition is best suited to approve grants and disburse funds. The RRLI Coalition understands the various barriers RLOs face in different contexts (e.g. lack of access to bank accounts) and can mitigate often-overlooked risks with financing (e.g. around community dynamics). By choosing to have the Coalition formally govern the grantmaking process and approve grants, those who have the most knowledge of risks, local context, and what impact looks like in their own communities are put in decision-making and approval roles.

The Power of Flexible Funding

RRLI makes grants that allow grantees to identify what is in the best interest of the communities they work with. Sometimes, they determine it is critical to invest in the people and systems that make their organizations run smoothly and efficiently. This was true of several coalition grantees who chose to use some of their flexible funding to promote organizational sustainability and longevity. Here are some ways coalition grantees invested in the health of their organizations:

- **RAIC** was able to move from being a volunteer-run organization to hiring a paid staff, developing an organizational chart, and investing in professional development.
- **Refugiados Unidos** was able to build up their administrative and financial systems and teams, leading to formal registration that then allowed them to receive a grant from a US-based foundation.
- **StARS** was able to build up its reserves, promoting sustainability for its far-reaching community programming: last year, StARS ran 23 programs that reached 67,521 people.
- **YARID** was able to hire its first Monitoring and Evaluation specialist, which has helped to increase programmatic efficacy across the organization.

challenges and reflections

Over the past year, RRLI faced complex challenges and learned important lessons during its day-to-day operations and engagement with stakeholders. Some of the most important reflections are outlined below:

- **Change is a process requiring diligence.** RRLI received regular skepticism from powerful actors in the system that RLOs had the capacity to manage large funds or the positioning to uncover solutions. RRLI received equal pushback to the idea that hiring people of forced displacement or embracing inclusive practices and equitable partnerships would lead to improved responses to refugee situations. In short, not everyone appears ready for change. RRLI learned from this pushback that it is not enough to focus on funding models; it must also support partners to acknowledge

and dismantle the deeply rooted and problematic power dynamics prevalent within refugee response, while also continuing to generate evidence about the impact of centering refugee leadership in refugee response. RRLI realizes that change will not happen overnight; it will, therefore, diligently continue to come together with other advocates to apply pressure and demand meaningful change from powerful actors.

- **Inclusion requires an upfront investment but pays off over time.** As a coalition, RRLI has reflected on the importance of its internal journey. By taking the time to build consensus-based decision-making models, develop Standard Operating Procedures together, establish roles and responsibilities across organizations and teams, deploy inclusive hiring practices and develop rapport and

relationships with the support of an external facilitator, RRLI has “moved slow to go fast.” Without this solid foundation, the successes of RRLI would not be as pronounced.

- **Allyship is foundational to sector shifts.** RRLI has been encouraged by the tremendous interest from philanthropic donors, governmental and intergovernmental institutions and INGOs who are asking how they can help; RRLI has benefited from their support. With this experience as a guide, RRLI has reflected on the importance of genuine allyship. It is clear that this movement will require collective action by actors across the ecosystem in order to instigate a more just, inclusive, equitable, and ultimately impactful refugee response system.

looking forward

In 2022-2023, RRLI will build on the successes of the previous year in the following key ways:

- *Initiate the Strengthening Program:* Each of RRLI's 12 2021-2022 RLO grantees will benefit from the Strengthening Program – a peer-to-peer relationship-based collaboration in which the relevant local coalition member teams up with the new grantee to build and implement an organizational development plan rooted in sustainability and impact growth.
- *Build the RLO Network:* With the number of RLOs in RRLI's network growing daily, RRLI intends to launch a loosely-run RLO network that builds pathways for a peer-to-peer engagement at regional and global levels, and that shares opportunities for funding and joint advocacy. The RLO Network

is key to building the movement for refugee leadership worldwide.

- *Fund the next cohort of RLOs:* Building on the first and second rounds of RLO funding, RRLI will fund at least 10 new RLOs operating in Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon and Uganda. This year, RRLI will also prepare itself to expand grantmaking into five new countries (provisionally identified as Ecuador, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia and South Sudan) starting in 2024.
- *Renew grants from first and second cohorts:* RRLI knows that success is tied to consistent access to funding. RLO grantees who demonstrate impact or the potential for continued or scaled impact will receive funding renewals, resources permitting.
- *Design and implement the RLO baseline funding study:* While RRLI has relied on

data such as the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report and OCHA's Financial System Tracker to understand funding flows, the story of how much money reaches RLOs is incomplete. To tackle this knowledge gap, RRLI will begin a multi-year project alongside key academic and research partners to track funding flows within its countries of operation and analyze changes as RLOs receive greater funding.

RRLI will also engage with a wide range of stakeholders to advance our interconnected goals around advocacy and fundraising. Those goals include:

- *Fundraise to replenish the RLO-to-RLO fund.* RRLI has a minimum fundraising need of \$2.3 million to achieve the goals of 2023-2024. Ideally, RRLI will surpass these goals in order to continue issuing multiyear funding to its RLO-to-RLO Fund grantees.

- *Support key governments, philanthropic donors, international NGOs and UNHCR to resource RLOs with high-quality funding:* In 2022-2023, RRLI would like to instigate greater direct grantmaking to RLOs by those with the largest budgets and greatest influence. Beyond an interest in seeing the dollar amount grow, RRLI will support and encourage these actors to embrace inclusive grantmaking practices (e.g. end requirements of legal registration and bank accounts, adjust funding ceilings and floors, remove thematic limitations and language requirements, and simplify application and reporting requirements).
- *Support and urge UNHCR to better embrace the 'who' and 'how' of refugee leadership, not just the 'what.'* RRLI commends UNHCR's decision to increase its Refugee-Led Innovation Fund from 12,000 USD to 50,000

USD. To complement this progress, RRLI will support and encourage UNHCR to appoint a person of forced displacement as the new High Commissioner, to review its partnership guidelines for accessibility, to build more equitable and trauma-informed partnerships with RLOs, and to institutionalize formal pathways for refugees to contribute to key strategizing and decision making within refugee response.

Photo by St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)





2022-2023 partner profiles

RRLI is excited to announce the 2022-2023 grantees, profiled by country of operation below. In total, RRLI will provide 12 RLOs in Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon and Uganda with grants ranging from 25,000 USD to 200,000 USD. In total, RRLI distributed \$1.18 million USD in 2022-2023.



COLOMBIA

El Derecho a No Obedecer ("The Right to Not Obey")

<http://derechoanoobedecer.com/>

*Bogotá, Medellín, Cúcuta, Cartagena and Cali;
Ecuador*

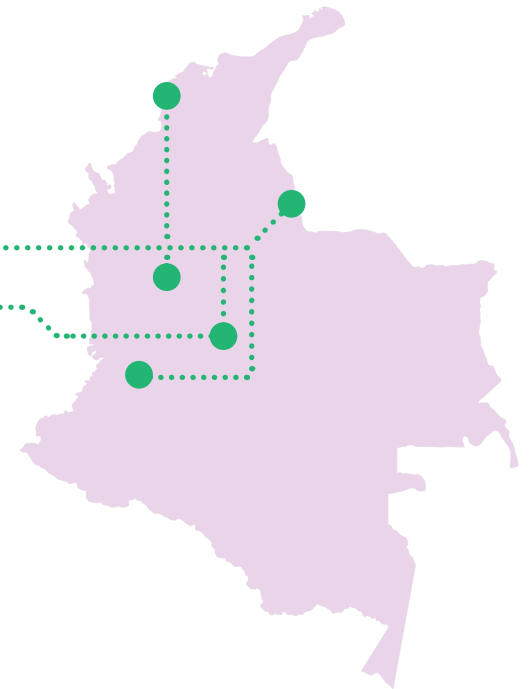
El Derecho a No Obedecer ("EL DANO") is a Venezuelan youth-led initiative that promotes and advocates for social and cultural integration among migrants, refugees, returnees and their host communities. They do so by creating spaces for conversation between various stakeholders, including the refugee community, host community, government, private sector, and academia; convening networks that act upon the recommendations of these stakeholders; and supporting the mobilization of network campaigning through strategic advocacy and communications, including through social media outreach and research.

Fundación Radaber

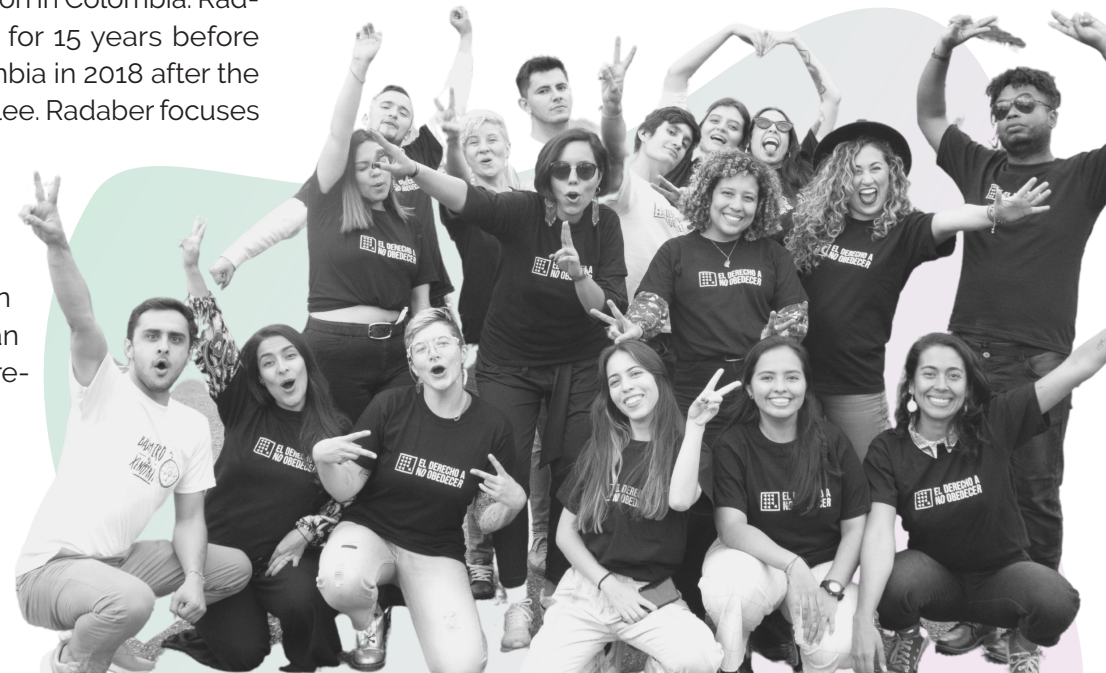
<http://fundacionradaber.org/>

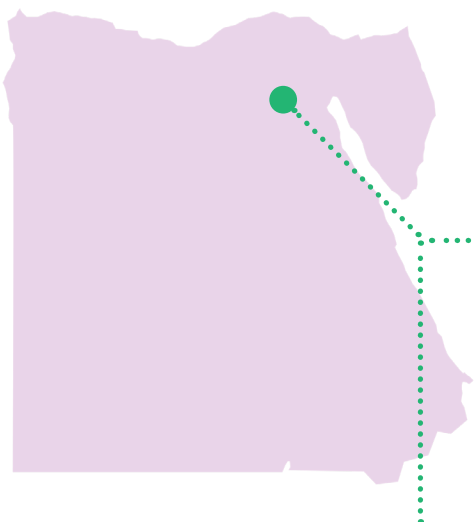
Cundinamarca

La Fundación Radaber ("Radaber") is a Venezuelan women-led organization that provides holistic services to refugees and migrants living in the state of Cundinamarca – an underserved location in Colombia. Radaber ran in Venezuela for 15 years before reestablishing in Colombia in 2018 after the founder was forced to flee. Radaber focuses on providing access to legal status, education, and healthcare for the migrant and refugee population, in addition to humanitarian aid and support for entrepreneurs.



Team photo. Photo by El Derecho a No Obedecer.





New Vision

<https://nvisioncentre.wixsite.com/n-vision>
Cairo

New Vision is a refugee-led community-based organization founded in 2017 in Cairo, Egypt to build the capacity of migrants and refugees to improve the quality of their lives. New Vision provides key legal, psychosocial and education support services. Among other programs, New Vision offers adult education that supports labor market entry, income-generating activities for women, children's creative expression programs, and legal services that support registration with UNHCR, access to birth certificates and referrals to other community services.

Tafawol Association for Special Needs and Development

<https://tafawol-egypt.com/en/>
Giza

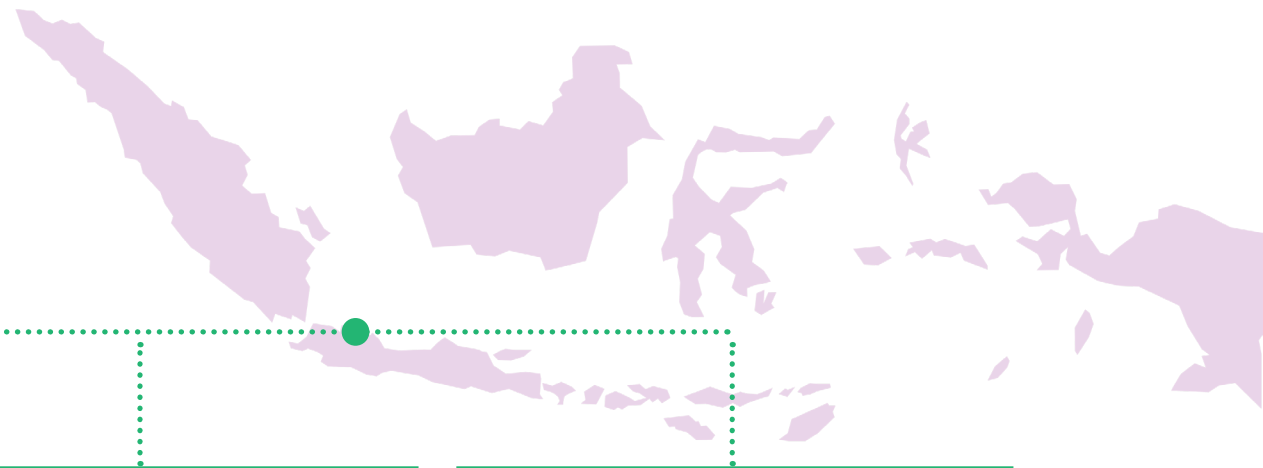
Founded in 2016, Tafawol is a refugee-led community-based organization (CBO) which started as a small initiative that supported children with special needs inside local school settings. They have since expanded into a multi-site, full-service refugee support agency that provides a wide breadth of services, including a year-round school for migrant children with disabilities, speech training for disabled children, legal aid programming, employment skills training for migrant women and single mothers, a kindergarten, online education video production, and migrant psychosocial support programming.

Faysel Community School

<https://www.faisel-school.education/>
Cairo

Faysel Community School is a refugee-led organization based in Cairo, Egypt, whose mission is to develop well-rounded, confident and responsible individuals who aspire to achieve their full potential. They do this by providing a welcoming, happy, safe, equitable and supportive environment to access educational opportunities, as well as through the provision of legal services and counseling. Tawasul runs the largest refugee community school system in Cairo with four sites and a variety of programs, reaching 1,400 students of all ages annually.

INDONESIA



Care the Displaced Children (CDC)

Bogor City

CDC is a newly established refugee-led preschool and education center offering educational programs to refugee children coming from countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Somalia. They are seeking to address an important and unmet need for refugees of Indonesia: access to kindergarten and preschool. The founders, who are educators, lawyers and advocates for the rights of forcibly displaced people, are well-connected to the community and have long, personal histories working with their fellow displaced people in Indonesia.

Help for Refugees

<https://www.help4refugees.or.id/>
South Jakarta

Founded in 2017, HELP (Health, Education, and Learning Program) for Refugees is a community-based learning center in South Jakarta, Indonesia. Each year, they provide education and healthcare services to over 150 refugee children, youth and adults in their community. HELP's center offers mathematics, science, and Indonesian and English language courses, as well as ad hoc health clinics and distribution of food packages and sanitation packages. The center, which has students and volunteer teachers from over 12 nationalities, is a bridge between the refugee and Indonesian communities in Jakarta.

Refugee Learning Center

<https://www.refugeelearningcenter.com/>
Cisarua

Established in 2015, Refugee Learning Center (RLC) is a refugee-led community center providing education to child refugees and asylum seekers who are not able to enter the education system in Indonesia. In 2017, RLC expanded their services to include access to a General Educational Development program, which was the first formal secondary education opportunity to be offered to refugees in Indonesia. Today, RLC reaches 200 refugee youth and 129 refugee adults with daily programs and services, including medical and dental clinics and a youth sports program.

Ettijahat – Independent Culture

<https://www.ettijahat.org/>

Beirut

Ettijahat – Independent Culture was founded in 2011 with the mission to support and empower independent Syrian artists and cultural practitioners principally in Lebanon and other countries where displaced Syrians reside. Ettijahat supports the production of art and knowledge, refugee-led artistic initiatives, and the success of artists through scholarships and advocacy for work rights and protections for refugees and other marginalized populations. Ettijahat believes that an investment in culture is an investment in accessible education, a more equitable labor market, and means for marginalized people to earn decent livelihoods.

Makani

<https://www.makani.org.uk/>

Beirut

Makani is a social enterprise that supports women to find freedom and confidence through arts and opportunity. Their arts program provides a space for women to process trauma, gain confidence, and address common concerns by producing short films and participating in theatre productions. The opportunity program consists of social enterprise activities and supplemental education and training programs to develop literacy, English language and digital skills. Through skills and confidence gained in these programs, women engage in advocacy to support the health and wellbeing of refugees in Lebanon.

*Participant in a script-writing workshop.
Photo by Makani.*

UGANDA

Kandaakiat Organization for Women Empowerment and Development (KOWED)

<http://www.kandaakiat4women.org/>
Kampala and Kiryandongo Settlements

Kandaakiat organization for women empowerment and development (KOWED), a refugee women-led organization operating in Kampala and the Kiryandongo Settlement, envisions a society where women are collectively and individually self-reliant and free from injustice. Their workshops and programs focus on empowerment, livelihood skills development, women's rights education, women's health education, food security and environmental sustainability, including through a robust agriculture program. Their programs offer a space for women to discuss various issues with each other and to tackle feelings of isolation in these settlements.

Tomorrow Vijana

<http://www.tomorrowvijana.org/>
Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

Founded in 2014, Tomorrow Vijana operates in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement (Nkoma/Katalyeba), where nearly 80,000 mostly Congolese refugees live. Tomorrow Vijana helps youth rebuild their lives by ensuring they have access to education, youth vocational and life skills, psychosocial support/counseling, empowerment programs for women and girls, livelihood and environmental protection, and capacity-building for small groups. Tomorrow Vijana has reached over 10,000 people with these wraparound services since 2014 – all on an annual budget of only 70,000 USD.

Team photo. Photo by Kandaakiat Organization for Women Empowerment and Development.



join us!

The call for applications for the RLO-to-RLO Fund opens on our website each January and closes in March. If you are an RLO, we encourage you to learn more about our RLO-to-RLO Fund and consider applying if you are within our current geographic reach. We are eager to learn more about your organizations and the possibility of partnering with you! If you have any questions about our grantmaking process, please contact us at grants@refugeeslead.org.

Over the past year, we have received tremendous support for our initiative from our fellow RLOs, allied organizations, philanthropic donors, governmental and intergovernmental actors, and multilateral agencies. These partnerships are the backbone of RRLI's success, and we are continuously seeking new and impactful collaborations. If you'd like to join us in this journey, we encourage you to reach out by sending us an e-mail to info@refugeeslead.org to start a conversation. Together we can feed the success of the refugee leadership movement.

Photo by St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)

#REFUGEESLEAD



resourcing refugee leadership initiative

Asylum Access
C/O Port Workspaces
344 Thomas L Berkley Way
Oakland, CA 94612



refugeeslead.org



info@refugeeslead.org



[@refugeeslead](https://www.instagram.com/refugeeslead)