



Deaconess  
Foundation

# Equal, Inclusive and Reconciled Societies

Development Cooperation Programme  
Annual report 2023

ISBN 978-952-9854-58-5

Woman on the cover photo: Virgilia Motoc, Moldova

Photographer: Meeri Koutaniemi

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Layout: Hilikka Hyvärinen / Hipateos Oy



With support from  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Overview of the Deaconess Foundation's Programme .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Changes and Materialised Risks in Operating Environment .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 East Africa.....	8
3.2 East Europe & Western Balkans .....	9
3.3 Risk management capacity and risk management plans .....	10
<b>4. Programme Results in 2023 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 Achievements in 2023 against the programme's theory of change.....	13
4.2 Early signs of impact .....	14
4.3 Outcome level results .....	16
Outcome 1 .....	16
Outcome 2 .....	20
Outcome 3 .....	23
Outcome 4 .....	26
Outcome 5 .....	29
Outcome 6 .....	34
4.4 Results in advocacy.....	36
4.5 Sustainability and localisation .....	37
4.6 Accountability and transparency .....	39
<b>5. Results-based management and programme development .....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1. Results-management system development.....	40
5.2 Evaluations .....	40
5.3 Capacity building of the Deaconess Foundation staff.....	41
<b>6 Management .....</b>	<b>42</b>
6.1 Organisation and general management.....	42
6.2 Programme management and the team .....	42
6.3 Financial management.....	43

# 1. Executive Summary

The Deaconess Foundation is a **social foundation group** established in 1867 in Helsinki, Finland. In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation implemented its development cooperation programme **with 12 local civil society actors** through **10 projects** in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kosovo, Tanzania, Somalia/Somaliland, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Finland. The programme prioritises support for **women, girls, minorities, and persons with disabilities**. The analysis of results achieved in this report provides evidence that the programme is on the right path towards advancing its desired impact: “Marginalised youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts enjoy equal rights, opportunities and psychosocial wellbeing in communities and societies.”

During 2023, the work of our programme partners was disrupted by emergencies, conflict, and oppression, directly impacting the groups they represent and serve. However, our partners demonstrated remarkable resilience by adapting to changing conditions and adopting new approaches and work methods. Many have had to step up and provide emergency support or advocate for humanitarian aid, even when humanitarian work is not their primary field of expertise. All their efforts helped mitigate the social, political, security, and safety risks affecting programme implementation.

As a result, all the projects under the programme were implemented, yielding positive outcomes and **reaching over 8,856 direct rights holders**, including **5,951 women and 330 persons with disabilities**.

The Deaconess Foundation’s partner Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were strengthened as civic actors and succeeded in influencing policy areas relevant to the groups they represent, contributing to systemic change. They also engaged in diverse networks and partnerships at the local, national, and international levels, expanding their expertise and amplifying the impact of their interventions. The trust they have gained from both institutions and the groups they represent has been vital in achieving these successes.

Despite the persistent challenges of nepotism and stigma, successful efforts in creating market linkages and skilful awareness raising have heightened employers’ interest in hiring youth in vulnerable positions who possess relevant skills and a solid commitment to work. Local businesses now understand better the importance of employing more inclusively. Further, our partners’ capacity building and relentless advocacy work have enhanced inclusive and accessible public service provision to groups in vulnerable positions. Marginalised young women and men, persons with disabilities, minorities and persons affected by conflict have progressed on skills paths, and their life management and employability skills and business competencies have strengthened. Further, our programme increased their employment, with **514 people having found jobs, started businesses, or developed other decent livelihoods since 2022**.

Citizens and communities have gained a better knowledge of their rights and their possibilities to make an impact. Participation in societies has been enhanced across our programme, primarily through community involvement and employment. The wellbeing of children and young people with disabilities has increased. Further, right holders have engaged directly in dialogue with duty bearers. As duty bearers become more aware of the groups facing marginalisation, they are more likely to



Photographer: James Kasela

*The first graduates from the sewing school in Igoda Children’s Village, Tanzania, wearing dresses they have sown themselves.*

consider their needs and rights in policy and practical work. This work strengthens democracy, making it more representative and inclusive.

In the Horn of Africa, the strengthened capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts and their active participation in peace processes on both community and national levels contributed to fostering peace and stability in the region. Our programme facilitated and supported the meaningful engagement of women and young people in these processes. Furthermore, the programme continued to promote integrating trauma healing and psychosocial support in peace processes.

The Deaconess Foundation positioned itself as a facilitator of reflection on “shifting the power” within the Finnish CSO sector. It also succeeded in raising awareness among the wider Finnish audience about Roma women’s grassroots work for the realisation of their rights in Eastern Europe. Advocacy efforts

in Finland, in programme countries, and globally have been central to the programme’s achievements.

Strong local ownership of all the actors involved, as well as multisectoral collaboration between relevant duty bearers and other stakeholders in their fields of intervention, was further advanced in 2023, enhancing the situation of the rights holders and ensuring transparency and accountability of our work. Our programme also empowered business and peace networks that will live beyond the programme.

The Deaconess Foundation further invested in developing results-based management, and knowledge sharing within the programme has been an integral part of this endeavour. For the programme’s second year, 2 137 996 euros were used to cover programme expenses, including funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Deaconess Foundation. Nine employees worked in the MFA programme team within the Foundation’s International Affairs Unit.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACRL-RfP</b>	African Council for Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>EU</b>	The European Union
<b>FCWCT</b>	Foxes Community and Wildlife Conservation Trust
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights Based Approach
<b>MFA</b>	The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
<b>OWDA</b>	Organisation for Welfare and Development in Action (Ethiopia)
<b>PSEAH</b>	Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
<b>VoRAE</b>	Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians
<b>Y-PEER</b>	The Somaliland Youth Peer Education Network

# 2. Overview of the Deaconess Foundation's Programme

The four-year development cooperation programme (2022–2025) of the Deaconess Foundation aims at having an impact on the realisation of equality, inclusion, and wellbeing among the most marginalised young people, minorities, and those affected by conflicts in the operating countries.

In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation implemented the programme in partnership with 13 local civil society

organisations that represent minorities, marginalised young people, women, and persons affected by conflict and have direct connections to the project participants. Another 11 CSOs worked with the implementing partners in the countries of operation. To create sustainable solutions, the programme not only impacts the individual level but also strives to build long-term structural changes by cooperating with the private and public sectors.

**The programme has six essential outcomes which together contribute to achieving the impact:**



## Priority areas

The Deaconess Foundation's programme includes three priority areas to achieve inclusive, sustainable, equal, and reconciled societies. The three priorities are understood and implemented as inextricably intertwined. By interlinking them, we aim to decrease poverty and conflict risks under global, national, and local inequalities and crises.

**Livelihood and skills development of the most marginalised:** We offer learning programmes for marginalised young people, minorities, and the displaced that support their employability and develop their skills in personal life management. To promote sustainable change, we cooperate with and build the capacities of the private and public sectors.

**Active and resilient civil society:** We strengthen the skills of the representatives of Civil Society Organisations and marginalised groups in advocacy, policy influencing and networking. We also build enabling environments and structures for dialogue between civil societies and governments.

**Peace and trust in communities:** We focus on building awareness and skills of insider reconcilers and officials, particularly in trauma and psychosocial support. Moreover, we interlink community-based actions in reconciliation with national peace processes.

## Geographical Focus

The Deaconess Foundation's programme focuses on two regions: Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans and East Africa. It aims to build close cooperation between partners within these regions.

In **East Africa**, the programme covers Ethiopia, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, and Tanzania. In the region, the programme work focuses on the employability and participation of young people facing marginalisation and fosters trust and peace in the communities of the Horn of Africa at large, through

the provision of support to reconciliation practitioners' leadership and wellbeing.

The Deaconess Foundation's programme in **Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans** covers Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine. In this region, the Deaconess Foundation's work strengthens the status of Roma, repatriated, refugee, and displaced women and girls. It also supports public institutions to provide inclusive, equal, and effective services and fosters a diverse, effective, and resilient civil society.

### Eastern Europe and Western Balkans



#### PROJECTS:

**Empowerment and Social Justice for Roma Women** (Kosovo)

**Supporting socio-economic re/integration and ensuring equal participation rights of repatriated and refugee women and girls in Kosovo**

**Roma Women's Power** (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)

**Strengthening Roma minority's participation in policy and decision making in Ukraine**

### East Africa



#### PROJECTS:

**Mustaqbaldoon II** (Somaliland)

**Youth Action for Future** (Ethiopia)

**Youth Agency in Mufindi** (Tanzania)

**Trust and Peace: Peacebuilding from the ground** (South Sudan)

**Trust and Peace in communities** (Horn of Africa)

# 3. Changes and Materialised Risks in Operating Environment

The programme's two regions faced two main types of risks during 2023, namely **social and political risks** and **security and safety risks**, including risks related to **climate change**. Political situations and conflicts affected programme implementation, especially in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Southern Somalia, and South Sudan. In addition, inflation increased the pressure on our partners throughout the programme. The effects of the war in Ukraine continued to be strongly felt in Eastern European programme countries, resulting, for instance, in displacements, threats to energy supplies, inflation, and the spreading of fake news.

## 3.1 East Africa

The Deaconess Foundation's programme in the region covers Ethiopia, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, and Tanzania. Tensions in the Horn of Africa have risen during 2023 due to armed conflicts, the increased impact of climate change and natural disasters as well as rampant inflation. The region continued to face significant human rights challenges, including constraints on civic space and freedom of expression. The mitigation of security and safety risks was an ongoing concern to the Deaconess Foundation and its partners, especially in South Sudan and Southern Somalia, also in 2023.

The ongoing war in Sudan and other conflicts in the region posed significant risks, including the potential spread of violence and challenges in managing displaced populations. As of October 2023, an estimated 2.2 million people were internally displaced within South Sudan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), and the country also hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees, mainly from Sudan. South Sudanese insider reconcilers have been actively engaged in community reconciliation efforts and facilitating the return to their places of origin of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who sought refuge in churches. The Trust and Peace project enabled the provision of psychological first aid to 700 refugees and 200 IDPs in South Sudan. Implementing the programme

faced significant challenges due to armed conflicts, which reduced safety in the operating areas and postponed activities. In areas where armed forces were deployed, insider reconcilers accompanied mediation teams to promote dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution between communities. Further, the programme supported the development of Early Warning and Early Response mechanisms at the community level. This measure will help to mitigate the risk of future conflicts.

In the Somali region of Ethiopia, clashes between militias from the Oromia and Somali regional states in the Koloji IDP camp left several civilians dead and many others injured. The Deaconess Foundation raised humanitarian funds for the Koloji IDP camp, where the situation has been dire for a long time, with many children suffering from malnutrition. As a result, food aid was distributed in early 2024 to the camp where some of the project IDP participants come from. Somalia continued to experience violence from Al-Shabaab. Travel to Somalia was minimised, and our partners had additional security measures for in-person events. Careful evaluations were made before travelling to conflict-prone locations. Safety was assessed at event venues in advance, and events were not made public until after the event had occurred to ensure the safety of the participants. Despite these challenges, the programme activities continued as planned, with additional security awareness and situation monitoring.

Somalia and the Somali Region of Ethiopia continued to experience extreme drought. During the spring of 2023, rains brought some relief to many areas, as well as new threats, including flash flooding. The deteriorating economic conditions prompted a rise in the number of IDPs seeking better livelihood opportunities. These developments did not have a direct impact on the programme activities. However, as it is anticipated that the droughts and other extreme weather events related to climate change will continue, project-level mitigation measures have been updated to include, i.e., the possibility to extend food packages to participants



in trainings and continuing Vamos life-skills trainings in the city of Godey, where there is a particularly high influx of internally displaced young people.

Across the region, civil society faced severe restrictions, hindering its ability to address sensitive issues and blocking the inclusive participation of groups in vulnerable positions in social and economic life and peace-building and reconciliation processes. The Mary Hoch Foundation team invested time mitigating these risks by coordinating efforts to enhance civil society initiatives and collaboration with the public sector. In South Sudan, the political climate remained dictatorial and full of suspicion, with human rights activists and journalists frequently arrested and disappearing without a trace. State officials monitored every activity aimed at empowering citizens.

In the Somali Region of Ethiopia, the impact of drought and floods was combined with high inflation, further deteriorating economic conditions. As the South Sudanese pound weakened against other currencies, living costs and poverty rates increased sharply. The projects have benefited from the higher USD per EUR exchange rate. However, as costs within the region significantly increased, it resulted in financial stress for the partners. For example, travel costs in the region increased by about 50%. Programme administration staff required more time to adjust the budget and ensure there was no overspending.

New health-related risks were identified during the year. Dengue fever broke out in Somaliland. To mitigate this risk, the staff excluded individuals exhibiting dengue fever symptoms, such as cough and fever, from participating in project activities.

### 3.2 East Europe & Western Balkans

The Deaconess Foundation's programme in the region covers Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine. As Russia's war against Ukraine continued, the region had to tackle unprecedented challenges such as citizen displacement, homelessness, inflation, threats to energy supplies, the spreading of fake news, and hybrid actions.

All countries in the region, except Belarus, made efforts to progress in their EU integration processes. The governments and authorities in these countries have actively developed policies and ratified international human rights instruments in fields relevant to the programme work: anti-discrimination,

Roma inclusion, immigration, gender equality, and asylum. This greatly supported the programme policy work in Kosovo and Ukraine especially. Yet, many of the policies lacked local implementation processes and budgets, and local authorities often had limited capacity to carry them out.

**Security challenges, risks, and threats persisted in the region.** Because of the tensions and security incidents in North Mitrovica, Kosovo, the mental wellbeing of the repatriated women in the region deteriorated. Therefore, the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims actively assessed whether they needed extra support. The Serbian-speaking Roma in the same area were more hesitant to join in activities led by civil society because of the tense situation.

The security situation in Ukraine changed constantly. Both participants and active collaborators had to relocate for shorter or longer periods. In such cases, social media platforms helped keep the connection with them. The capacity to ensure safety and continue the programme work was sustained by leading the operations from three localities: Kyiv, Strasbourg, and Mukachevo. With humanitarian support from the Deaconess Foundation, Chiricli opened a shelter in Mukachevo. If the security situation in Kyiv changed, the mitigation plan would relocate the critical staff to Mukachevo.

Moreover, the local Roma mediators are spread in all regions and know the communities who participate in the programme. Online meetings and meetings outside the country's territory were used to ensure safety. Most of the employees who work with the programme are women. Yet, male employees have been stressed by the changing mobilisation rules. We have not lost any core staff members yet, but this remains a risk. As travelling becomes even more difficult for Ukrainian men, having part of the personnel in Strasbourg is one solution to ensure safety, the continuation of the work, and international advocacy activities. In Belarus, the programme managed to work "in silence" by focusing on "non-political" topics, such as the economic empowerment and health of vulnerable groups. Participating in civil society networks provided good knowledge on how to stay safe. Peer-to-peer and technical support was assured by the partner located outside of Belarus.

**The region's high level of inflation and price rise** was apparent throughout the year. Some of the activities

cost more than planned. The partners had to find cheaper vocational skills providers in Kosovo, for example, and in Moldova, some activities were left out that did not affect the desired results. Due to higher living costs, poverty increased among the programme participants, making their position even more vulnerable. This affected their well-being, social conditions, and occasionally their motivation and ability to participate in programme activities. These situations called for more personalised attention and guidance. In the context of increased poverty, safeguarding basic needs and income has been a priority for the programme's target groups. It has been important that economic empowerment is included in each project in this region. This made it possible to involve participants also in advocacy and civic participation. In Ukraine, the programme succeeded also because it was sustained by our humanitarian work project, which is external to the programme but designed to complement each other.

**The high mobility of both persons in vulnerable positions and skilled professionals characterises the region.** Kosovo faces a brain drain of health professionals emigrating to other European countries, while young people and activists are emigrating from Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. We assessed that both the emigration of professionals and vulnerable communities could affect the programme results. However, this didn't materialise even when some partners, for instance, had to deal with staff changes. Regarding programme participants, we achieved the targets by having strong grassroots communication and connection and including new participants when some dropped out.

The civil society in the region and the programme partners went through hectic times, as they had to fulfil many societal tasks, from providing emergency support to continuing their core tasks to addressing new human rights challenges and working on influencing policies. In Ukraine and Moldova, the partners had to learn new work areas, including assisting IDPs and refugees, monitoring human rights in the context of the Marshall law, assisting gender-based violence victims, and providing wartime shelter. They engaged in dialogues with organisations that had relevant expertise. For Roma Women Fund Chiricli, it was instrumental to combine forces with the Ombudsman in human rights monitoring and advocacy, eventually leading to the organisation becoming a member of the Expert Council.

### 3.3. Risk management capacity and risk management plans

At the project level, risk analyses are carried out, and project-specific risks are assessed and continuously monitored with the partners. Information on anticipated risks recurrent in different projects and geographical areas directly feeds into and supports the more in-depth analysis and update of the programme level matrix, performed annually while planning the next year and ensures synchronisation between the two levels. The programme-level risk matrix has been an effective tool in supporting risk management and mitigation. At the end of 2023, the matrix was updated by adding a new type of sociopolitical risk. This addition anticipated the potential impact of visa liberalisation on our projects in Kosovo from January 1, 2024, which may lead to increased brain drain and undocumented migration.

The Deaconess Foundation has taken the new risk management tool Granite into use during 2023. The tool also constitutes a platform for more efficient risk management in the programme. During 2024, risks identified as part of development cooperation work will be escalated to the Deaconess Foundation leadership through Granite. In addition, the HaiPro system serves to better manage risks for the programme staff based in Helsinki. Besides, travel safety is carefully considered when the team is travelling. Both trainings and procedures focusing on travel safety are in place.

The programme made significant steps on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH). All the project employees from partner organisations completed a compulsory online basic safeguarding course and attended a one-day online workshop organised by the Deaconess Foundation. As part of the workshop, the new whistleblowing tool was presented. The Tanzanian partner, Foxes Community and Wildlife Conservation Trust (FCWCT) received a 5-day training and a six months consultation to develop their PSEAH processes and policies. The Deaconess Foundation and its partner organisations also completed safeguarding self-assessments and made further plans on prioritisation. Trainings and proceeding with workplans will continue in 2024 for some of our partners. Further, zero tolerance for corruption is applied by all our partners, and all have internal anti-corruption or anti-fraud policies in place to prevent corruption in all work streams. **No cases of abuse, sexual harassment or corruption have been identified or reported to the Deaconess Foundation by partners in 2023.**

# 4. Programme Results in 2023

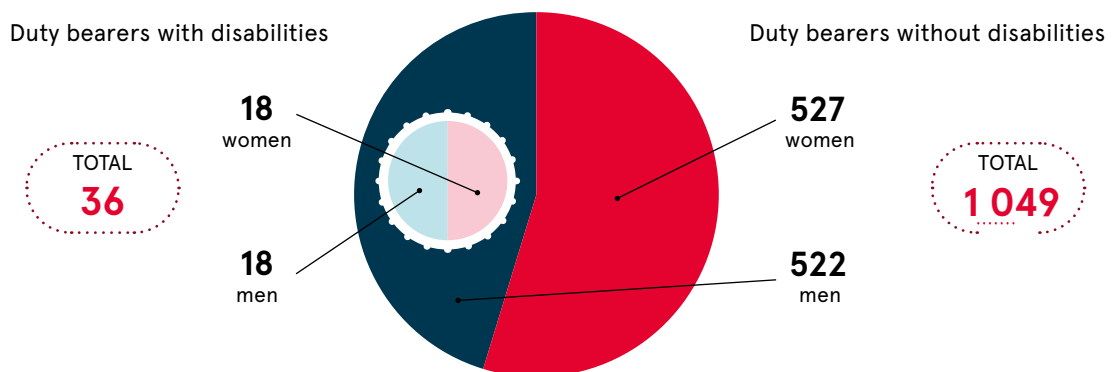
In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation’s programme “Equal, Inclusive and Reconciled Societies” was implemented through 10 projects in eight countries of East Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, and Tanzania) and Eastern Europe (Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine) as well as Finland.

The analysis of achievements against the programme’s theory of change, outcome-level analyses, and the presence of early signs of impact provide evidence that the programme is on the right path towards advancing its desired impact, i.e., the following:

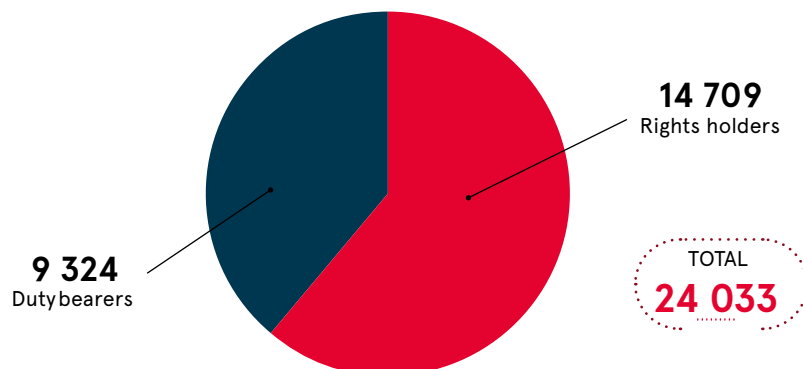
**“Marginalised youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and psychosocial wellbeing in communities and societies.”**

High ownership of all the actors involved is the backbone of the Deaconess Foundation’s programme. Trust and credibility among local communities and good relations with local authorities are essential building blocks for ensuring ownership, transparency, and accountability of our work. Extensive advocacy efforts in Finland, in the countries of operation and globally are central to the programme’s achievements.

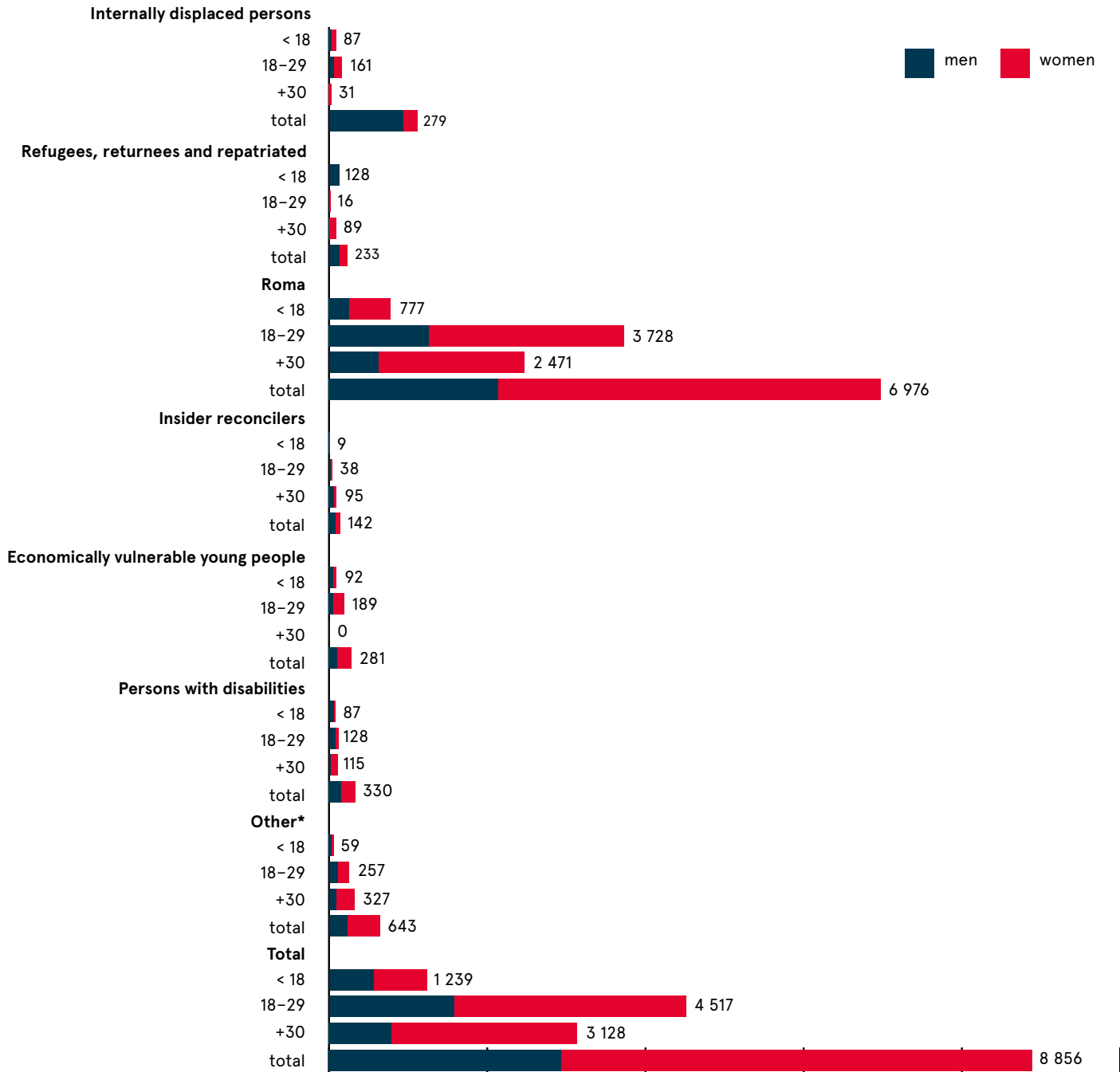
## Direct duty bearers reached



## Indirect rights holders and duty bearers



## Direct rights holders reached according to age, gender and group



\*) This category includes single mothers, economically vulnerable young people, university students, graduates, minorities, and CSO staff from Somaliland; young people facing marginalisation from Ethiopia; media and business representatives from Kosovo and representatives of Finnish CSOs and business.

## 4.1 Achievements in 2023 against the programme's theory of change

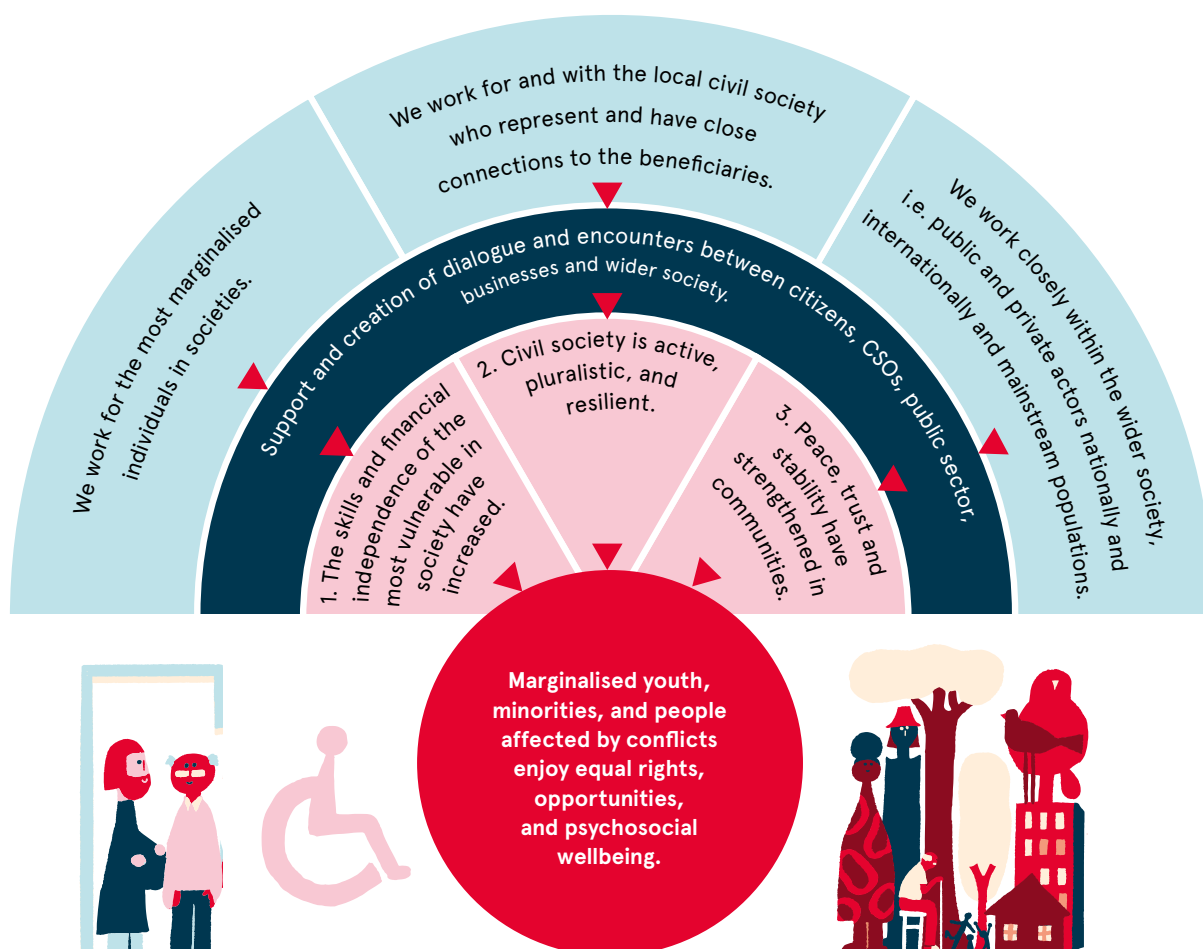
The programme's theory of change draws on the idea that an equal, inclusive, and reconciled society is possible when 1) even the most marginalised members of the society have equal access and opportunities to a decent livelihood, 2) civil society is active, pluralistic, and resilient, and 3) there is peace and trust in communities.

The Deaconess Foundation's programme work, partly leaning on results achieved earlier by projects that started before the programme period, has already achieved the following:

1. Marginalised youth, minorities, and persons affected by conflict have gained personal life management skills, employability skills, and business competencies (**outcome 5**). This progress has, in turn, improved their self-confidence and wellbeing. Advocacy efforts

towards the private sector have increased employers' interest in hiring repatriated women and young people facing marginalisation (**outcome 2**) and have promoted more inclusive employment services (**outcome 3**). Intense policy work has improved the accessibility of government jobs to the Roma minority (**outcomes 1 & 3**). During the programme's first two years, 613 people found jobs, started businesses, or developed other decent livelihoods.

2. Individuals and communities have gained a better knowledge of their rights and possibilities to create an impact. Participation in communities and societies has increased across the programme, in particular through community involvement and employment. The Roma community has gained a better understanding of policymaking and actively took part in local-level policy processes (**outcomes 1 & 5**). Partners influenced policy processes and documents to



Simplified theory of change of the programme

reflect better the needs and voices of the groups they represent, making progress towards achieving fair, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Further, partner CSOs have successfully engaged in diverse networks and partnerships at the local, national, and international levels. Capacities increased, especially in safeguarding. Peer-to-peer learning among the partners in the two programme regions was strengthened (**outcome 1**). Connections and networks between CSOs, private sector actors and governmental institutions have also improved. On a broader societal level, progress has been made in making public services better meet the needs of the rights holders, particularly in Ukraine and Kosovo (**outcomes 1, 2 and 3**).

3. The Deaconess Foundation’s programme enhanced the effectiveness of peace and reconciliation processes by providing insider reconcilers with resources in reconciliation process design, peer support and skills in mental health and psychosocial support. As a result, insider reconcilers are getting better equipped to stabilise conflict in the Horn of Africa. In addition, the number of young insider reconcilers participating in peace and reconciliation processes has increased. Mechanisms and networks have been developed to help connect local peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts with larger-scale peace processes. Government and NGO actors in the Horn of Africa are becoming increasingly aware of how MHPSS and trauma healing have largely been missing from peacebuilding and conflict resolution programming. The programme promotes a paradigm shift in peace processes to foster the inclusion of trauma healing and psychosocial support (**outcome 4**).

## 4.2 Early Signs of Impact

The programme’s targeted impact is that marginalised youth, minorities and people affected by conflicts enjoy equal rights, opportunities and psychosocial wellbeing in communities and societies.



Photographer: Meerl Koutanemi

*Edona Limani volunteers to support Roma girls in continuing their education in her hometown of Gadime, Kosovo, as part of the mentoring programme of the CSO Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.*

### Improved wellbeing of young people

In 2023, an impact indicator was piloted in two youth projects in Somaliland and Tanzania that began before the launch of our programme.

This initial assessment of progress towards the programme’s impact attests to positive changes in the participants’ lives, with improved wellbeing for 87% of the respondents.

The most reported types of changes in wellbeing related to personal empowerment and life skills development, including time management, psychosocial, and networking skills. Those skills have enabled youth to cultivate a positive mindset, make life decisions, and grow a network. Survey respondents highlighted increased self-confidence and courage to participate in communities through work or study. Many of the interviewed young people mentioned an improved economic situation and achieved financial independence. They were motivated, with professional goals, such as self-employment or pursuing further education. Achieving financial independence provided them with more opportunities to plan their future.

INDICATOR	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	TARGET	PROGRESS AGAINST TARGET 2025
Percentage of targeted youth, minorities and persons affected by conflicts whose wellbeing is improved	Not collected	Not collected	87 %	80 %	105%

## **Policy work is key in advancing equal, peaceful and inclusive societies**

There are signs that policy work will contribute to more equal, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Across all programme countries, partner CSOs assessed that the duty bearers have greater knowledge about the needs of youth, minorities, internally displaced persons, repatriated, and insider reconcilers than before. In Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, rights holders were given opportunities to advocate for the rights they consider relevant alongside our programme partners, directly engaging themselves in dialogue with duty bearers. As awareness grows about the groups the programme advocates for, the likelihood that duty bearers will consider their needs and rights in legislative, policy, and practical work increases. Such work strengthens democracy, making it more representative and inclusive.

In Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, policy work contributes to the consolidation of the rule of law through its efforts related to anti-discrimination and equality policies. In Kosovo, the programme partners advocated for the inclusion of “antigypsyism,” a specific form of discrimination, in the anti-discrimination legislation and its recognition by relevant equality institutions and practitioners. Following these efforts, the government proposed amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Law. In 2024, the programme will provide technical expertise to the working group responsible for preparing these amendments. This advocacy and policy work model will also be shared with programme partners in Ukraine and Moldova. When specific forms of discrimination faced by Roma are defined in legislation and understood by those implementing the laws and policies, the likelihood of equal treatment for Roma increases. However, the inclusion of antigypsyism in international and national standards is still at its beginnings in Europe. Not only can the work done in Kosovo serve the anti-discrimination work of other countries, but also that of international organisations, such as UN bodies, who could use the evidence and knowledge generated.

The National Human Rights Institutions in Ukraine and Kosovo now possess better knowledge about the vulnerabilities of Roma and internally displaced persons and have improved access and cooperation with these communities. As a result, their capacity to monitor and protect the rights of these groups has strengthened, making them more robust institutions. Strong human rights institutions are pivotal in advancing the rule of law.

## **Multisectoral collaboration has improved the situation of rights holders**

The programme has advanced multisectoral collaboration between relevant duty bearers and other stakeholders in their fields of intervention, enhancing the rights holders’ situation. The cooperation with humanitarian actors facilitated access to emergency support for rights holders in South Sudan and Ukraine. By partnering with UNICEF in South Sudan, the Women of Faith Network enabled access to polio immunisation for children. Further, government and NGO actors in the Horn of Africa are becoming increasingly aware of how MHPSS and trauma healing have largely been missing from peacebuilding and conflict resolution programming. The programme has started to impact public policy in that area by developing a draft National Healing Framework in Kenya.

In Ukraine and Kosovo, the cooperation with the human rights Institutions and the Council of Europe brought successful results regarding the monitoring of human rights for Roma and in advocating for improvements in legislation on ID registration and anti-discrimination law. The Ukrainian State Migration Service in charge of ID registration is committed to fulfilling the right to ID registration for all. Still, they need more expertise, access to communities, and funds. Working together on this issue, Chiricli, the State Migration Service and the Ukrainian Ombudsman’s office helped 76 Roma get registered passports, and 46 get registered birth certificates in 2023. The Deaconess Foundation’s humanitarian project provided support, covering, for instance, transportation costs for undocumented persons. The aim is to use the lessons learnt from this pilot and extend it to other regions in Ukraine. Furthermore, the same stakeholders and Chiricli started to work on simplifying the ID registration procedure and making it more accessible. The new procedure could significantly impact the right to ID papers for undocumented persons in Ukraine.

In Kosovo, the successful collaboration with the Office for Good Governance not only furthered the efforts against antigypsyism but also contributed to the concrete implementation of the “employment mechanism,” a country-wide affirmative policy for the inclusion of underrepresented communities in the public sector. The programme has also advanced collaboration between the private sector and civil society, which has increased the possibilities for people in vulnerable positions to get employed.

## Improved access to employment

The programme has improved equal access to employment for marginalised youth and minorities, thereby increasing inclusion and cohesion in societies. Even though additional efforts are required to gain a deeper understanding of companies' needs, combat stigma, and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, our partners have succeeded in securing employment opportunities for the groups they represent. With many of the companies in Ethiopia and Tanzania, the collaboration has been so fruitful that they have indicated a willingness to continue hiring young people facing marginalisation.

Following the enactment of the Regulation concerning the Admission Procedure in Civil Service, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo are preparing to publish a call to fulfil the 10% quota of reserved positions, therefore improving the accessibility for government jobs to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Through targeted interventions such as mentorship programmes, educational support, improved employability and community engagement initiatives, the programme has enhanced the inclusion and resilience of young people facing marginalisation. According to the evaluation report of the Youth Action for Future project

(YAFF) project, the youth have gained employable skills, and 97% of those who have taken vocational skills and entrepreneurship training are now running a business either individually or as a cooperative. They have become integrated into society as respected and responsible members of their communities. The realisation of young people's right to work is expected to reduce the inequality gap among youth groups and society. YAFF has increased youth welfare and promoted decent work while marginally reducing young people's irregular migration as an unintended impact.

## 4.3 Outcome level results

### OUTCOME 1



*The capacity of the project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened.*

**Excellent progress has been achieved in advancing Outcome 1 in 2023. The programme partners influenced policy areas relevant to the groups they represent. The**



James Kasela

*Innocent Mkyonye got a job as a mechanic at his trainer's repair shop in Luhunga, Tanzania, after learning motorcycle maintenance in a five-month apprenticeship training. While working, he will continue to develop his car maintenance skills.*



number of policy processes in which they were involved increased. In Ukraine, transformative steps were achieved towards simplifying the legal procedure for undocumented persons' birth certificate registration. In Kosovo, partners contributed to enhancing anti-discrimination legislation and policies for foreigners. The programme partners engaged in diverse networks and local, national, and international partnerships. Peer-to-peer learning among the partners in the two programme regions progressed. Organisational capacity strengthened, especially in safeguarding.



Outcome 1 aims to improve the capacity and policy-influencing power of the main CSO partners and other local CSOs involved in programme implementation. To achieve this, the CSOs engaged in policy processes and networks/partnerships and developed their organisational and management performance. Influencing and strong CSOs are key to achieving the desired impact of the programme. The results for this outcome have been collected in Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, and Tanzania.

### Contributing to systemic changes and humanitarian needs

All programme partners contributed to public decision and policymaking by being part of working groups,

attending public consultations and meetings with relevant duty bearers, communicating the needs of the groups they represent, publishing data about the right holders, advocating for the groups they represent to be included in policies, monitoring, drafting texts, and/or providing consultancy and expertise support for duty bearers. The partners contributed to 55 policy processes. Some of the policy processes have been ongoing, while new ones emerged, especially in Ukraine, regarding the rights of IDPs and Roma IDPs. While many CSOs in Ukraine had to shift their focus to humanitarian work and actions, the Deaconess Foundation's partner Roma Women Fund Chiricli and the other Roma CSOs Chiricli partnered with, continued to do both emergency intervention and policy work. The programme partners engaged in 107 partnerships and 45 networks in 2023. They did so with diverse types of actors, local, national, and international: other CSOs, duty bearers, the private sector, international organisations and International Non-Governmental Organisations.

The programme had an impact on various policy processes, such as the Somaliland National Youth Policy, Youth Development Policies in the Somali Region, the National Comprehensive Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation of Integration of Foreigners in Kosovo, legislation to establish the Kosovo Institution for Documentation of War Crimes, the National

INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	TARGET 2025	PROGRESS AGAINST TARGET 2025
1. Number and names of the policy processes, partnerships and networks in which project partners and other targeted civil society actors are involved.		Policy processes: 30 Partnerships: 94 Networks: 24	Policy processes: 35 Partnerships: 155 Networks: 46	Policy processes: 55 Partnerships: 107 Networks: 45	Project partners are involved in: Policy processes: 30 Partnerships: 103 Networks: 28	Policy processes: 300% Partnerships: 254% Networks: 161%
2. Project partners' and other targeted civil society actors' organisational and project management performance have improved.		Project partners' average rate of organisational and project management performance is 3.76 / 5.00 (fair)	Project partners' average rate of organisational and project management performance is 3.98 (fair)	Project partners' average rate of organisational and project management performance is 4.32 / 5.00 (good)	Project partners' average rate of organisational and project management performance is at least 4.00 (good)	108%

Strategy on Transitional Justice in Kosovo, the National Strategy for Roma Integration and Protection in Ukraine and its Action Plan, the National Recovery Plan of Ukraine, and the Law on national minorities of Ukraine.

A success factor is that governments in Kosovo, Ukraine, and Moldova have been very active in advancing policy reforms, for the European Union accession process is a high priority for them. This created a conducive environment for progress in the areas of anti-discrimination legislation, improving the situation of the Roma. Regarding the Roma national policies and policies for repatriated, asylum seekers and internally displaced in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, there have been some encouraging steps towards developing implementing plans, indicators, and monitoring the progress. Regarding the Roma National Policy in Kosovo, the relevant CSOs and the Office for Good Governance met quarterly to monitor the progress of the Policy. In Ukraine, also thanks to advocacy efforts of the Roma Women Fund Chiricli and other CSOs, the government renewed the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the National Roma Plan, which now includes five Roma CSOs. For the first time in history, Ukraine dedicated a budget to the implementation of the National Roma Strategy and pledged to back the creation of regional and local Roma Action Plans in 2024.

The programme partners evaluated that several partnerships helped them expand their expertise, knowledge, and work practices, implement activities, improve the quality of their actions, reach rights holders in new locations, and amplify and improve the results. For some partners and projects, the implementation of the cross-cutting objectives succeeded thanks to partnerships with women's rights and disability organisations. The projects focusing on employment and skills development cooperated with private companies, employers, and vocational institutions. The Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights and the Kosovo Ministry of Internal Affairs representatives visited the Deaconess Foundation in 2023, which helped strengthen the partnerships, trust, and programme planning. Together with the partners, the Deaconess Foundation's team met key stakeholders in most of the programme countries during country visits. The partners evaluate that such visits are essential for building trust, strengthening cooperation and achieving the desired impact.

These achievements are only possible with the long-term advocacy and networking of the programme partners. Institutions and communities recognise them as trusted experts with reliable methods.

## **Targeted Capacity Building and Peer Learning among Regional Programme Partners**

The results for measuring how programme partners' and other CSOs' capacities have strengthened have been collected through the quarterly and annual reports and a questionnaire completed annually by the programme partners. The scale of use is from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). All project partners completed the questionnaire and scored an average of 4,32 in 2023.

In 2023, all partners completed an introductory safeguarding course online and a tailored one-day online safeguarding training. The partners improved their knowledge about safeguarding policies and processes and about how to conduct self-assessments and risk assessments. The Tanzanian partner, Foxes Community and Wildlife Conservation Trust (FCWCT) started an intensive process of developing safeguarding with the support of a Tanzanian safeguarding expert. This led to increased knowledge of FCWCT's staff, village child protection committee members, and young people about protecting the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people. Many participants' perceptions were changed, especially regarding the physical punishments of children. FCWCT also developed a safeguarding policy and started to develop safeguarding processes, which will be finalised in 2024.

Partners' capacities in monitoring and evaluation improved further. Instead of all-partner workshops, needs-based, partner-tailored reporting clinics were organised, which increased partners' understanding of reporting requirements and helped resolve a few issues related to data collection. Based on the partners' feedback, they also found the project self-assessment sessions helpful in that they provided a structured approach to evaluating progress and helped analyse data.

In East Africa, the Somaliland Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER) and the Organisation for Welfare and Development in Action (Ethiopia) (OWDA) had an exchange meeting in Jijiga, which allowed them to deepen their knowledge about each other's work. As a result, each organisation developed a set of lessons learned and concrete issues that they can apply in their activities, especially in entrepreneurship training. Y-PEER was impressed by the young women-led cooperatives developed through the Youth Action for Future project. As a part of the Vamos approach, Y-PEER and OWDA increased their skills in individual counselling, which they also started applying to young people in 2023.

## Challenges

Programme partners' policy, networking, and capacity building work have been occasionally disrupted by emergencies, conflict, oppression, and crises, which affect the groups they represent and serve. The partners in Belarus continue to work in silence and focus on income and skills generation. Many partners had to provide emergency support even when humanitarian work was not their primary expertise. They also advocated for humanitarian support. The volume of work done by the programme partners is high, and sometimes, they had to cut investment in capacity development and training activities to address the needs of the right holders and duty bearers. In several programme countries, our partners feared staff members would leave because of the war or brain drain. Fortunately, this risk was not realised. In Ukraine and South Sudan, the staff only relocated temporarily.

Especially in Eastern Europe but also in East Africa, disinformation, conspiracy theories, hate speech, and polarisation affected the security and the possibilities to influence some policy areas. For example, in Ukraine, the partners had to consider carefully how to take up human rights abuses against the Roma minority by the state institutions and to make sure that Russia doesn't use such incidents for disinformation. Due to the crisis and challenging operational environment for CSOs, programme partners faced difficulties engaging and training new activists to ensure the sustainability of their work.

While strong connections with duty bearers are crucial to the sustainability of the programme work, some institutions wish that the CSOs could provide resources for the policy processes because they lack resources and expertise. This positively impacts the quality of the policies, but the CSOs must be able to channel funds from donors to provide expert work. Further, exchange visits require plenty of organisational work and financial resources. Also, some data collection and outcome analysis challenges persisted in 2023, highlighting the need to continue and further develop mutual learning sessions and other reporting support processes in 2024.

## Lessons Learned

The best advocacy results were achieved when the partners collected strong evidence and best practices on the issues they advocated for. They gained such evidence and inspiration by meeting international partners and institutions and developing their own models based on these practices.

Advocating with human rights institutions and international organisations can yield better results and contribute to transformative human rights achievements. For human rights institutions, partnering with CSOs enables them to reach rights holders and enhance their knowledge of communities. CSOs acquire knowledge about fundamental and human rights as well as policy work. Actions such as joint human rights monitoring can help both sides improve their outcomes and use their resources more efficiently.



Deaconess Foundation

**The Deaconess Foundation and its partners organised the Regional Programme Forum with the eight partners in Western Balkans and Eastern Europe for the first time. The Executive Board of the Deaconess Foundation attended part of the Forum and met the partners. All partners evaluated the Forum as very useful. Most partners gained more insight into the Foundation's mission, activities, and leadership by discussing with the Deaconess Foundation's Executive Board members. They appreciated the Executive Board's interest in their work and the friendly attitude toward them as partners. The partners improved their knowledge about each other's work and expertise. Future ideas for capacity sharing developed: Roma Women Fund Chiricli from Ukraine realised that they could greatly benefit from the experiences of the partners in Kosovo in dealing with homelessness and relocation after the war, as well as in supporting victims of sexual violence and trauma. The partners in Moldova and Belarus established a connection with the Jesuit Refugee Service from Kosovo and wish to exchange further on income generation and entrepreneurship for vulnerable groups.**

## OUTCOME 2



*Businesses operate more sustainably, and businesses and other employers employ more inclusively.*

**The progress of the results has been very good in East Africa, where the expected results were achieved during the reporting year. In Eastern Europe, progress towards the target is slower. In East Africa, the success results from continuous advocacy by the project teams towards employers. In Tanzania, where the results have been most remarkable, tea companies and Chinese businesses have played a key role in employing young people. In Ethiopia and Somaliland, especially the public sector has set an example to other employers by hiring young people facing marginalisation. In Kosovo, businesses established by repatriated women have employed other repatriated women.**

The programme encourages businesses to operate more sustainably and hire marginalised and minority youth and women. The partners work closely with businesses and labour markets and organise events to bring stakeholders together. By creating connections with the businesses, cooperating, and advocating programme partners provide new information and influence the employers' attitudes, which leads to more employment opportunities for the programme participants. Results for this outcome have been collected in Ethiopia, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Kosovo.

## Advocating businesses and public sector employers was crucial to creating employment opportunities

The varying results show that the programme works in very different contexts. While reaching the (revised) target in East Africa is proceeding well, especially in Tanzania, the progress has been slower in Eastern Europe. This can partly be explained by the fact that only one project from Eastern Europe, which started in September 2022 in Kosovo with a limited economic empowerment component, contributes to this outcome, whereas three projects from East Africa, which began in 2019 and 2021, contribute to it. In East Africa, 101 employers employed 146 youth from vulnerable positions; in Kosovo, two employers employed three repatriated young women. The data gathered from East Africa reveals that employers are interested in hiring young people who are skilled and committed to work. The partners have been able to create connections with businesses successfully. The good progress shows there have been more employment possibilities than expected in East Africa, especially in Tanzania. The progress can even be considered exceptional, as the original overall target before the target revisions for East Africa was 39.

In Ethiopia, three public sector employers hired young people trained by the project. The local water authority in Jijjiga, Somali Region, hired six young men. In addition, the health science college and public service and management institute both hired one young man. The rest of the young people who finished vocational training founded their businesses (40, from which ten young women and 30 young men).

In Somaliland, seven employers in the private sector, 11 in the public sector and three CSOs employed 28 young people (16 young women and 12 young men) who participated in project activities. In addition, ten young people (five young women and five young

INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	REVISED TARGET 2025	PROGRESS AGAINST REVISED TARGET 2025
1. Number and types of employers who have employed marginalised young people and minorities in programme countries		Number of employers in East Africa: 0	22	East Africa: 101	East Africa: 150	East Africa: 82%
		Number of employers in Kosovo: 0	0	Kosovo: 2	East Europe: 10	East Europe: 20%

men) established new businesses. The private business employers represent various sectors, from healthcare and marketing to IT and design. This result has been achieved through carefully selecting the fields in which the youth have received training and persistent advocacy and networking towards private sector actors. These activities have included meetings, visits, and other networking activities. In addition, a market feasibility study was conducted in 2023. The outcomes of the study were used to design the project activities. According to the study, there is a significant gap in the Somaliland labour market, as most of the young people, especially persons with disabilities, girls, and groups facing marginalisation, lack the necessary skills to meet employers' demands. The study showed that the most promising sectors were amongst the trade and small businesses, and thus, the vocational trainings chosen were tailoring, plumbing, beautification, and graphic design. Special focus was also paid to sufficient livelihood and addressing gender imbalances in earnings.

In Tanzania, 77 private sector employers have employed 110 youths, of which 50 were young women and 60 were young men. Of the project participants, 15 established their own businesses (eight young women and seven young men). In the operating area in Mufindi, especially the Chinese companies and tea businesses have employed many young people. In addition, small businesses, e.g. in the beautification, catering, and mechanics sectors, have been particularly interested in hiring. Training, especially psychosocial coaching, has changed young people's mindset, boosting their motivation and self-worth, which helps them secure employment. Apprenticeship training has provided them with skills and connections to the employers. Despite the awareness-raising efforts of FCWCT, employers have not yet been very keen to employ young people with disabilities. Achieving this still needs more targeted work.

In Kosovo, there has been little progress in achieving the outcome target. During 2023, two new businesses were established by repatriated women. Of these two businesses, one employed two repatriated young women and the second employed one. To reach the targets in 2024 and 2025, strategies for enhancing sustainability and inclusivity amongst businesses will be revisited and reinforced. An encouraging development is the project's successful signing of five new Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with professional skills course providers and potential employers in the baking and beautification sectors. Notably, all businesses behind the MoUs are led by Kosovar women who understand the local context and the situation of repatriated women.

## Challenges

It has been hard to help skilled marginalised youth get hired by private sector employers, even with ongoing efforts to link them with businesses and show their potential as workers. As employment opportunities in the Somali Region are scarce, private companies tend to favour members of their own clans. In addition, there are prejudices against minority clan members, who often belong to the most marginalised persons in Somali society. Therefore, further work is needed to get employers to hire more inclusively.

In Somaliland, employment in the private sector is primarily informal and favours family members. This is why it is challenging to acquire official job contracts, especially in certain sectors. Those sectors that need skilled labour often hire foreign employees. This is especially challenging for females, as the job markets are highly gendered, and the sectors from which women can seek employment are very limited. In Kosovo, the stigma against repatriated and refugee women is a significant obstacle to employment. Ensuring employers hire these women requires sustained advocacy and time. Because the companies with whom the MoUs have been signed will only hire women if there are open vacancies, employment through them remains insecure. In addition, many repatriated women prefer part-time jobs, which makes employment more challenging.

## Lessons learned

Creating contacts with businesses through visiting them in person has proved successful in Ethiopia. In addition to networking, this helps the project staff to keep updated on the market's current needs and to revise the vocational training sectors accordingly. As the private sector still seems to favour their family members and have prejudice against the minority clan members, the public sector has appeared to be a good partner and willing to employ skilled youth despite their background.

In Somaliland, the project team effectively utilised the feasibility study to map the needs of the businesses accurately. This was crucial as the companies willing to hire from the official labour market seek specific skills. In Kosovo, a multi-step procedure for approaching employers has appeared successful. In addition, approaching only women-led businesses has worked well, for they seem to have more understanding and empathy towards the repatriated and refugee women. The project should also pay more attention to the employability of the women identified in the future.



In Jijiga, Somali Region of Ethiopia, a local water supply and sewerage authority has employed six young plumbers during 2023. Before participating in the vocational training programme provided by the project, the young men were working as low-paid assistants to actual plumbers. They mostly dug holes with a shovel when a pipe needed to be repaired. After the skills training provided by the Jijiga Polytechnic, they are now qualified plumbers. All the participants are from vulnerable backgrounds, and many of them belong to minority groups.

As the city is growing fast and the authorities have increased the water pressure, the old pipes are breaking easily, and water leakages are common. The local water authority urgently needs qualified plumbers, and they were eager to hire six out of ten plumbers who graduated from the skills training. The authority has been pleased with the employees and is willing to hire more skilled young people. The project partner OWDA and the water supply and sewerage authority have agreed that in 2024, the project will train young people in administration to take care of the water meter reading, reporting, and invoicing, and the authority will hire them.

*As a social foundation group, the Deaconess Foundation is boldly working for human dignity both through its profit and non-profit operations. In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation had 3,400 employees and used 5,5 million Euros of its own funds for its non-profit operations in Finland and globally.*

*This unique position has enabled the Deaconess Foundation to continue bringing together private, public, and civil society actors in Finland and globally. In Finland, this was done primarily through the Partnering for Change project, which continued the Deaconess Foundation's collaboration with Finnpartnership, Fingo, and other stakeholders. In 2024, the Deaconess Foundation's international operations plan to engage with its innovation platform, Coimpact, which specialises in facilitating and speeding up social innovations in Finland and globally.*

## OUTCOME 3



Services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised young people and minorities are more inclusive, functional and of good quality.

The progress towards the target has been very good, and the expected results were achieved in both outcome indicators during the reporting year. The average number measuring improved service quality, inclusiveness and functionality was 4,05 / 5,0 in Eastern Europe and 4,0 / 5,0 in Tanzania. Thanks to the successful advocacy work of our partners, achieved results also comprised seven documents, including revised policy documents and newly developed research papers. The results for this outcome have been collected in Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, Ukraine, and Tanzania.

In outcome 3, the desired aim is to enhance the provision of inclusive, high-quality services by public service providers to marginalised groups and minorities.

In 2023, four projects were feeding to this outcome, three in East Europe and one in Tanzania. The implementing partners monitor and analyse the gaps in existing services and their delivery. Based on this, they provide capacity building to local authorities to ensure good quality services to vulnerable groups. They also make recommendations and advocate to guarantee the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed in essential documents on the local and national level.

### Public authorities provide more inclusive and accessible services for minorities

Outcome data indicated that both service providers and end-users perceive the quality of the services provided as good. It also shows that public services have become more inclusive and accessible for minorities, with a clear improvement in service quality since 2022. However, the results vary based on the country and whether the data was collected from service providers or users. For instance, in Kosovo, service providers rated the services at 3,29 (fair), while the end-users rated them at 4,10 (good). In Ukraine, progress has been made in providing more inclusive employment services for the Roma, especially in the Transcarpathia, Vinnytsya and Lutsk regions. Success factors lie in the long-term, daily communication and advocacy work by Roma Women Fund Chiricli with

INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	TARGET 2025	PROGRESS AGAINST TARGET 2025
1. Improved quality, inclusiveness and functionality of services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised youth and minorities		Average of services in East Europe: 3,4 / 5,0	East Europe: 0 (no results)	East Europe: 4,05	East Europe: 4,2	East Europe: 96%
		Average of services in Tanzania: 2,56 / 5,0	Tanzania: 2,89	Tanzania: 4,0	Tanzania: 4,0	Tanzania: 100%
2. The number and names of documents which include specific needs of marginalised youth and minorities are developed or revised by local authorities and other service provider		0 documents	2 documents	7 documents	5 documents	180%

national policymakers and in regular meetings bringing together local and national authorities and CSOs to share experiences and increase understanding of inclusive service provision. As a result, local authorities have been increasing the involvement of Roma representatives in decision-making.

In Tanzania, the capacity of 16 Village Child Protection Committees (VCPC) to provide services to marginalised young people and children and youth with disabilities has improved. In 2023, all VCPC members attended a one-day safeguarding training, and two members per committee attended longer training on the same topic. As a result, the awareness of the reporting channels for unequal behaviour and how to use them has been raised among the project participants. In Kosovo, targeted information sessions and roundtable discussions implemented by the Employment Agency have been great proof of the effectiveness of customised approaches in achieving the inclusiveness of services for marginalised communities. In Belarus, The Center for Social Services in the Gomel area consulted caregivers of older people, persons with disabilities, or seriously ill family members on proper care techniques. Caregivers received information on care products, where to obtain special equipment and government care allowances. This new form of

cooperation with the service providers for tailored service provision greatly expanded the inclusiveness and accessibility of services for the Roma community.

### **New policies and research improve the status of minorities**

In Kosovo, a remarkable achievement was the enactment of the Regulation concerning the Admission Procedure in Civil Service. The CSO Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians initiated the inter-institutional working group and supported them with expertise and funding. The Regulation sets forth the guidelines and processes for recruiting candidates for civil service. Specifically, it mandates that public institutions must initiate recruitment processes exclusively for members of underrepresented communities to fulfil the 10% quota of reserved positions for minority groups in public sector entities, therefore improving the accessibility for government jobs to the targeted Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. The enactment of the Regulation is a significant step towards meeting the quota for minority representation in public sector jobs. This Regulation aims to promote diversity and inclusivity and is the next step in promoting the right to employment of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.



Roma Women Fund Chiricli

*Partners of the Roma Women Fund Chiricli from different regions of Ukraine at the office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights discussing inclusive social services.*



In Ukraine, four documents were developed with the participation of Roma representatives and Roma Women Fund Chiricli: the Roma National Strategy, the New Roma National Action Plan, the Law on national minorities of Ukraine and the State programme "Unity in Diversity." The documents provide guidance and commit the Ukrainian government and institutions to work towards realising the fundamental and human rights of Roma and other national minorities. In Belarus and Moldova, research on the digital divide between the Roma minority and the mainstream population was conducted. As a result, recommendations were formulated to enhance the digital skills of Roma. It was acknowledged that digital proficiency, especially in using state services such as taxation and banking, is essential and requires further action.

### Challenges

In Ukraine, there are numerous challenges in reaching the most vulnerable people due to the ongoing war. There is a great need for safe and accessible premises for activities, especially for persons with disabilities. Also, the security situation is unpredictable, which makes planning challenging. Even though Kosovo has progressed in creating inclusive employment opportunities for communities facing marginalisation, it still faces challenges related to systemic barriers, ensuring sustainability, addressing skill gaps, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess impact and guide future interventions. In Tanzania, the Village Child Protection Committee members work as volunteers and do not receive any compensation for their work. They would need more support from the ward-level authorities. The project continues to advocate for hiring parasocial workers in every village.

### Lessons learned

The Kosovar partner emphasised the importance of data-driven solutions to identify and address the root causes of employment challenges. Gathering and analysing data on employment patterns, skills gaps, and barriers faced by minority communities enabled more informed decision-making and targeted interventions. Integrating these lessons into future initiatives will be instrumental in advancing inclusive employment practices and promoting socio-economic empowerment for marginalised communities. Continued collaboration, innovation, and stakeholder commitment will be essential to overcoming persistent barriers and achieving sustainable progress.



**Cooperation with state employment centres in Eastern Europe helped 50 Roma find jobs in different businesses. 70% of them kept their jobs, and 30% left due to low pay but stayed registered with the employment centre to search for a new job. 15% of the ones who kept working got the chance to further training to enhance their skills at the expense of the businesses.**

**Irina, a Roma woman from Eastern Europe, got a job as a kitchen worker via the employment centre. The work was physically very hard as it involved lifting heavy things. However, the administrators noticed Irina's talent in working with dough, and she was trained as a cook preparing dough for baking. It was very difficult for Irina to study, as she is illiterate, and working as a cook requires studying recipes, so her teenage daughter helped her with her studies. Now Irina works in two places - in the culinary department of a shopping centre and a restaurant. She also bakes at home and sells pastries to various cafes.**

## OUTCOME 4



*Roles and capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts and officials to provide specialised psychosocial services are strengthened.*

This is achieved by supporting reconciliation and service process design, strengthening the knowledge and skills of insider reconcilers in peace and reconciliation processes, and increasing awareness and skills on mental health and psychosocial support. To ensure this, the programme provides training, a variety of spaces for peer exchanges, and mentoring. The outcome results have been collected in Somalia, South Sudan, and Kosovo.

Outstanding progress has been achieved in outcome 4 through the two projects of the Horn of Africa region. There has been evident growth compared to the previous year in the percentage of insider reconcilers using their new skills and knowledge in practical work after training. Substantial growth can also be seen in the number of peace and reconciliation processes in which insider reconcilers participated following the training. Furthermore, in 2023, there were more active women and young insider reconcilers than before. In Kosovo, the training for municipal officials was conducted only at the end of 2023. This explains why no data on applying new skills was available within the same year. However, the number of trained municipal-level officials was high, and the training quality was very satisfactory.

### Insider reconcilers utilised their new skills and knowledge in reconciliation and trauma healing

In 2023, 78% of the trained insider reconcilers used their new skills and knowledge in practical work. This

INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	REVISED TARGET 2025	PROGRESS AGAINST REVISED TARGET 2025
Number and percentage of insider reconcilers* and officials who, after the trainings, use new skills and knowledge in reconciliation work and specialised services for refugees or repatriated. Ways of applying the new skills.		0	145 insider reconcilers (57%)	140 insider reconcilers (78%)	470 (82%)	63%
Number of insider reconcilers participating in peace and reconciliation processes. Number and types of processes.		65 9 processes	266 20 processes	205 48 processes	466 50 processes	112 % 96 %

\*) Insider reconcilers are individuals who belong to a group or community currently experiencing violent conflict and actively working to reconcile this conflict. They can be community leaders, faith leaders, women leaders, youth leaders or leaders of minorities.

indicates that the progress towards the target set for 2025 has been good. In South Sudan, most insider reconcilers are religious leaders who applied their new skills in trauma healing as part of preaching sermons and outreach activities. They also engaged in community reconciliations and facilitated internally displaced persons' return. In the regional Peace & Trust project, which covers the Horn of Africa region with a particular focus on Somalia, it was seen that the insider reconcilers employed their increased trauma awareness for their own wellbeing and that of participants in reconciliation processes. They also applied their new skills to develop healing-centred methodologies for reconciliation activities, facilitate healing circles and teach others about trauma, mental health and psychosocial support.

The new skills acquired by the insider reconcilers in South Sudan added value to the work of religious leaders in many ways. Specifically, trauma healing and reconciliation skills became integral to their everyday practice. For example, when internally displaced persons sought safe spaces, they often ran into churches where the religious leaders were able to support them. Another notable example is that in the regions where the project capacitated religious leaders, community members placed their trust in them and sought counselling sessions. As for the youth leaders, they were able to use their new skills in the context of sports activities – for instance, during soccer games, the half-time breaks were used for discussing reconciliation matters. The Women of Faith in South Sudan applied their new knowledge when doing outreach to street children. In the Peace & Trust project, the co-creation workshop focusing on Youth Leadership Training and Practitioner exchange built participants' capacity, particularly in trauma awareness and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), which was reported highly beneficial in the feedback surveys. The project also established the Eastern Africa MHPSS Network, which provides a space for insider reconcilers to support one another in employing new skills learned during grassroots and community activities.

In Kosovo, the first groups of municipal-level officials were trained in trauma-informed approach in November and December 2023. For this reason, they will only start applying their new skills in 2024. However, various success factors have been identified already. A key success factor is that a team of multi-disciplinary professionals contributed to preparing the training materials, and the training included essential self-care elements for institutional service providers.

## **Increased participation of insider reconcilers in peace and reconciliation processes**

In South Sudan, 86 trained insider reconcilers participated in three types of peace and reconciliation processes in 2023: early warning and early response programs, community reconciliation programmes, and reconciliation related to cattle theft. The regional Peace & Trust project reported a total of 119 insider reconcilers participating in the different types of peace and reconciliation processes: formalised national reconciliation processes and commissions; local processes such as healing circles, community meetings, the Somali Student Peace Initiative and regional meetings through networks. The combined results from 2022 and 2023 have already met the target for the number of insider reconcilers participating in peace and reconciliation processes by 2025.

In South Sudan, the insider reconcilers of the Bahr El Gazal region led community mediation sessions that ceased hostilities and continued to intervene to facilitate the return of the cattle that had been raided. Even though the conflicts keep recurring because communities continue to embrace cattle rustling as a traditional practice, positive steps have been made. Communities were willing to cooperate with insider reconcilers because they saw direct benefits. In some cases, the police supported insider reconcilers, and in the Eastern Equatorial State, the religious leaders even accompanied the government mediators. Efforts by insider reconcilers in Upper Nile fostered good relations between Christians and Muslims.

Progress on the path towards healing and reconciliation was made as insider reconcilers provided healing services to community members. While the reconciliation process may be slow regarding healing individuals, it is anticipated to have a significant long-term impact. Furthermore, insider reconcilers are regarded positively for their active involvement in conflict resolution processes within their communities, which augurs well for their future engagements. Establishing successful connections between the insider reconcilers is crucial for providing opportunities related to peer networks, capacity building, and raising awareness of insider reconcilers' potential within the peacebuilding field.

In Somalia, the number of young Insider reconcilers participating in peace and reconciliation processes increased. One of the main success factors behind this positive development was the launch of the Student Peace Initiative (SPI) at Simad University in Mogadishu.

SPI is designed to be an 18-month student-led initiative that promotes peace and wellbeing among students and their communities. SPI will achieve this by providing support, guidance, and resources to students affected by conflict and violence.

## Challenges

The biggest challenge in South Sudan was that the government refused to cooperate in most areas. Insecurity was high, and permits for celebrating international holidays (e.g., Human Rights Day and Peace Day) were denied. National Healing and Reconciliation Programmes were not carried out due to the resistance of opposition politicians. The main challenge in the regional Peace & Trust project was to engage the government duty bearers. In the future, it also needs to be decided whether the emphasis will be on engaging with more insider reconcilers or upscaling support for those to whom the project is already connected.

In South Sudan, the insider reconcilers faced various challenges: they were often expected to offer financial support to the people with whom they worked, and due to the lack of such funds, it was frustrating to them – as they saw those people were truly in need. In addition, poor road networks and heavy rains were limiting insider reconcilers' work from time to time. In the Peace & Trust project, one of the challenges was receiving data due to a lack of cultural norms by some insider reconcilers in participating in surveys. In Kosovo, organising training sessions in trauma-informed approach for officials posed challenges due to language and cultural barriers. Specifically, when arranging sessions with the participation of Serbian minority officials, the absence of a Serbian-speaking psychologist and reliance on interpretation affected knowledge transmission.

## Lessons Learned

The Trust & Peace project's success in South Sudan depends on the local insider reconcilers' ability to keep focus. When the insider reconcilers took a significant role in conflict resolution, it helped them earn the trust to engage in trauma healing and community dialogue. One of the lessons learned in the regional Peace & Trust project was that alternative ways of receiving feedback on activities from various beneficiaries need to be developed. In addition, the method of engaging with national-level actors for authentic support needs to be improved for better results. In Kosovo, well-designed data collection instruments must be developed during 2024 to measure the number and percentage of officials who utilise the skills acquired during training and how.



**The agreement establishing the Interfaith Council of South Sudan was signed in the capital, Juba, in December 2023. The Council, which results from long-term work by the African Council of Religious Leaders and its partner organisations in South Sudan, can be crucial in promoting understanding and cooperation between religious communities.**

**In South Sudan, which has been affected by protracted conflict, the Interfaith Council can be essential in promoting peace and reconciliation. Religious leaders significantly influence the country and can contribute to conflict resolution by preaching tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding, which the Council's work promotes.**


**By fostering mutual respect and understanding, the Council can help bridge differences. The Interfaith Council can also act as a mediator in conflicts and disputes, helping to facilitate dialogue and negotiation between different groups.**

## OUTCOME 5





Participation and agency of minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts are increasing in local communities and societies.

Outstanding progress has been achieved in outcome 5. Participation in communities and societies has largely increased compared to 2022, mainly through employment and community involvement in Eastern Europe and through education and community involvement in East Africa. Employment targets have been achieved across the programme.

INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	TARGETS 2025	PROGRESS
1. Increased participation of minorities, marginalised youth and people affected by conflicts in local communities and societies. Ways of participation		<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 28 % attend education; 22 % are employed or self-employed; 33 % participate in local communities and societies.</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 0% attend education; 2% are employed or self-employed. 1% participate in local communities and societies</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 32% attend education; 18% are employed or self-employed; 32% participate in local communities.</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 0% attend education; 47% are employed or self-employed; 18% participate in a women or youth group in local community and society.</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 31,5% attend education; 44% are employed or self-employed; 62 % participate in local communities.</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 35 % attend education; 46% are employed or self-employed; 47 % participate in a women or youth group in local community and society</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 45% attend education. 35% are employed or self-employed. 55% participate in local communities and societies.</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 51% attend informal education; 45% are employed or self-employed 48% participate in women or youth groups or mentoring networks in local community and society</p>	<p>103% Eastern Europe</p> <p>89% East Africa</p>



INDICATOR	PROJECTS FEEDING PROJECTS FEEDING (out of 10 projects in total)	BASELINE	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	TARGETS 2025	PROGRESS
2. Number and types of civic actions, initiatives, campaigns and policy dialogues implemented by minorities, marginalised youth and persons affected by conflicts and partners		99	<i>Data available from 2023 onwards</i>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 1 Multicultural Festival 1 initiative to provide internships in political parties for Roma girls 4 informational campaigns about Roma rights 90 dialogues between the Roma community and local authorities and policy dialogues on the Roma Strategy and the Ukraine recovery Plan at local and national level</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 0</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> 100 actions Multicultural festivals and other public events, Open space events, media productions (campaigns, videos, documentaries) and theatre productions</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> 4 actions Community actions</p>	95 %
3. Number and percentage of minorities, marginalised youth or people affected by conflicts who are employed, have established their own business, or have developed other decent livelihood after the trainings		<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> Employed: 32 Established own business: 3 Percentage: 18%</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> Employed: 53 Established own business: 42 Developed other decent livelihood: 30 Percentage: 42%</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe:</b> Employed: 32 Established own business: 3 Percentage: 17%</p> <p><b>East Africa:</b> Employed: 81 Established own business: 42 Developed other decent livelihood: 30 Percentage: 69%</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe + East Africa:</b> Employed: 247 Established own business: 91 Developed other decent livelihood: 43</p>	<p><b>Eastern Europe + East Africa:</b> 60 % of trained minorities and marginalised youth are employed, have established their own business or have developed other decent livelihood</p>	77 %

Outcome 5 is achieved through strengthening the employability skills of marginalised youth, minorities, and persons affected by conflicts, improving their knowledge of human rights and how to participate in society, and developing positive life strategies. This is also accomplished through providing legal aid to the above-mentioned target groups and through support to children with disabilities. Results for this outcome have been collected in Kosovo, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Ethiopia, Somaliland, and Tanzania.

### **Increased participation in local communities and societies**

There has been a solid increase in participation in Eastern Europe, primarily through employment (+26%) and community involvement (+30%) compared to 2022. Targets for 2025 have been exceeded in terms of the percentage of persons employed or self-employed and of persons participating in local communities and societies. As far as persons attending education are concerned, the percentage has remained at the same level as in 2022, which represents 70% of the target for 2025.

Collaboration with the public sector in different forms has been vital in supporting the active participation of vulnerable groups. In terms of employment, working closely with employment centres and agencies has been crucial in Kosovo, Moldova and Belarus. With the help of regional activists in the registration process, Roma women from Belarus have received training and secured their first job placements through these centres. Employment opportunities have also been facilitated and fostered through advocacy efforts towards private companies. This resulted in 121 individuals gaining jobs in Kosovo. East European Roma and repatriated women have mainly been employed as cooks, sellers, seamstresses, beauticians or factory workers. The programme has also helped women develop their business competencies through skills and entrepreneurship training, mentoring, and startup support. The established businesses primarily work in the service sector, providing, for example, cooking, confectionary, decorating, beautification, and delivery services. In Belarus and Kosovo, women's business networks have been established, focused on long-term sustainability. They function as spaces where peers educate peers and facilitate connections with other business networks.

The psychosocial group meetings in municipal premises across Kosovo have fostered increased trust in institutions among repatriated individuals. These peer support groups have not only contributed to lowering the threshold of access to municipal

services but also encouraged women to participate in organisations that support repatriated persons. With their outreach work in communities in Ukraine, Roma mediators have managed to provide legal information and advice and signposting to different services to over 2 200 Roma girls and boys, men and women, persons with disabilities and older people. As a result, Roma women's participation in different activities has increased. They have, for instance, engaged in reconstruction efforts, feminist forums, human rights dialogues, and meetings related to minority issues at the national level. Roma women and girls have also been empowered to take leadership positions within their communities and participate in decision-making. This strengthens their voices and ensures that their concerns are addressed in policymaking. They have also been supported in getting involved in health and wellbeing initiatives, such as reproductive health programmes or campaigns against gender-based violence. This allows them to actively participate in promoting the welfare of their communities.

Participation has also risen significantly in East Africa. Compared to 2022, participation through education has increased (+35%), as has community involvement (+40%), while the percentage of employed or self-employed persons has remained at the same level. The programme is progressing well towards the targets for 2025.

Programme participants in East Africa have engaged in their communities mostly by becoming representatives in local committees, members of women or youth groups, and members of associations or networks of alumni. The programme has also succeeded in encouraging young people to take action through volunteering, for instance, in clean city campaigns, hygiene and reproductive health campaigns, employment forums or in organising activities at their IDP centres. In Tanzania, rehabilitation efforts have improved access to education for children with disabilities who were previously unable to attend school due to the lack of supportive devices. In Somaliland, many dropouts returned to secondary school or applied to university, while a few participate in non-formal and vocational education. Investment in small businesses, other employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship training, and startup grants have resulted in high employment levels. Most youth work in plumbing, beautification, tailoring, forestry businesses or tea companies, focusing on self-employment in Somalia and Ethiopia and employment in Tanzania. In Tanzania, some young people are employed occasionally in timber carrying to raise capital and make the starting investments to establish own businesses. In Ethiopia, of the young people who received vocational and

entrepreneurship training, 100% are employed or have set up businesses and have benefited from a significant increase in monthly income.

Psychosocial support has successfully enhanced vulnerable groups' confidence to participate in local communities and societies. It is provided in most of our projects under the livelihood strategic priority through individual and group sessions. For many programme participants, psychosocial support has been a turning point in changing their perception of opportunities. In Kosovo, individual psychological counselling combined with access to psychosocial support groups helped repatriated and refugee women to improve their general level of functioning and structure their lives, allowed for peer support and provided a sense of belonging and community. In Tanzania, following psychosocial training, the shift of mindset has even decreased the level of theft in the villages the participants come from.

### **Minorities joined in actions to gain and raise awareness about issues critical to them**

Programme participants participated in 99 civic actions, initiatives, campaigns, and policy dialogues led by the programme partners, nearly reaching the 2025 target of 104. In Kosovo, these activities included members of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities participating in a Multicultural Festival and an initiative that assisted four Roma girls in securing internships in four political parties. Both initiatives managed to successfully highlight issues of critical importance to marginalised communities, bringing them to the general public's attention and to that of policymakers and mainstream political parties. Combating discrimination and stereotypes against vulnerable groups is essential for creating an inclusive environment where they feel valued and respected. Promoting tolerance and understanding amongst the wider population helps break down barriers to participation. Following information campaigns in

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, Roma children and youth have gained awareness about their rights, international solidarity and the role of women in society, as well as motivation towards social integration.

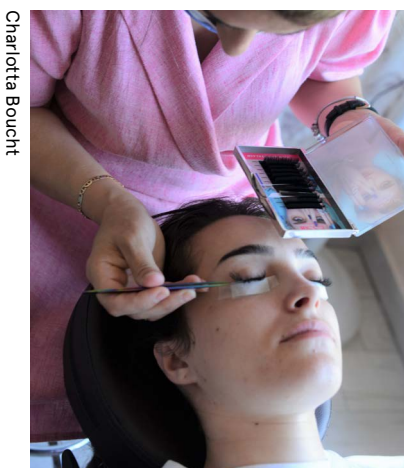
Additionally, 90 dialogues between the Roma community and local authorities, as well as policy discussions on the Roma Strategy and Ukraine's recovery plan, were organised at both local and national levels in Ukraine. Those dialogues helped to increase awareness about the challenges faced by Roma communities. Roma representatives started attending meetings regularly and participating in regional, national, and international events. The dialogues also played a crucial role in getting the Roma Action Plan approved and including Roma priorities in the EU negotiation process for Ukraine.

### **Progress on the employment path of marginalised youth and minorities**

From 2022 to 2023, 613 people found jobs, started their own businesses, or developed other decent livelihoods. We aim for 60% of the programme participants to have a job, be self-employed, or develop a decent livelihood by the end of 2025. By the end of 2023, we had already reached 77% of this target. Employment has been fostered by a successful combination of careful selection of the participants, mentoring and career guidance, skills training, and creating connections with employers.

In Ethiopia and Somaliland, special attention has been paid to selecting not only the most marginalised but also the most motivated young women and men amongst IDPs, marginalised clan youths, single mothers, and youth with disabilities. In Eastern Europe, mentoring and career guidance have been instrumental in getting Roma women and repatriated women to progress on their employment path. In Kosovo, Tanzania and Ethiopia, business connections are created through in-person employer visits. A vital part of those discussions is advocacy work to combat the stigma that impacts marginalised minorities and promote more equitable hiring practices. In Tanzania, local small business owners have hired many young people after they completed their apprenticeship training.

In addition to skills and entrepreneurship training, individual business creation has been supported by startup kits, savings and loan groups, and piglets distribution. In Tanzania, some young people report having other decent livelihoods, meaning they have taken up some casual work like timber carrying or farming activities to raise capital to invest in their desired livelihood. Some of the young people were engaged in this type of activities before the start of the project,



Charlotta Boucht

*Jesuit Refugee Service in Kosovo has helped many returnee women in vulnerable situations to regain their confidence and get the skills they need to work for example in the beauty care industry.*



but as a result of their participation in our programme, their number and commitment to the activities have increased.

The programme participants who found employment started their own businesses, or established another decent livelihood have improved their quality of life. Another important aspect is that with psychosocial support, training and various hard and soft skills, minorities and marginalised youth can become more resilient and ready to seize opportunities and have a sense of direction for the future. Most of the participants become more proactive in looking for job opportunities, proceeding to further studies, and actively participating in developing their communities. Project teams and coaches have achieved a good professional level in youth work, especially in supporting the most vulnerable youth, reaching an increasing number of marginalised groups. In the future, the progress will be easier to achieve.

## Challenges

Discrimination against Roma persons, repatriated women and youth from minority clans in the labour market is still strong and working on eliminating the stigma is a slow process. In Ethiopia, attaining a decent livelihood for women from vulnerable groups was challenging, requiring targeted interventions to address gender disparities. The low degree of career guidance for Roma children and the pressure of patriarchal attitudes is an obstacle to girls choosing some professions. In Kosovo, the social scheme the women benefit from is lost if they become employed, which makes them hesitant to pursue formal employment. Substantial advocacy would be needed to address this issue.

## Lessons learnt

In practice, the distinction between employment and self-employment can be subtle in Eastern Europe. Indeed, participants receiving skills for employment might wish to receive entrepreneurship training later. In Belarus, it is common for entrepreneurs to work both for themselves and be employed somewhere else.

The participation rate of young people with disabilities is lower than that of other young people with vulnerable backgrounds, and additional efforts and time are needed to achieve better results in that area. In Tanzania, an employment programme will start in 2024 to support young people with disabilities especially. Because many young people with disabilities cannot travel to reach the place of employment, they will also be supported in self-employment.



**The psychosocial support aspect included in the trainings aiming at advancing the participation and employment of young people in marginalised positions has proven to be very important, even life-changing for some of the participants. They have gained confidence in themselves and motivation to change their situation in life.**

**Felix Kitenusa, living in Igoda village in Tanzania, has always been quick to learn new skills. He has worked, for example, as a barber and as a motorcycle driver. But after he lost his leg in a motorcycle accident, he started misbehaving and lost the trust of his community. "Attending the trainings organised by the Youth Agency in Mufindi project changed me. The psychosocial training concentrated on building self-esteem and responsibility. I decided to become a better person and started attending church regularly," says Felix.**

**Felix has now regained the trust of his community. After attending the entrepreneurship training organised by the project, he borrowed some money and set up his own phone repair shop. He has turned his disability to an advantage and is calling himself the "Gongo boy" (gongo means crutch in Swahili), making him well-known in the area. "I want to expand my business. The first step would be to start selling phones, not only repairing them and selling the accessories. My dream is to become a great businessman," says Felix.**

## OUTCOME 6



*Awareness in Finland has increased regarding development cooperation, the issues of marginalised youth and minorities, reconciliation, and the business potential in Africa.*

**Despite a slight decline in the communication results achieved in 2023 compared to 2022, overall, good progress has been made towards the revised targets, and communication activities are reaching Finnish people as planned.**

In addition to communications and advocacy efforts in the programme countries, the Deaconess Foundation's programme includes communications, advocacy, and global citizenship education in Finland. In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation published content related to development cooperation on its website, social media, and other channels. Deaconess Foundation also organised events and reached out to the media to spark interest in the themes related to the programme work.

The main communication themes of the programme are 1) bringing forth the voices and views of the rights holders the programme supports, 2) disseminating information about the results and challenges of the Deaconess Foundation's development cooperation,

and 3) highlighting the importance and the ways of respecting and protecting human dignity and human rights.

### **Influencers strengthened the visibility of the Deaconess Foundation's messages**

While on the output level, there has been a 25% rise in the number of publications and posts made from 2022 to 2023, the number of persons reached has decreased from 2022. This shows the situational nature of communications. In 2022, Russia's attack on Ukraine created a lot of interest in the Deaconess Foundation's work in Ukraine, translating into a considerable increase in the number of people reached through different channels. Even though the numbers of people reached were mostly lower in 2023 than in 2022, they are still significantly higher than the 2021 baseline. This shows that a large part of the growth in reach is sustainable.

Even if the number of individual views of social media posts related to the programme was lower than in 2022, it was still more than twice the baseline of 2021. The number of persons reached annually through the international affairs' webpages and articles and blogs related to development cooperation was also lower than in 2022 but higher than the baseline. Progress towards the 2025 targets is made, achieving 74% and 87% of the desired outcomes.

In 2023, the topics that resonated particularly well with the target audiences were Roma women's rights and grassroots activism, young people's participation in peacebuilding efforts, and the results of the Deaconess

INDICATOR	BASELINE 2021	RESULTS 2022	RESULTS 2023	REVISED TARGET 2025	PROGRESS AGAINST TARGET 2025
Number of persons reached through webpages of international cooperation annually	2 018	3 404	2 944	4 000	74%
Number of views of social media posts related to DF's development cooperation	48 798	150 180	111 970	500 000	52%
Number of annual individual views of articles and blogs related to DF's development cooperation activities	1577	2 789	2 167	2 500	87%
Number of persons attended events related to DF's development cooperation	219	250	620	1 500	58%

Foundation's work. While posts on LinkedIn and X also got a good number of views, posts on Instagram and Facebook reached even more people.

In addition to the Deaconess Foundation's direct communication activities, articles related to the Deaconess Foundation's development cooperation were published in Iso Numero and Maailma.net. Social media influencers Meeri Koutaniemi and Aleksandra Laurila shared content related to the rights and grassroots activism of Roma women in Eastern Europe on Instagram and TikTok. This helped to further expand the reach of the messages to tens of thousands of people, particularly to young audiences in Laurila's case.

## Finnish people became more aware of the struggles of Roma women in Eastern Europe

More than 620 participants attended different events related to the development cooperation programme, which doubled the number of attendees from 2022. The high turnout can be attributed mainly to the substantial organisational investment in participating in the World Village Festival and the Partnering for Change project, which hosted popular events focusing on the decolonisation of aid in Finland.

Näe minut campaign was the most significant communication effort during 2023 and received the most views. Some campaign photos were also exhibited



Deaconess Foundation

Young people from Somalia, the Somali diaspora in Finland, and Finnish youth gathered to exchange ideas, hopes, and needs related to young people's involvement in peace work at the Youth as Peace and Reconciliation Builders in Somalia workshop. The workshop was organised together with the #reconciliation programme and FINSYR ry in September 2023.

In the workshop, young people from Somalia and Finland talked about their current peacebuilding activities and discussed their wishes and needs in relation to peace work and the involvement of young people in it. The suggestions and needs that

emerged from the discussions were compiled into eight steps to strengthen the role of young people in peacebuilding in Somalia. The steps were shared with the Centre for Peace Mediation and other relevant actors and communicated through the Deaconess Foundation's communication channels.

The workshop was one of the first steps taken in the programme towards communication not only targeted at people representing diaspora from programme countries in Finland, but also communicating and creating the content with them. The target is to include diaspora communities also more in planning of the activities in the future.

at the World Village Festival and Korttelijuhla events. As a result of the campaign, over 50,000 Finnish people now know more about the human rights situation of the Roma in Eastern Europe and Roma women's work at the grassroots for the realisation of their rights.

The Partnering for Change project carried out a survey to assess the current situation of Finnish development cooperation CSOs and the views of their staff about the decolonisation of aid. The survey provided valuable information about CSO employees' engagement levels and needs. Based on the survey findings, the project organised training for CSOs on the topic, which was crucial in starting and expanding the discussion about shifting the power within the Finnish sector, especially amongst fundraising experts. Participants mentioned receiving various tools to begin the process of decolonising fundraising. The project also encouraged Finnish businesses to do sustainable business in Ugandan markets, challenging the traditional pictures these businesses might have of Sub-Saharan African countries.

Finding suitable partners to collaborate with was key to achieving good results in communications. A good example of this was the event on the realisation of human rights in Ukraine during the war and reconstruction. It was organised in partnership with the Finnish Human Rights Centre and the Rule of Law Centre, with participation from the Ukrainian Ombudsman's Office, and it attracted a lot of positive attention.

### Challenges

The main challenge in programme communication is ensuring that the voices of programme participants are heard in as direct a way as possible. Communication materials are mainly collected, chosen, and finalised by Finnish or other individuals who may not fully understand the participants' realities. In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation committed to following Fingo's guidelines for Ethical Development Communications. The challenge now is to work according to these guidelines, even in fragile and otherwise difficult contexts.

## 4.4. Results in Advocacy

The programme strives to achieve structural change by doing advocacy work in Finland, in the programme countries, and at the EU level to advance minorities' rights to participate in society and to have equal access to employment, education, and services. Much of this work falls directly under the programme results outcome, but some parts must be mentioned separately.

In 2023, the Deaconess Foundation strengthened its cooperation with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and his Secretariat. At the beginning of the year, the Representative of the Commissioner for Equal Rights and Freedoms, Rights of National Minorities, and Political and Religious Beliefs contacted the Deaconess Foundation to discuss possible cooperation in the field of advancing the rights of Roma and other national minorities in Ukraine. In June 2023, the Representative of the Commissioner visited Finland to strengthen the partnership. Special attention was paid to supporting the Commissioner's office in advancing the rule of law and human rights in Ukraine. The Deaconess Foundation and the Commissioner continued to advocate institutions in Ukraine, international organisations, and donors for the rights of undocumented Roma.

Deaconess Foundation and its partners also advocated the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, the Delegation of the European Union in Ukraine and Moldova, The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the Venice Commission, and the Council of Europe's Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division. We provided country and local-level information on the needs of Roma and the level of implications of institutions and governments and made recommendations, especially about Roma communities and Roma refugees in Ukraine, Moldova, and Kosovo. We informed the European Commission's Coordinator on Combating Racism about the types of racism that Roma people face in Finland, Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.

## 4.5 Sustainability and Localisation

Strong ownership of the partners, policy work, institutional capacity strengthening, and the creation of empowering networks are the main components of our programme's sustainability.

### Strong ownership of the partners, rights holders and stakeholders

The ownership of the results is high among all actors involved in the programme: the programme partners, rights holders, duty bearers, and other stakeholders in programme areas. The programme partners and other stakeholders include civil society organisations, universities and other educational organisations, private companies, and public sector authorities. The programme partners are the rights holders' own organisations and thus have a direct connection to them, which ensures a strong ownership of the results. The programme partners engage the rights holders and other stakeholders in planning and implementing. They also facilitate interaction between rights holders, duty bearers, and other stakeholders, which is central to the programme's sustainability. This happens through various activities, including door-to-door meetings, information sessions, field visits, roundtable discussions, open calls for applications, regional learning hubs, and co-creation workshops. These events then shape the further development and implementation of the projects.

Examples of practices promoting ownership:

- At the beginning of 2023 in Kosovo, VoRAE staff conducted a thorough needs assessment by contacting participants from the previous year. Satisfaction levels with services provided were measured through individual questionnaires, and feedback on successes and challenges was collected. Based on the feedback received, VoRAE staff developed and implemented new approaches as needed, ensuring that the participants' evolving needs were addressed and their voices were heard throughout the process.
- The first co-creation workshop, held in Kenya at the end of November 2022, established the Eastern Africa Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network in 2023. It is a practitioner-led space for rights holders to come together and coordinate shared initiatives to meet their needs in psychosocial peacebuilding best.
- The Somali Youth Summit served as a platform for young people, private sector companies, government representatives, and community



*Roma Women Fund Chiricli works together with stakeholders such as the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner of Human Rights to promote sustainable change.*

leaders to meet, share ideas, and address youth challenges. It was a strategic opportunity to ensure that young people's voices remain at the centre of the regional development agenda.

- In Ukraine, active cooperation with duty bearers, such as the Ombudsman Office, the State Service of Ukraine on Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, the Ministry of Education and Science, and other essential actors, has been instrumental in improving the morale and increasing the motivation of the Roma community to understand policy-making processes and participate in them at the local level.

### Policy work addressing root causes of inequality

As described earlier, the programme partners engaged actively in policy-making processes, particularly in Kosovo and Ukraine, achieving significant impact in advancing legislation, policies, and practices in the field of anti-discrimination and equality, the rights of national minorities, as well as the monitoring and protection of human rights by human rights institutions, the police and the army. The programme's contributions in both countries include developing Roma policy action plans and establishing a mechanism for monitoring policy implementation, reducing the risk of national-level policies remaining unimplemented. Policy-level work ensures sustainable structural changes.

### Capacity building for long-term sustainability

As previously mentioned, the programme partner CSOs have developed as organisations and are becoming

increasingly relevant and influential societal actors in their area of work. The partners have had the opportunity to engage with new national and regional networks. Through these connections, they have been able to advocate for their causes and implement actions. Working through networks ensures sustainability, as the knowledge is mainstreamed and spread outside the programme partner's circle. Furthermore, the partners now possess improved tools to align their work with vulnerable groups with the rights-based approach and connect it to human rights instruments, institutions, and funding sources.

The programme also invests in the capacity building of private sector actors and other duty bearers to ensure improved and sustainable service provision, access to employment, and integration into society. Here are some examples of this type of work:

- In Somaliland, private sector stakeholders were invited to a feasibility study dissemination workshop to receive timely information on the obstacles young people may have to employment and how to support and enable them to enter the job market.
- In Tanzania, Village Child Protection Committees have been strengthened in safeguarding and disability inclusion in 16 villages.
- In Kosovo, the capacity-building programme on trauma-informed approach for municipal and central level officials has been collaboratively developed with institutional partners, such as the Council for Social Welfare and Families under the Ministry of Finance, the Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Person and Integration of Foreigners under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Agency for Qualifications. The Training of Trainers curriculum is now an official module of the 4-year capacity development programme created by the Council for Social Welfare and Families for social workers working with repatriated persons and refugees. This programme is accredited by the National Agency for Qualifications. This ensures that professionals trained are qualified to train further municipal and central level officials involved in direct service provision for the reintegration of repatriated and refugee women and girls during and beyond the project lifespan. The group of accredited trainers cascaded the training to 150 officials in 2023, using training materials collaboratively developed by the group to ensure high relevance to the local context and the specific challenges faced.

## Networks that will live beyond the programme

The programme partners work not only towards achieving the programme's objectives but also to build sustainable solutions and empowering networks and promote learning from best practices internationally. These are examples of the networks created:

- The partners in Belarus and Kosovo are actively developing informal support networks comprised of women in business. The networks provide mentorship and inspiration to Roma, repatriated and refugee women initiating new enterprises, ensuring sustainability beyond the projects' completion.
- The newly established Eastern Africa Support Network, focused on integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in Eastern Africa, aims to function as a support structure for this work after the closure of the project. It holds the potential to become a significant change-making body within the region. By creating a Terms of Reference document and identifying key insider reconcilers to lead the initiative, the Mary Hoch Foundation provides support while fostering organic and sustainable regional leadership. Hosting learning hubs and workshops also helps to connect practitioners to create strong professional networks upon which practitioners can rely following the project's end. Similarly, the Mary Hoch Foundation team supports regional partners in identifying external funding sources and creating fundraising plans to ensure they can be sustained after the project period.
- The Interreligious Council of South Sudan was formally registered and launched in 2023 and has the potential to support peace and healing processes locally and build dialogue between local and state-level actors. The formation of the Interfaith Youth Network and Women of Faith Network, both represented on the Interreligious Council's board, is expected to advance the rights of young people and women in peace processes in South Sudan in the future.

## Insuring long-term socioeconomic sustainability

The programme results framework is currently not well equipped with indicators to measure the long-term socioeconomic sustainability of the results from the point of view of the programme participants in livelihood and skills development projects. We will carefully

consider this as part of developing our programme beyond 2025.

Evaluations, however, provide useful analysis in that area. According to the Youth Action for Future project evaluation report, the project has contributed to reducing youth unemployment in participating communities, providing youth access to sustainable livelihood options. However, the report also pointed to the youth's lack of experience in running small-scale enterprises as a risk to sustainability. New businesses often struggle with limited market share, narrow client base, low demand and cost burden, and family pressures can exacerbate these challenges. Young trainees from vulnerable communities, who are often primary breadwinners, had high expectations for quick returns, but their inexperience led to unmet expectations and financial strain, making it hard even to cover operational expenses like rent. This has been taken into account in the next project phase. Young people who set up businesses will be supported in developing their business plans, and OWDA's team will visit them regularly to offer business mentoring.

The Mustaqbaldoon evaluation report, finalised in 2023, confirms that young people have acquired knowledge and skills that will have long-term benefits and encourage others to learn similar skills. The Roma Women's Power evaluation report states that one of the main ways to ensure the sustainability of the intervention was the training and mentoring of the Roma women involved in the project activities. This support has improved their employment status and empowered them to run in elections and become role models and agents of change in their communities. In Belarus, numerous women participated in employment programmes, and several educated Roma women with social activity experience were trained to become the project's driving force, transferring knowledge to others. In Moldova, women supported through the entrepreneurship programme have created new jobs for their community, and those running in local elections are advocating for women's rights in local policies. In Ukraine, some Roma women who participated in training and internships have applied their new skills to provide humanitarian support to their communities.

### **Shifting the Power**

Through the Partnering for Change project implemented in Finland, the Deaconess Foundation invited the Finnish CSOs to participate in discussions, trainings, and other events to create a coherent understanding of decolonising development cooperation. This initiative supports the process towards a more inclusive and non-hierarchical development sector and paves the

way for locally-led future development cooperation programmes. Further, the Partnering for Change Project Manager actively participates in FINGO's Shifting the Power core group.

The project also serves as an opportunity for broader reflection and actions within the Deaconess Foundation, which started in 2023 and will continue unfolding in 2024.

## **4.6 Accountability and transparency**

Our work for outcome 1, "The capacity of the project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened," directly addresses accountability and transparency issues. The aim is to reinforce the partners' professional, operational and good governance skills. All partners made progress for this outcome in 2023, especially in safeguarding. The Deaconess Foundation's complaints mechanism was also upgraded, and the updated process was introduced to partners in November 2023. In addition, we constantly work to improve both the Deaconess Foundation's and the partners' capacities in monitoring and evaluation to support results-based management and thus promote accountability and transparency.

Trust and credibility among communities and good relations with local authorities are essential for ensuring ownership, transparency and accountability of the programme work. For example, in Tanzania, the district government participates in and closely monitors the implementation of the project activities. In Ethiopia, the project managed to create fruitful relationships with city councils and the relevant regional administration bureau, giving them a sense of ownership of the project. Recognising the project's positive impact on young people's lives, the city council in Godey decided to provide technical and legal support for the enterprises created during the project's duration.

In Kosovo and Ukraine, progress in public policy influencing enhanced both public and private sector responsibility and accountability by ensuring policies were responsive to the needs of marginalised communities and promoted equitable access to resources and opportunities. Additionally, Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians helped ten other Kosovar CSOs improve their ability to monitor local policies and authorities. Emphasis was placed on aligning their activities with the government's strategic policies for advancing the rights of Roma and Ashkali communities. CSOs were equipped with advocacy techniques to hold the authorities accountable for fulfilling their legal obligations towards marginalised communities.

# 5. Results-based management and programme development

## 5.1. Results-management system development

The Deaconess Foundation considers it essential to regularly consult the programme partners on the processes, tools and formats developed to serve results-based management. Efforts have been made to simplify reporting templates and further develop reporting processes based on their feedback. In 2023, we have expanded the practice of conducting annual self-assessments to most projects to promote learning within the programme and support the annual report writing. We have also trained project partners and the Helsinki team on annual report results analysis to improve reporting and analysis of programme-level results. In addition, the monitoring trip checklist, report format, and project document format were also updated.

Impact-level data collection was piloted in two projects in East Africa, focusing on the indicator *Percentage of targeted youth, minorities, and persons affected by conflicts whose wellbeing is improved*. Data collection utilised a qualitative methodology called “most significant change” via a questionnaire conducted with focus groups consisting of 17 project participants in Somaliland and 14 in Tanzania. The same young people will be followed throughout the programme phase, allowing us to assess the programme’s impact on participants’ lives over the 4-year period. The pilot gave valuable information on how to improve the questionnaire to capture the long-term changes better in the future.

In connection with the outcome data collection process in 2023, minor changes were made to update questionnaires based on feedback from partners to receive more concise and relevant information. However, as data became available, we realised that the questionnaire on participation used for the outcome 5 indicator needs to increasingly be adapted to each context in the future so that the questions are formulated to avoid misunderstandings and biasing the results. Some of the questions have been formulated

in a manner that, for instance, might have led young people to answer them in a certain way in the hope of getting additional support from the project. Their actual situation might not be as grim as the questionnaire showed. Regarding data collection for outcome 3, we faced some challenges, which will be considered before our next annual report. Service providers and end-users both have been interviewed correctly according to the results framework and its definition, but we have acknowledged that the data should preferably be disaggregated into service providers and end-users separately to see the progress from both sides and to adjust the activities based on the different views of the services.

At the end of the year, the programme’s results framework was updated based on the needs acknowledged in connection with annual reporting 2022. Some terms in the outputs and indicators’ formulations were updated and refined to avoid misunderstandings and duplications, ensuring smoother data collection. In addition, as most of the targets had already been achieved in 2022, revisions have been made at both outcome and output levels. However, because of tight timing, outcome analyses for this report were written mainly using the old targets. Baseline data was collected during the inception phase of our new project in Ethiopia, and some updates were made to the baseline database for Tanzania.

## 5.2. Evaluations

OWDA in Ethiopia completed an external project evaluation in early 2024 for the *Youth Action for the Future* project, which ended in 2023.

The evaluation findings established the high relevance of the project to the situation of the young people in the Somali region, emphasising its remarkable success, efficiency, and effectiveness. According to the evaluation report, the project interventions were highly effective in achieving the overall outcome of enhancing the capacity of the OWDA and Naadiga Curis



in youth work. The capacity of both organisations has significantly increased, enabling OWDA to better align its livelihood programmes with the needs and demands of young people. The life skills training has had a tremendous impact and contributed positively to changing the lives of the youth for the better, shifting their career path and self-perception. Survey findings show that 88.3% of respondents have improved their self-management and communication skills, which are expected to increase their income. Many participants have started small businesses as a direct result of the lessons learned during the training period.

Recommendations included scaling up the project to the other towns and zones in the region. Additionally, the report advised that the selection of women's employability skills should take into account cultural and market factors. Recommendations will be considered as part of the planning of the new project Youth Action for Skills, starting in 2024 and implemented by the same partner in Ethiopia.

### **5.3. Capacity building of the Deaconess Foundation staff**

Together with the KIOS Foundation, the Deaconess Foundation organised one training session and a workshop on the human rights-based approach. Thirty staff members of the Deaconess Foundation and its partners attended the training. In the annual reports and the capacity survey, the partners evaluated that their knowledge of the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) had improved. An HRBA Checklist developed by KIOS will support programme staff in integrating HRBA into their work. In the coming years, the staff will be trained on the Checklist.

The Deaconess Foundation continued to work with the Abilis Foundation to find ways to advance disability inclusion within the programme. New trainings were planned for 2024, and the compilation of a disability checklist started. Two staff members attended Fingo's training on disability and data disaggregation.

An online travel security training course was launched in 2023. The course strengthened personnel's preparedness and operational competence in matters related to work travel safety. The training covered the specific circumstances and security risks that may occur in the programme countries and how to prepare for them. Further, the Helsinki-based team participated in first aid courses: EA1 for general competence and a tailored EA2 for first aid in demanding circumstances and emergencies.

Thanks to a workshop facilitated by an external consultant, the International Affairs staff also gained a better understanding of the nexus approach. However, limited time hindered us from making more progress in risk management within the programme. This task has been postponed to 2024, which will allow us to incorporate related recommendations from the KPMG activity audit. Also, the capacity building in gender equality has been postponed to 2024.

# 6 Management

## 6.1 Organisation and general management

The Deaconess Foundation is a social foundation group. Together with the Rinnekodit services operator, the Foundation provides social welfare and health services. The Foundation's operations are divided into profit-making and non-profit-making. The Diaconia and Social Responsibility department represents the non-profit activities of the Deaconess Foundation. The self-financing of the branch's project-based operations is covered by the income from the profits from the Rinnekodit services operator and return on capital, as well as by the income from fundraising carried out by the Foundation. Of the Diaconia and Social Responsibility branch funding, 60,5% is estimated to be covered by project financing, 36% by the Foundation's operating income and return on capital, and 3,5% by other fundraising income.

The Deaconess Foundation's administrative bodies are the Board of Directors and the Managing Director. It also has a delegation that is responsible for appointing board members. The Board of Directors and the Managing Director are responsible for issuing the financial statements, presenting truthful and adequate information in accordance with auditing standards in force in Finland, and ensuring that they fulfil all statutory requirements. The Board of Directors and the Managing Director are also responsible for the internal control to draw up financial statements that do not contain any material inaccuracy deriving from malpractice or falsehoods. In Finland, the MFA programme is administrated, coordinated and implemented by the International Affairs Unit, which functions under the Diaconia and Social Responsibility branch.

## 6.2 Programme management and the team

The International Affairs Unit had 13 employees in 2023 (11 females and two men). The team is multi-cultural, with backgrounds in several countries and a variety of educational and professional profiles. The MFA programme team in Finland had nine staff members. The total number of person-years for the programme

in 2023 was 6,3. The leadership of the programme was the responsibility of the Head of International Affairs, who took care of the administrative management of the programme, connections to other programme support organisations and the funding body at the management level and acted as the supervisor to the programme team in Helsinki. In addition, she participated in some of the practical work of the programme. The Senior Programme Coordinator managed the practical work of the programme and acted as a team leader. The other programme team members in Finland included Programme Coordinators (including one who was employed in 2023 for monitoring and evaluation tasks), Senior Expert on Civil Society and Human Rights, Expert on Corporate Responsibility and Private Sector Cooperation, Expert on Communications, Senior Expert on Reconciliation and Controller. The team in Finland worked closely with partners in the programme countries and other partner countries. The programme team had weekly meetings to discuss issues related to the programme. Furthermore, the programme team had several other programme-related meetings and capacity-building events during the year to develop the processes and practices related to the programme.

To promote the efficiency of the work and the wellbeing of the personnel, regular one-to-one meetings between the Head of International Affairs, the Senior Programme Coordinator, and the Programme Coordinators took place, as well as a recreation day. The team members also attended several events related to development cooperation and programme-related themes organised by, for example, the MFA.

The programme team in Finland was able to learn from and use the experience of other international projects implemented at the Deaconess Foundation, such as the humanitarian aid project in Ukraine and Moldova and several Roma projects funded by the EU and the Deaconess Foundation. Furthermore, the programme's work complemented and benefited from the work of the Deaconess Foundation in Finland with youth, civil society, refugees and other groups facing vulnerable circumstances. The various policies of the Deaconess Foundation were followed in the programme (e.g. Code of Conduct).

### 6.3 Financial management

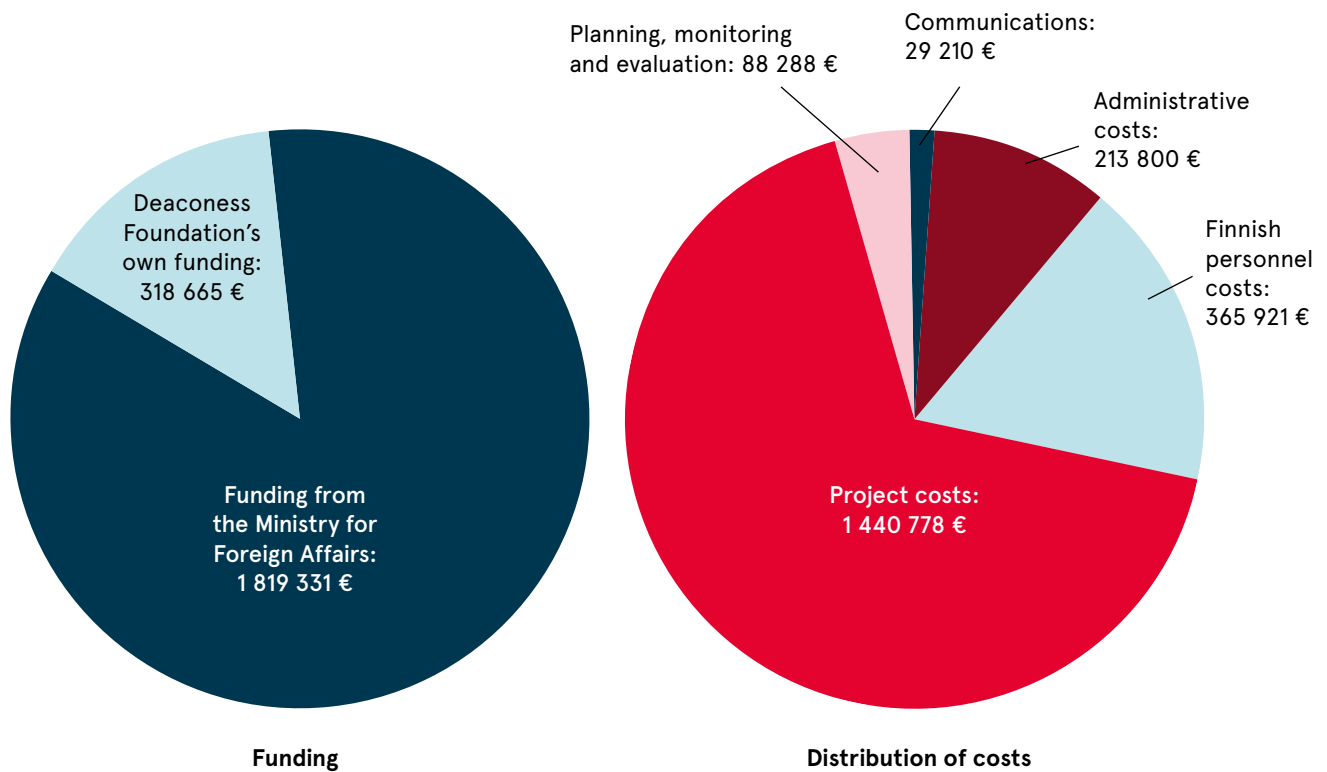
In 2023, 2 137 996 euros were used, including both the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’s and the Deaconess Foundation’s own funding. The percentage of self-funding was 15%.

Programme Coordinators in Helsinki and Financial and project staff in the programme countries performed the practical day-to-day financial management. A Controller working with a 50% working time for the programme team supported the Helsinki-based team and partners in programme countries in financial issues. In addition, the Financial Unit of the Deaconess Foundation backed the programme finances.

The budget covered five categories: 1) project costs, which explained the budget used for the implementation of activities in the programme countries; 2) planning, monitoring and evaluation costs, as well as capacity building costs 3) communications and advocacy costs; 4) administration costs and 5) personnel costs in Finland. The budget also included the unallocated budget. The bookkeeping took place both locally in the partner countries and Helsinki. All locally accrued expenses were entered in the Deaconess Foundation’s

bookkeeping monthly or quarterly based on financial documents. The double-entry bookkeeping system was used in all projects, and costs were registered when accrued. The financial situation of each project was closely monitored, and project figures were then entered into the programme budget frame. The Deaconess Foundation’s financial department provided the framework for accounting procedures in Helsinki: each project had its own cost centre and project number, and costs were reported using expenditure categories both locally and in Finland.

Locally, a separate bank account was opened, or a cost centre created in the bookkeeping programme for the projects’ finances. The local bookkeepers carried out day-to-day bookkeeping and provided the Deaconess Foundation with monthly or quarterly financial reports approved by the partner’s coordinators. The project finances were audited in the programme countries using the guidelines provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and a copy of the audit reports was sent to the Deaconess Foundation. The Deaconess Foundation’s bookkeeping covered both the costs accrued in Finland and the programme countries. Expenses were recorded to bookkeeping as they occurred, salaries and administrative costs monthly, and field costs monthly or quarterly. The programme finances in Finland are audited annually.



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