



world relief SEATTLE

# Executive Summary 2020 | Published February 2021

What a year 2020 was.

When I think back on all of the challenges we faced as a country - the pandemic, racial injustice and unrest, record unemployment, and food insecurity - I am burdened by how each of them is magnified in the refugee and immigrant communities we serve.

With the first wave of layoffs in the spring, many from our community lost jobs in the hospitality industry, and many faced additional barriers to getting their first job in the U.S. We mobilized quickly to start a grocery box pickup and delivery.

our refugee and immigrant neighbors wouldn't fall victim to eviction, food insecurity, and unemployment.

Our team continued to provide excellent integration services with creativity, agility, and an unstoppable hopefulness. While we continue to welcome refugees and immigrants and see them rooted in community, we are doubling down on economic and educational empowerment. **Next time a crisis hits, they will weather it with the resources they need to thrive.**

I can't wait to share with you more about how we're investing in immigrant leaders and entrepreneurs in 2021. There's too much to say about it here, so you'll have to stay tuned!

In the meantime, I want to thank everyone who has stuck with us through a tumultuous season by volunteering your time and expertise, by keeping us in your prayers, by donating faithfully, and by continuing to advocate for just and compassionate policies.

With hope and determination,

*Chitra Hanstad*

Chitra Hanstad  
Executive Director  
World Relief Seattle



Photo: Hannah Letinich

*We provided groceries and other essentials to more than 500 families per week through much of the year*

**The sheer number of our immigrant neighbors who had such a basic need overwhelmed me.** I was impressed by their mettle and courage, but I was troubled that our society has neglected to change the systems that cause such inequality in times of distress.

World Relief Seattle stood in the gap last year. Our staff and volunteers worked tirelessly so that



# We have the pleasure of working with people from around the world. Here's a look at who came through our doors in 2020!

● **Resettlement:** we resettled 388 refugees and asylees from 15 countries.

● **Former detainees:** World Relief volunteers served 110 formerly detained immigrants from 26 countries outside of the ICE processing facility in Tacoma.

● **Gardeners:** 46 families from 20 countries grew culturally-familiar foods at Paradise Parking Plots Community Garden in Kent.

● **Legal Services:** we provided immigration legal services to people from 41 countries.

○ **Employment:** 565 people from 35 countries accessed employment services such as help finding a job or accessing unemployment benefits during COVID.

● **Youth:** 163 children from 10 countries participated in youth programming, such as Refugee Youth Summer Academy, Family Literacy Class, and a new family support program.



Photo: Jacob Carter



Photo: Hannah Letnich

Young people with immigrant backgrounds joined the team as Equity & Sustainability Interns and Project Manager Interns. They, in turn, helped develop and teach science-based curricula at the Refugee Youth Summer Academy.

# We envision every refugee and immigrant welcomed by community, rooted in community, and empowered for community.

*Our vision is accomplished through five strategic pillars. Each pillar is inspired and informed by our community partners and by the refugees and immigrants that we serve.*

*To request an in-depth copy of our strategic plan, email [infoseattle@wr.org](mailto:infoseattle@wr.org)*

## I - Welcome and Community Integration

Across the country, refugee admissions slowed to a historic low. The logistical challenges of COVID, combined with years of exclusionary policies, barred many thousands of people from reuniting with loved ones and finding refuge in the U.S. Integration services such as English class, casework, and access to transportation became very complex and our team responded with creativity and agility to ensure that nobody was left without support.

## II - Next Generation

Family Literacy Class and Refugee Youth Summer Academy both had to adapt to a pandemic year by moving mostly online. In light of new barriers to academic and social development in 2020, we also piloted a family support program where volunteers walked with whole families through the challenges of remote learning.

## III - Immigration Legal Services & Justice

While the economic uncertainty of 2020 caused many people to delay more costly applications, the ILS team was busy with legal concerns regarding work, travel, and documentation. In the fall, in anticipation of fee hikes from USCIS, we helped 35 people apply for citizenship. And in December, we filed our first DACA application!



*Grace completed her CNA training this year. 1 in 5 essential workers in Washington are immigrants.*

## IV - Economic Empowerment

The employment team worked non-stop in 2020 to help families maintain economic stability in a volatile job market.

We also piloted an entrepreneurship support program to help immigrant-owned businesses weather the pandemic. Staff and volunteers helped 54 business owners apply for public grants, with a 100% success rate!

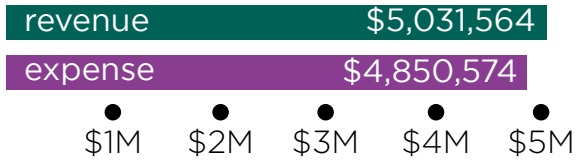
## V - Spiritual Care

Pandemic restrictions curtailed much of our work inside the ICE processing facility in Tacoma. We grieve the indefinite detention of immigrants and the additional isolation they have felt during the last year. In addition to providing spiritual encouragement to detained immigrants, we provided emergency rent assistance and mobilized to provide grocery boxes for an average of 500 families per week throughout the summer.

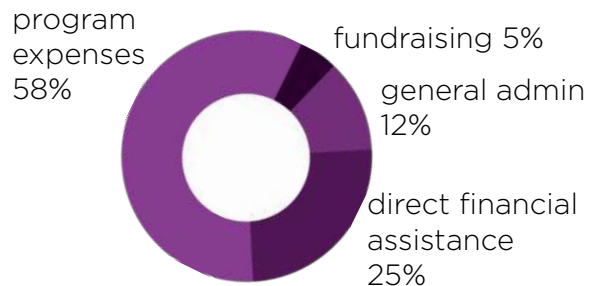
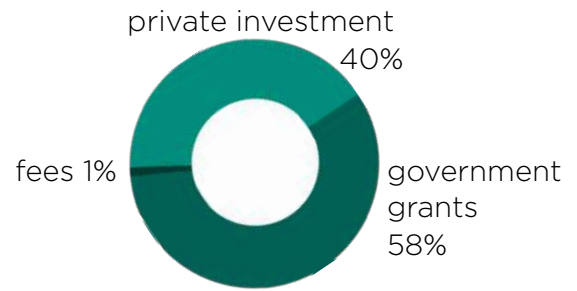
*I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you gave them to me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me. - Jesus, The Gospel of Matthew.*

# Fiscal Recap

World Relief's fiscal year runs from October through September



We have seen a steady increase in the percentage of our funding from private sources - from 10% in 2015 to more than 40% in 2020. This diversification of funding provides financial stability and strengthens our programmatic goals, and would not be possible without partners like you!



## Joseph and Sarah

“It was a kind of joy, but on another higher level. Tears of joy.” That is how Joseph describes reuniting with his wife and children in December.

Joseph is originally from Congo, but lived in a refugee camp in Uganda for most of his life. “Life was hard,” he says about his time there. “We were always called refugees. We were not allowed to cross outside of the camp.” When the opportunity came for him to resettle in the U.S. – to finally have a place where he could belong and have a future – he and his wife, Sarah, made the difficult decision for him to go on and for her to wait in Uganda.



Joseph had never met his one-year-old son, who was born after Joseph's last visit to Uganda.

Over the last 5 years, he built a life in Washington. He is a social worker with the Congolese Integration Network, helping others from the DRC access services and stay connected with each other in the Seattle area. He also visited Sarah back in Uganda whenever possible, both of them yearning for the day when she would be allowed to join him.

Sarah and the children finally arrived on December 15th, 2020 and were greeted at SeaTac airport by Joseph and their caseworker. World Relief Seattle staff and volunteers supported the family through a 2-week quarantine period, and now continue to help them acclimate and get rooted in our community.

“I like the U.S. because after a year we can get a green card and it doesn't say Refugee ID,” Joseph reflects. “I was called a refugee for all those years ... Here we are no longer called refugees because we are permanent residents. And soon I will try for citizenship. If I happen to pass the exam it shows a kind of belonging. My family is here now. I'm now happy. I'm now settled. I pray to God that he can help me so they can also adjust to life here. **We push together, we push ahead**”.

Your donation builds a welcoming community in Western Washington.

Set up a monthly donation or make a special one-time gift at [WorldReliefSeattle.org/Give](https://WorldReliefSeattle.org/Give).