

REFUGEE FUND

MICROGRANTS

REPORT 2016-2018



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ABOUT

Since many years branches of Service Civil International (SCI) have been active worldwide on an increasing number of projects dedicated to forced migration and to work with refugees and asylum seekers, who were displaced within or outside their countries. In particular, this work took place in their new home places. The aggravation of the migration situation in Europe in Summer 2015 has moved a number of SCI activists and branches to provide additional local help to forced migrants. Considering the positive effects of such efforts and their coherence with the SCI mission and history, at the International Committee Meeting 2015, branches proposed and approved an Urgent Resolution aimed at providing small and easily accessible microgrants to groups and branches planning projects and activities with and for forced migrants, lowering barriers to connect with locals and promoting mutual understanding. Therefore, since 2016, SCI is offering this funding opportunity of up to €500 for several local or national projects that develop grassroots support in the field. Some of the activities were starting to be coordinated by Building Bridges (see p. 22) in order to support new as well as existing projects within the SCI movement, when these projects would find difficulties in finding other funds.

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the Refugee Fund microgrants, summarizing the main facts and its development since its implementation. Additionally this report should inspire others to get involved in the field, by sharing what branches and volunteers within SCI had organized.

OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

Although the general objectives of the Refugee Fund remain the same as in the beginning, improvement has been done according to the needs of the applicants and recommendations coming from the whole SCI movement. The main goals of providing this funding opportunity to SCI activists can be resumed as follows: To increase the number and quality of projects and activities related to forced migration taking place across the whole SCI movement and volunteer groups. The microgrants are oriented on activities related to raise awareness and take action, as well as it is supposed to offer non formal education and make an impact as its priority.

The three key objectives of the Refugee Fund are:

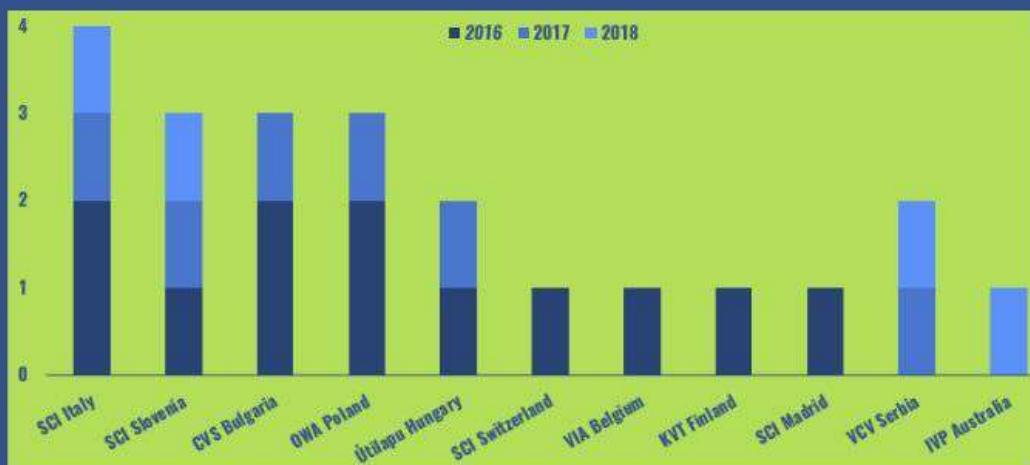
| GENERAL OBJECTIVE | LIGHT PROCEDURES | FOCUS ON SCI PRINCIPLES |
|---|--|--|
| Promotion of peace through understanding and integration between locals and people seeking refuge or who recently found it and support people seeking refuge in their arrival and transit toward their destination. | The Refugee Fund prioritises actions by volunteers over administrative procedures. Application and reporting requirements are first and foremost considered for the sake of supporting the planning/evaluation of the initiatives. | Similarly to all the activities carried on by SCI, the actions supported by the Refugee Fund have to be in line with the SCI Mission and guided by SCI core values: <i>Volunteering, Diversity, Non-Violence, Respect for Human Rights, International Solidarity, Respect for the Environment, Inclusion, Empowerment and Cooperation.</i> |

STATISTICS

22

PROJECTS HAVE BEEN GRANTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE FUND

APPROVED APPLICATIONS PER BRANCH AND PER YEAR



11

SUPPORTED BRANCHES

THE TOTAL
COST OF THE
ALLOCATED
PROJECTS
ADDED UP TO

€9528



32

ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PROJECTS

ADMINISTRATION

Since their creation, the Refugee Fund Team has been run by a varying number of members. At the end of 2018, there are 5 team members, all with diverse time availability and differing contribution. New team members have been chosen based on their motivation letters and preferably with previous experience in the field. All functions are voluntary based.

In addition, there are the SCI International Secretariat (IS) representative and the SCI International Executive Committee representative following and supporting the team. The Finance and Administration Officer in the IS is in charge to complete the reimbursements via the SCI internal Pink Slip system or bank transfer. In general the IS also provides considerable support in terms of promotion of the Refugee Fund (mainly through the engagement of a long-term volunteer at the IS, also involved in Building Bridges; see p. 22).

The approved and reimbursed grants came from the SCI IS, plus few private donations. The total requested amount matches almost exactly the available funds at the end of 2018.

It is necessary to diversify the sources of financing the Refugee Fund with SCI external funding, due to no capacity of the IS for replenishment. A fundraiser has therefore been hired in 2018 in order to elaborate content, to be used for the future development of SCI in general, as well as to get the necessary funding to support the implementation of activities. Additionally, the fundraiser has been focusing on supporting the engagement of trusts and foundations, on extending prospect research resulting in a database of trusts, on submitting applications for the three SCI microgrants and making a first approach to (often larger) aligned grantmakers that may consider building a partnership with SCI.

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

The team meets on Skype depending on the workload, but on an average of every 2 months in order to exchange updates as well as to clarify questions and to develop the further continuation of the microgrants. In addition, constant communication via mostly email and skype serve to discuss and decide on current issues and queries. All documents (guidelines, applications, reports, meeting minutes etc.) are stored and shared within the team on Google Drive.

In general, communication and promotion about the Refugee Fund gets more regular and precise. Promotion serves naturally to link the topic of forced migration between peacemaking and mutual understanding through awareness raising as well as through the integration of forced migrants into several activities. Concretely the topic is also more intensively mentioned on the diverse communication channels and international SCI meetings.

Within SCI a consistent cooperation with the branches as well as with the other two microgrants (GAIA MicroGrants and Natural Disaster Fund) enables a valuable exchange and support.

In order to increase the visibility of the Refugee Fund microgrants itself, it is crucial to encourage potential applicants to apply as well as to promote the implemented projects. These are shared through the different communication channels:

SCI website (www.sci.ngo)

SCI mailing lists: reaching branches, partners, offices and several individual activists

SCI Newsletters: E-Zine (external) and Peace Connection (internal)

SCI social media: mainly Facebook and Instagram

SCI international events: eg. APM, EPM, ICM

Visibility and promotional materials

APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESS

Any SCI branch, group member or an official working group of SCI can apply for funding up to €500 per application for the implementation of projects in the suggested areas of work, based on simplicity, but with a maximum impact. Applications to the Refugee Fund microgrants can be submitted at any time, but they can only be accepted until funds are available.

Possible areas of activities are:



Applications in other areas can also be considered, in case they are in line with the aims of the Refugee Fund. All submitted applications that fit at least in one of the areas of activities are assessed by the team and evaluated according to the following general selection criteria:

1. the request fits the aims of the Refugee Fund and the conditions set out in the application form;
2. their contribution to awareness raising among:
 - a. local communities;
 - b. people seeking refuge;
 - c. SCI volunteers;
 - d. SCI as an organisation.
3. their direct positive impact on the target group, on the local community, on the interactions (inclusion) between the two and in general among all individuals sharing the space where the initiative takes place;
4. the value of the contribution provided by the Refugee Fund (why the grant would make a difference in relation to this particular project and why the costs cannot be funded elsewhere).

A special importance is the impact on local communities, even if it is difficult to measure it, especially for outsiders, as the Refugee Fund Team is. In that sense, the team depends on the declarations coming from the applicants. However, the team tries to get feedback from participants and volunteers as well.

At the beginning, supporting documents have been developed and since then being improved taking into account recommendations from SCI activists and the Refugee Fund Team itself. As already mentioned, the administrative effort should be held on the minimum. The following up-to-date documents are shared with the applicants, whenever they demand them and also available

on the SCI internal Members Area. The intention is to ensure that the same standards are applied to the submitted projects:

- Refugee Fund Rules and Procedures (2018)
- Refugee Fund microgrants 2018 - Application Form
- Narrative Report
- Financial report - Refugee Fund project

The Application Form should provide information which enables assessment of whether the four general selection criteria are fulfilled. Once the application is submitted by the SCI branch, it is reviewed and evaluated by the Refugee

Fund Team within 14 days, taking the selection criterias into consideration. If needed, additional information is asked to the applicant in order to ensure that the application is complete and clear enough. If a project is rejected, a reasoned response is given to the applicant to allow an improvement of the project. Regarding the fact that applications are very diverse in terms of topics and effects, the team is always looking to maintain a quality standard for all applicants and to ensure that the applicants understand the objective and goal of their projects. This enables the team to support the applicants in planning and implementing their project. A voluntary assigned team member communicates the official decision and its availability to take over further communication and cooperation with the applicant.

One basic purpose of the Refugee Fund is to have an overview of the projects and share the developed ideas with the rest of the movement. In order to do so, the reporting form to be filled out from the applicants was designed to allow an easy evaluation of the projects as well as the integration of the data and the exchange of experiences for the implementation of Building Bridges. After 30 days of implementation of the last event of each project, both completed report forms (narrative and financial) have to be sent to the team. The reports allow the team to gather valuable opinions and information on the projects, especially in order to develop an overall evaluation and performance of the Refugee Fund microgrants, as well as possible directions for improvement and development and its role in the overall SCI strategy and activities. Follow-up plans and long-term impacts are also asked to be mentioned in the forms.

OVERVIEW OF GRANTED PROJECTS

Variety and diversity keeps the team motivated to sustain the Refugee Fund microgrants and to support meaningful initiatives in the future. Here an overview of the implemented projects throughout the past few years - just to keep you inspired!

The twelve in 2016 approved applications came from Europe, while two refused ones came from the Asian region. In one case, because in the application was sent very late for a project that was already funded and in the other case because the applicant was a contact and not a branch. Another approved project has been cancelled.

In 2017, all six received applications have been granted by the Refugee Fund.

In 2018, one application has been refused by the Refugee Fund Team, agreeing that the applicant could have put more effort in finding other funding sources. Another received application has not been re-designed after the provided feedback of the Refugee Fund Team. In the end four applications have been approved. There have also been some demands to the Refugee Fund from other interested organisations outside of SCI, that could not have been taken into consideration. Finally, the Refugee Fund Team is very delighted about the approval of one project from overseas and especially looking forward to hear about the situation with refugees on the other side of the globe.

Info-event about Refugees, Antwerp 18th June 2016
Raising awareness about the refugee situation and fundraising

This project was organised in collaboration with Refocus aiming to work with local communities to lower prejudices by providing information about the refugee situation on the road through Europe and Belgium. Providing the locals the chance to empathize with and to understand more the perspective of forced migrants lead to obtain mutual respect and understanding. To awaken solidarity, four guest-speakers with different origins and experience were invited as well as artists (music and slam poetry) from different continents. oriental food and slam poetry performers. Additionally funds were raised to keep on supporting independent international volunteers who organise projects with refugees by distributing postcards from the balkan route in exchange for a free donation, depending on the visitors financial abilities as well as by

selling oriental food and drinks. The target group were persons who already were open to receive refugees in Belgium, persons who were already involved in refugee solidarity activities, as well as doubting persons with uncertainties and fears. The reputation of the venue, Madam Fortuna, as an organisation which actively supports solidarity and diversity through art, culture, music and social activities was also helpful for the promotion of the project. The follow-up was to continue in implementing similar projects in public spaces, also in smaller towns or villages. Through the support of the Refugee Fund the profit of the project could be used for the benefit purpose. Their first mission was to inform the visitors. Secondly, to inspire them to get involved personally in already existing initiatives.



No Border Fest, Rome 1st - 3rd July 2016
Dedicating festival to the freedom of movement and struggle against diverse forms of racism

No Border Fest was organized for the first time in 2009 by SCI Italy along with several other associations and informal groups in response to the so called "Security Law", that established the juridical figure of "illegal immigration" in Italy. Since then, No Border Fest is conceived as a space for workshops, public debates, video/photo-exhibitions and music dedicated to the topic of freedom of movement and struggle against diverse forms of racism. SCI Italy is the main promoter along with several associations and informal groups dealing with the issues mentioned above. The objective of the No Border Fest is to deepen aspects related

to migrants everyday life as practice of repossession of dignity, through workshops, roundtables and debates as well as by sharing best practices connected to different approaches, where migrant people are active in their own social inclusion and active citizens of their new societal frame. In order to achieve this goal several entities, migrants and social workers are cooperating in order to exchange experiences. Volunteers can apply yearly to contribute to this project, promoted as one of SCI Italy's workcamps. Link to video: <https://goo.gl/Nb4B8Q>

SCI & Friends Welcome Party, Milan 7th -10th September 2016
Connecting different people in a public event



In the true spirit of SCI the event was public, so everyone was invited to join in; specifically, the main objective was to reach out to: volunteers having been already involved in international voluntary workcamps; to potential future volunteers, refugees and asylum seekers; to entities working with/for refugees and asylum seekers, SCI activists, experts, citizens. The concept of this project was to involve refugees, volunteers and SCI activists in the preparation of the event and to invite the citizenship (from Milan and its outskirts) to the final event. The ideas were the following ones:

1) working together is the best way to overcome differences and prejudices as well as to experiment the possibility of being active within the society;

2) sharing stories and lectures in order to raise people's awareness.

The event was organized as:

- a) storytelling (about workcamps, migration and Kurdistan)
- b) intercultural dinner
- c) session about desaparecidos in Argentina
- d) African music and dance

Walls to paint on, not to divide, Sardinia 2nd - 4th June 2017
Boosting social activation of refugees and asylum seekers while enhancing exchange

Since the town is not well equipped for the inclusion of forced migrants as active citizens, lacking of basic facilities as cultural centres, associations and recreational spaces, the concept behind the initiative was to enforce a message of mutual efforts and cooperation between refugees and asylum seekers and local youngsters in order to overcome challenges that are usually perceived as differences, though in reality they present similarities according to the context of origin. The objective was reached through painting murals on some public walls and those of the hosting and sheltering centre. Content of the

murals have been same stories, background, aspirations and needs of both migrants and local youngsters. The weekend was concluded with an open dinner in the town of Cagliari, in order to present the outcomes of the initiative and the Building Bridges campaign. The idea behind this event is rooted in the history of SCI Sardegna, since with several workcamps organized throughout the years the local group has been contributing to the culture of murals in Sardegna, and murals are conceived as tools for social inclusion, campaigning and exchange, since they always involve several target groups and stakeholders.

Workcamping the AfricaDay, Milan 13th October 2018
Working with local communities and lowering the prejudices toward newcomers



The aim of this project was to raise awareness among the local people about the historical, social, political background and the lives of newcomers (culture, living conditions, dreams and stories) in the area of Milan and its outskirts, where the presence of extremist groups is increasing. The main objective of the initiative was to connect local associations that work with/for migrant people, especially those from African countries. The purpose was to strengthen the collaboration between SCI Italia and Cascina Casottello, where a couple of associations (Sunugal and Fate Artigiane) cooperate in order to create an open and intercultural space for one of the poorest areas of Milan. Furthermore, the common

events had a strong impact on local people, SCI volunteers and activists and the network. The activities were embedded in an open event "Africa Day 2018" together with Cascina Casottello. During the event stories were shared by SCI volunteers that took part in workcamps in African countries as well as cultures by cooking traditional food and dancing together. The event has been characterized by raise-awareness activities (human library, visual discussions, reports, open debate and round-table) and by social and cultural exchange through dinner and music.

The whole event can be found on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/AfricaDay18>

OWA Poland

Summer camp activities for children from the Refugee Center, Linin, 30th July - 13th August 2016 Providing different indoor and outdoor activities

The aim was to involve the children in organized activities during the summer, also to get them interested in the national and cultural backgrounds of the volunteers, coming from 4 different countries. As well as to give a chance to the volunteers to learn about refugees and forced migration. The project has been organised since 12 years already, and it was important for OWA Poland to organise it in a refugee center especially during the migration crisis.



Come on Peace! Poznan 12th November 2016 - 7th January 2017 Improving social inclusion and lowering the prejudices toward refugees

The event took place in the democratic forest kindergarten NaBosaka. Main goal of this initiative was to create bridges between Polish and economical refugees Roma children and to decrease cultural shock experienced by the two groups. During the project, between 7 and 10 Roma and between 3 and 5 non-Roma participated in the workshops. Through intercultural education as well as the creation of a non-directive and non-violent welcoming space the encounter between Roma and non-Roma children should get ensured. Additionally, environmental education was provided by exploring the nature of the National Park and a space for artistic expression (music and manual) was also created.



Sunny summer for children in Refugee Center, Linin, 29th July - 12th August 2017 Working with refugees along their way

This project continued supporting the refugee center as a workcamp aiming to involve the children in different activities, as well as to share the backgrounds of the volunteers, which came from 5 different countries. In addition, the volunteers learned about the refugee-situation in Poland and beyond. Values of working and living together as international group were also

transmitted. This project has been organised since many years and was already supported by the Refugee Fund in 2016. Due to a tense situation in the local community from April 2017 (a hostile attitude towards the refugee center) the project did unfortunately not spread the spirit of integration and multiculturalism, as wished.



KVT Finland

Volunteer Weekend - come and share! Helsinki, 1st - 2nd October 2016 Implementing sustainable and long perspective activities with refugees

Volunteer Weekend is an annual empowering event for KVT volunteers to give feedback, to get inspired, as well as to evaluate their experiences and share them with others. The special focus was on Middle East and migration, therefore especially the immigrant participants were asked to share their experiences, plan and run a workshop in cooperation with other KVT members and participate in workshops. For asylum seekers this occasion

supports their integration by finding local ways for active citizenship. In addition, KVT finds new active volunteers with refugee backgrounds. As a long term aim, they establish a common ground for future activities with asylum seekers and migrants. During the weekend they were able to get a wider understanding of what KVT does and also learn it in practice when planning and conducting parts of the programme, thus finding new ways to be active in KVT and SCI as well as share their views on how KVT's work with refugees could be further developed.



Mahis

Introductory Tours, Ljubljana, 10th September - 10th December 2016
Facilitating the integration of arriving asylum seekers



The project aimed to introduce new asylum seekers to the city, by touring them around the most practical places in Ljubljana and presenting them everyday life situations. The main aim of the project was to help asylum seekers orientate themselves to integrate in the local community, by meeting up with local volunteers and other locals. The goal was to reach people arriving in Slovenia, as a good introduction to the city really affects the perception of the country and the integration process. Each tour started in a district of the city, and continued through the main streets and places of interest, up until the center. The project was co-organized with *Slovenska filantropija*, since they already organised volunteer work and activities with asylum seekers, thus enabling access to the targeted asylum center.

No Borders Corner, Ljubljana, Maribor and Logatec, 4th April - 10th June 2018
Offering a public library section on forced migration to enhance inclusion



The project was realized in collaboration with the Slovene NGO *Humanitas*, which has been working for years in the fields of global education and social inclusion. The main aim was to facilitate the integration and settling (temporary or permanent) of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenia by offering them a special place in one of the municipal libraries. Activities included collect/purchase books in Farsi, Arabic, Urdu and other languages needed (some other funds were also available, through the cooperation), set up the places in the libraries and

promotional events for the project. There were at least 40 people at the inaugural event, including a journalist of a daily local newspaper. This public place in the library was also promoted in three different asylum centers. Besides a place for the refugees, it is also raising awareness about refugees and forced migration as well as becoming a meeting-place between local communities and migrants. Link to newspaper article: www.dnevnik.si/1042817728 (in Slovenian)

Fairy Tales of the World, Ljubljana, 26th October 2018 - 30th January 2019
Facilitating integration and settling of refugees and asylum seekers



This initiative was a continuation of the previous year's project *No Borders Corner*. The project aims to enrich the collection of the library section, based on visitors propositions, as well as to widen the horizon of local and migrant visitors by connecting them, lowering barriers and promoting cultural exchange and understanding. Therefore, they organised in total 4 fairy tales nights, where stories from different cultures and languages were narrated. They also invited their guests to join and taste a mix of slovenian

dishes and arabic delights, which encouraged people staying after the event and networking. Their third event was a bit different, since it was incorporated into a bigger event through the cooperation with other NGO's, where different opportunities for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers were presented as well as some singing and dancing performances, next to the poems reading.
Link to video from 3rd event: <https://goo.gl/i5fyDC>

SCI Switzerland

TheatreEscape Training, Bern, 14th January 2017
Preparing volunteers for TheatreEscape workcamps and other creative activities

The volunteers were guided in this process by theater pedagogues and received inputs through a learning-by-doing approach. Further on they acquired knowledge and methods on how to adapt and organize the since 2009 established workcamps. The main aim of these workcamps is to give children, who are fleeing from war, poverty or distress, the opportunity to discover new creative ways to express themselves together with Swiss and other migrant children living in the area.

More information: <http://theaterflucht.ch>



SCI Madrid

Free Spanish classes for refugees, Madrid, 2nd November - 16th December 2016 Helping the social inclusion of refugees by teaching them the local language

The project of the free classes for refugees through the intercultural dialogue was a success since its implementation. Building a good trust relationship in a not-judgemental environment enhances the development of the language skills. In addition, it helps to integrate by organising different social activities and cultural exchanges between the volunteer teachers and the immigrant

students, as an intercultural dinner in which participated more than 10 different countries. The teachers met monthly in order to evaluate the classes and the development of their project. Through the Refugee Fund SCI Madrid could afford and install a new blackboard for the further implementation of their activity.



CVS Bulgaria

Broken windows project, Sofia, 10th - 14th December 2016 Improving the conditions in Voenna Rampa Refugee Camp



Volunteers and inhabitants of the camp cleaned the playground, garden and surrounding areas; they repaired the ceiling, made a giant blackboard in one of the walls from the corridor and draw a child-friendly mural. The initiative aimed to involve the asylum seekers in reclaiming the space they inhabit - usually they are not involved in taking care of it and thus they lack ownership and agency. In that sense mutual prejudices get reduced by bringing people together while working on a common goal. In addition, asylum seekers' living conditions in the camp were directly affected by improving the environment and the state of public spaces. All planned activities could be covered, as well as people from both the local community and the camp got involved, and they have worked with another grassroot NGO for the artistic intervention of the walls. This initiative was a part of The Refugee project, that involves local volunteers in tutoring asylum seekers and refugees from different age groups.

Link to video: <https://goo.gl/L2ANiK>

Employment for inclusion, Sofia, 21st of February 2017
Informing about employment regulations

The main goal was to inform employers and asylum seekers/refugees about key regulations and to provide them with a space to meet peer to peer, matching the company employee profiles with suitable candidates. During the event the participants were able to meet with HR representatives, ask/answer questions and engage in further job seeking collaboration. Additionally several organizations were invited to present their complex services aiming at direct assistance to asylum seekers and refugees.



Volunteer academy: The Refugee Project, Banya, 31st July - 10th August 2017
Helping asylum seekers to feel accepted and integrated in the Bulgarian society

This project took place in the isolated reception center in Banya, which is mainly left alone by bigger NGO's. The participants were divided into three different groups: kids, women and men. Therefore the volunteers organized various activities for each of them: workshops, educational and recreation activities for the asylum seekers in the reception center (children, teenagers and adults) like

sports, games, crafts, excursions, etc. Mostly recreational activities were connected with the educational part, trying to recall the notions that were taught. Funded discussions about cultural differences were also enabled. An intensive study part for the volunteers about forced migration was prepared as well. This project has already been organized in other years before.



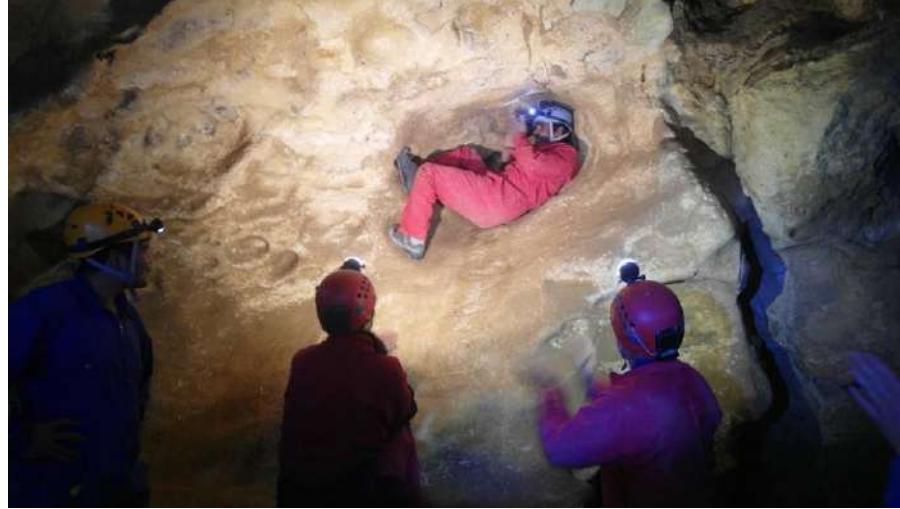
Útilapu Hungary

Winter full of fun, Budapest, 3rd December 2016- 28th January 2017 Strengthening the social integration of refugee youth through new exchanges with volunteers

Cooperating with Open Doors, the aim of the project was to help the inclusion into the local community, by providing regular programs, new experiences, interaction with the society, intercultural learning and fun. Hence, they organised five thematic weekends where the volunteers and the refugee youth got the chance to do the following activities together:

- 1) Learning Hungarian folk dance and songs
- 2) Ice Skating
- 3) Exploring Buda caves
- 4) Intercultural cooking and fundraising
- 5) Painting of colorful world map

Therefore, the programs were organised as to learn new things connected to the Hungarian culture as well as local knowledge of Budapest. The Open Doors working group was already connected with the group of around 25 young refugees living in Hungary. In addition, they wanted to enable the refugee youth to become an active part of Útilapu, to learn about volunteering, and to give them the chance to participate in international programs in the future, as well.



Balaton trip, Szántód, 13th - 14th May 2017 Strengthening connections and new skills - Weekend trip to make videos together

The aim of the project was to enhance the inclusion and integration of the refugee youth to Hungary, by providing a weekend trip where they could visit new places, gain new skills (video-making and photography) for their future, get the chance to be creative and express themselves. This new knowledge can be used in the future. Besides teambuilding

among the group itself, there was a good networking between the refugee youth and Open Doors, the group of Útilapu working with refugees and migrants, with perspective of the refugee youth to get regularly involved in Útilapu itself, as to organize further activities together.

VCV Serbia

Balkan Steps, April - August 2017

Supporting independent volunteers and refugees on the Serbo-Croatian border



This project is embedded into the bigger project consisting of several phases with several goals in mind. Using the Refugee Fund, the project aimed to increase and revoke solidarity among local people towards "newcomers" and to provide direct aid to people seeking refuge, close to Hungarian and Croatian border. Included activities were a living library, peer-to-peer meetings with aid-workers and long term volunteers who helped in a mobile kitchen, supporting undocumented people, and a public final event, inviting local people raising awareness about the border-situation in Serbia and in Europe.

Balkan Steps II

VCV Serbia, April - August 2018

Supporting solidarity and understanding between local communities, organizations and refugees

Balkan Steps II was an initiative that builds upon its previous edition (implemented in 2017). Their goal was to raise awareness about the current situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in Serbia, as well as enhance the level of commitment of local citizens. This year, Balkan Steps II lasted for 3 months. Their programme was about creating opportunities for citizens of Serbia and members of local and international grassroots organizations working for refugees to meet and support each other's in different ways: through awareness-raising events, donation campaigns and volunteers' placement. The activities were conceived taking into account the lack of information,

within the local community of Novi Sad in which VCV Serbia is operating, about the work of international grassroots organizations composed by young volunteers that operate to support refugees stranded at Serbia's borders, as well as the lack of information about lives, struggles and needs of refugees themselves. The project is conceived as a series of public events, which went on in parallel with a campaign for donations and ended with a short volunteering placement for young people in Subotica. All the activities are covered by stories at the BalkanSteps blog: <http://balkansteps.wordpress.com>



The main goal was to provide a bridge between the Australian local community and asylum seekers. The activities included to join a volunteer team (weekend workcamp) by promoting the work of IVP and assisting the organisers of a citizen science event at a popular tourist destination and nature biodiversity hotspot, near Sydney. Everything was done to make this as smooth and easy as possible for them to take part enabling them to interact with environmentalists, to engage with nature and ordinary Australians, to travel outside of the city and learn about the Australian flora and fauna in a supportive environment. The aims were to lead to more inclusion and acceptance of refugees by boosting confidence in a wider context and to recognize their contribution to Australian society more compatible with their qualifications, skills and aspirations. Even though some of the asylum seekers had been in Australia for between 3 months and 20 years but were all on bridging visas and still waiting on determination on being allowed to stay. They had no security of employment and no assistance from the Australian government. Read the post on SCI's [Voices of Volunteers-Blog](#).

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

As already mentioned above, the measurement of the concrete long-term impact on the targeted communities presents some challenges for the Refugee Fund Team. However, the team is able to evaluate the sent reports from the branches in order to assess the impact of the projects and estimate how important the microgrants were for their implementation. Statements are based on analysis, on feedback from the members of the Refugee Fund Team and on external feedback from branches, which all in all provide a general review of the fund. There is only one project, that is still in its implementation phase, at the preparation of this report and therefore can not be included in the evaluation.

The Refugee Fund microgrants proved to be more intensively used at the beginning, which is specially resumed in the statistics section. On the whole, the Refugee Fund stands for valuable impacts on the ground as well as on increasing awareness and the involvement of SCI activities in the field of work with and for refugees and asylum seekers, which means that the indirect impact is even wider. Most activities lasted from one day punctual events to even longer time periods, for instance serial events in a row within one project. Projects were focusing on entertainment, but especially on learning possibilities and integration, while establishing opportunities for exchange between newcomers and the local community. Target groups were sometimes also distinguished between children, youth and adults.

Fortunately, regarding the long-term impacts of the different projects, the team identifies a continuation of some of the projects over the three years. Additionally, meaning that some of the projects existed already before and could have been reorganised by the microgrants or that they have been extended and repeated in the following years. This can be understood as a success of and persistence of motivation of the applicants and shows the sustainability of some projects.

From the branches themselves different achievements and impacts have been mentioned in the narrative reports. In general, they refer to positive reactions from local communities, except for a few projects, where they indeed have had some troubles with the local community challenging the implementation of their project. Hereafter, the impact will be analysed and exposed regarding their contribution to raising awareness and impact among the different beneficiaries and target groups of the several projects (deriving from the general selection criteria):

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| SCI movement | SCI volunteers | Refugees/Asylum seekers | Local community |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|

Collaboration leads to skills exchange and to the exploration of new opportunities for the local community by connecting with other associations. Through cooperation and finding partners as well as cofundings, the different branches and activists get the opportunity to establish a wider network, which enables them to growth for future projects and to increase the visibility of their efforts and their organisation in their local environment. The promotion of interaction among people with different background aims to widen the horizons of the locals, to overcome prejudices as well as to the creation of a more inclusive society. Understanding and tolerance can be built up, by spreading the culture of other countries, specifically of countries of origin of the immigrants. Another specific example is the approachment to volunteers from workcamps, which can share and use their experiences from other countries for the enhancement of local projects, hence the integration in the hosting community.

Involving migrants in the activities as organizers/volunteers allows them to become protagonists of the narratives about themselves, which usually do not involve their point of view, experiences and messages; moreover it enables them to get to know local people and feel included and appreciated in a country in which they often receive the direct and indirect message of being unwanted. Sharing their volunteering experiences among peers and acting as ambassadors contributes positively to their self-respect. Additionally, the widening networking serves to reach a wider public, growing interest on the topic of forced migration as well as awareness raising in their context.

The fact to strengthen advocacy on migration issues can lead to an improvement of the situation of newcomers, whether for the implementation of projects with or for them, hence supporting their integration while fighting against stereotypes and discrimination as well as raising awareness on human rights.

More specifically, most of the different projects gave the opportunity to the migrant participants to learn about a huge diversity of topics (e.g. nature, culture, social skills) widening their general knowledge, which simplifies their social inclusion.

The microgrants definitely serve as empowerment for local activists and as an opportunity for mobilisation used by different SCI branches, that are active in the field. Another positive outcome is the improvement in team working and strengthening the cohesion of the different groups, working on the achievement of the same aims and objectives. Volunteers get the frame to train others on non-formal education, enhancing the opportunity to overcome prejudices and to learn new skills, build friendships across previously perceived barriers, developing intercultural understanding and appreciation, leading to general attitude changes.

Another aspect is the increasing mobilisation of potential new activists and volunteers for the SCI movement but also beyond, basically to work in the field of migration. Migrants sharing their volunteering experiences can function as ambassadors in order to attract even more interested people. Especially the different public events serve to promote SCI in general and increase the recognition of the individual branches as actors in the non-governmental field of forced migration projects and programs, by reaching people that did not know about it. The engagement of local press, enhances visibility and raises awareness among locals, even if they don't participate at the project itself.

The in the reports mentioned achievement of collecting donations can actually not be clearly attributed to the different target groups as it depends on the specific donations that have been raised, therefore, they can be very precisely beneficial for each of the groups. Worth to mention is the vast learning process recognised by most of the projects applicants themselves regarding project- and event management. The branches recognise in their evaluation and report forms the successes and the importance of their projects, and they even propose areas for future improvement. The cooperation between several activists and grassroot organisations show the competence of connecting ideas and spreading out the objectives of different projects. Hence, by involving different associations as partners, participation in the activities and events can be increased. Additionally, for the implementation of projects, asylum seekers as volunteers themselves, provide many new resources, skills, knowledge and perspectives for further projects and activities. In the end these achievements improve in general the implementation of the projects and therefore benefit all of the different target groups.



As a whole, the Refugee Fund microgrants seemed to be a valuable opportunity to start the implementation of projects through financial support, because several new collaboration could be raised and strengthened, which lead to further new projects connecting ideas and participants and improving generally. Regarding the continuation of projects, it is worth to point out that after having implemented a project for the first time, it seems in general to simplify the implementation of continuing projects. Contacts, know-how and experience are gained, additionally, received feedback from everybody involved and especially the values and needs of the target groups can be integrated into new ideas. Some of the applicants mentioned the planning of further projects in their report and some of them also applied several times for the Refugee Fund microgrants.

On the other hand, few applicants mentioned restrictions of long lasting impact when it comes to workcamps, because of their short duration or the floating population in refugee centers and camps. Nevertheless, the volunteers managed to involve the target groups in general. Hence, in the short term they provided education and entertainment. There are diverse challenges that have been mentioned in the reports.

"Visibility of events and activities: sometimes the same group of people appear on organized events."

Visibility should be increased in order to avoid this and to spread out the word to other people, that would even not be as much interested on the topic. Depending the promotion and invitation, the message should be as neutral as possible, for instance when the invitation is published publicly. How to persuade e.g. xenophobic public, that the projects are benefiting themselves as well?

"Organisational difficulties with the management and staff of refugee centers."

In order to be prevented, meetings or a well functioning communication with the refugee centers and their employees can be arranged, for instance in order to reach the needs as well as to strengthen the connection and cooperation with them.

Generally, since the launch of the Building Bridges Campaign, forced migration became an integral part of SCI. Activists and branches are becoming more aware of the issues and ways in how they can make a positive contribution to the integration of forced migrants into the receiving communities.

The goals and objectives of the Refugee Fund are also in accordance with SCI's perspective and strategy ([SCI strategic plan 2015-2018](#)):



Strategic objective 1.2 To make volunteering a way of true active citizenship and a lifestyle:

Specifically by trying to integrate migrants into the world of volunteering, the Refugee Fund projects are contributing to achieve social justice and change perspectives as well as to adapt the values of active citizenship.

Strategic objective 1.3 To promote intercultural dialogue and nonviolent communication:

Through the projects, forced migrants and locals get the opportunity for intercultural dialogue and non-violent communication, which is essential to reduce prejudices and deepen mutual understanding. By including migrants in international projects, they get to know even more different cultural backgrounds.

Strategic objective 2.1 To promote a global approach to local and worldwide challenges:

Offering the exchange of human experiences, where local communities, volunteers and migrants get new perspectives, help them to make the connection between local struggles and global issues and contributes to the building of a global community.

Strategic objective 2.2 To stimulate solidarity and to value diversity:

The goals of Building Bridges and its slogan **Start Building Bridges - stop building walls**, summarises this objective. In that sense, the Refugee Fund projects trying to give a voice to vulnerable groups, by raising awareness, contribute to the reduction of stereotypes and prejudices. The gathered experiences with vulnerable groups, especially with unemployed youth, marginalized migrants and asylum seekers, help to tackle discrimination and to create solidarity. These vulnerable groups are empowered to play an active role in society, by including them in volunteering, where they can participate and develop new skills and competences, instead of being just a target of solidarity.

Several resources and documents developed through different SCI projects provide on the one hand useful background on defining and understanding forced migration as well as remembrance. On the other hand they provide also practical information on planning, implementing and evaluating project ideas. For example the Building Bridges Toolkit:

<https://sci.ngo/what-we-do/building-bridges-campaign/building-bridgestoolkit>

Feedback from the applicants

"The application procedure was easy enough to make it possible for being run by OWA volunteer."

"It would be nice in the future to be able to fund larger initiatives."

"From KVT's perspective, it is highly important to have these kind of small funding opportunities that are easy to access and thus, easily managed by our volunteers instead of the staff members. Even if the sum is small, it is significant especially in a country like Finland in which the transportation is expensive and usually the most restrictive factor. We also appreciate the helpful team managing the fund and having the patience of answering all our questions and making the process very easy for us. For the future we would recommend providing the report form already when a project is approved. Also for the report of expenses more guidance could be helpful to determine the level of details required."

"SCI Italy stresses on the importance of the RF since the majority of fundings connected to working with/for migrants are biased in the sense that they just conceive an emergency approach to the issue. Even if this approach is important in the short-time, at the same time SCI Italy strongly believes that is the long-term that we can have a real impact on the society."

"I found the process for applying and reporting simple and clear. I hope you will propose the Refugee Fund again!"

"Communication was very smooth and the team was very flexible in understanding and answering to our needs as organizers."

The Funds were really useful in order to support our event

INTENTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

SCI needs to maintain and even increase the involvement in Building Bridges (transforming from a campaign into a programme). In that sense the Refugee Fund embedded as a tool providing an easy access to financial resources should continue encouraging the branches for taking action as the microgrants have been proven successfully by supporting small, meaningful projects working with forced migrants and raising awareness, which otherwise would not have taken place. However, as the Refugee Fund was initially created using SCI's own resources and the remaining amount is not sufficient to be allocated in 2019, its refill is absolutely needed. Therefore, the need for a

fundraising strategy, including local/national and international fundraising activities carried on by branches and activists themselves, are more urgent than ever, in order to achieve a self sustainability of the Refugee Fund microgrants by external funders. Herewith the team is also developing paths on how to continue with this instrument to support future projects. The fundraiser has elaborated content (as a database of trusts, to submit applications for the three microgrants) in order to get the needed funding to support the continuation of activities. In addition, the fundraiser focused on approaching potential partners as grantmakers to engage in SCI.

ABOUT SCI AND BUILDING BRIDGES

SCI is promoting a culture of peace by organising international volunteering projects, with individual, local and global impact for people of all ages and backgrounds. The organisation consists of 43 branches and an ever growing number of partner organisations. Living and working together with people of different backgrounds helps volunteers to break down barriers and prejudices, striving to SCI's vision, which is a world of peace, social justice and sustainable development, where all people live together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflicts. All activities should be in line with SCI's values. Visit the SCI website: www.sci.ngo

The Building Bridges campaign launched in 2016 aimed to raise awareness and stimulate the reflection about the refugee situation and forced migration in general. It included workcamps dealing with refugees and asylum seekers or including them as volunteers; study sessions to be implemented in SCI workcamps; the elaboration of materials and collection of methods to be used by branches and partners willing to get active in the field; the Refugee Fund microgrants for small projects; several seminars and trainings on the topic.

The Building Bridges Toolkit was designed to share the know-how on voluntary projects involving people seeking refuge or who recently found it as well as raising awareness on forced migration in general. The Toolkit is aimed at inspiring branches, partners and activists with case studies of successful projects on the topic, as well as supporting them in starting similar initiatives by providing practical guidelines on how to organise such projects and specific methods that can be used. The Toolkit is a work in progress and all projects supported by the Refugee Fund has been asked to refer to it but also to contribute by sharing content to be included in it.

The Building Bridges working group was established during the creation of the Building Bridges Toolkit by a group of SCI activists which have been leading successful projects in the field of forced migration. The aim of the working group was to coordinate SCI's efforts to raise awareness on the topic and to promote peace, understanding and integration between locals, refugees, and asylum seekers. THANK YOU!

More information about Building Bridges can be found on the website: <https://sci.ngo/what-we-do/building-bridges-campaign>
For questions please contact: buildingbridges@sci.ngo

To contact the Refugee Fund Team, send your request to: refugee_fund_team@scimail.org