

FINN CHURCH AID – OUR WORK, OUR RESULTS



MISSION

ACTION for human dignity.

VALUES

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS:

We promote human rights for all and regard all human beings as equals. We trust our partners and learn together with them. We embrace diversity and create connections between people with differing views.

UNYIELDING HOPE: We are committed to working collaboratively and consistently in order to achieve our long-term goals. We celebrate our achievements and are not disheartened by setbacks.

COURAGE: We work courageously for change. We dare to question established practices and call for the reassessment of power structures where needed.

RESPECT: We respect each other and our different beliefs. We respect the communities we work with, extending this to the environment and all its inhabitants. We value the resources given to us and use them in a cost-effective and transparent manner. We strive for mutual learning with our partners.

COVER PHOTO: Photo of a club activity organised by Finn Church Aid at a school in Aleppo after the earthquake in Syria, February 2023. A total of 2,000 children got to move, play and make music. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

VISION

FINN CHURCH AID (FCA)'S vision is a world comprised of resilient and just societies where everyone's right to peace, quality education and sustainable livelihood has been fulfilled.

IDENTITY

FCA IS A RIGHTS-BASED actor, and our action is guided by international human rights standards and principles.

FCA IS A FAITH-BASED and church-related organisation founded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The Church has mandated FCA to carry out its international diaconal work to help those most in need globally. The Christian tradition of compassion and social justice guides us. We value the different backgrounds and beliefs of all people we work with and promote interfaith collaboration.

FCA IS A MEMBER OF ACT ALLIANCE and is committed to working with its ecumenical and faith-based partners.

FINN CHURCH AID is Finland's largest international aid organisation with more than 75 years of experience. We specialise in the world's most fragile contexts and work with the most vulnerable people, regardless of their religious beliefs, ethnic background or political convictions.

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WE DON'T GIVE UP

SOME THINGS ARE CAPTIVATING. They make time stand still, focus the eye and clear the mind of all other thoughts. A tree swaying in an autumn or spring storm, for example, charms me again and again in this way. It sometimes bends so much that it is inconceivable that it does not break. And yet it does not give up.

During a working year, I meet hundreds of people in Finland and our programme countries. They represent different nationalities, social classes, professions and walks of life. They may live in slums or in government-paid official housing. Recently, discussions have almost invariably been serious and joyless. The horrors of Gaza and Ukraine are haunting. In particular, the fate of children caught up in violence hits hardest, and world politics can seem utterly absurd. At the same time, some wars and conflicts lead to others being overshadowed, such as the devastating civil war in Sudan. Is there no longer any restraint on evil and no value for humanity?

The desire for power, greed and sheer evil seem to blow away the idea of indivisible human dignity, commitment to the defence of human rights, and the promotion of democracy. While unconditional

human dignity, human rights and democracy may sound like somewhat technical and perhaps distant concepts, they are about simple things: we are all equally valuable. We have the right to expect equal treatment and the opportunity to influence decisions that affect us.

As uncertainty grows, those in power are tempted to turn a blind eye to common global challenges and hope that they will resolve themselves, or at least not affect their own country. Of course, this is not the case. On the other hand, when people look for solutions to these challenges, they think that conflicts will be resolved only by politicians or that the world will become more equal through increased economic cooperation. The role of ordinary citizens as the influencers and watchdogs of power is forgotten. It is perceived as too soft or perhaps even naive. The leadership of a growing global population is falling into fewer and fewer hands.

Despite the storms, Finn Church Aid has continued to work for human dignity. As a result of our work, a growing number of women and youth can influence decisions that affect them. More and more children are going to school, and more young people are finding

“In 2023, our work reached almost 1.4 million of the most vulnerable people.”

employment through vocational training, for which there is a growing demand. Our peacebuilding staff have worked with local communities to resolve conflicts. Practical lessons from these processes have been used to train UN diplomats.

In 2023, our work reached almost 1.4 million of the most vulnerable people. You can read more about our work behind the numbers in this publication.

How have we done it all? What has made these excellent results possible? I think it is perseverance or unyielding hope, to quote our values. Our employees, partners, donors and beneficiaries have not been afraid of challenges and headwinds. We have not given up.

A heartfelt thank you for being part of our work and the community of those who do not give up.

Tomi Järvinen
Executive Director, FCA



PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION

ONE OF OUR KEY OBJECTIVES IS to maximise the opportunities of children and youth to attend school and receive a quality education. Our work covers early childhood education and care, primary and secondary school, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and education sector development.

Our educational work focuses on refugees and vulnerable children and youth, particularly on gender equality and inclusion of people with disabilities. We also build and repair school facilities. Schools provide a safe environment to grow and learn for children living amidst disasters, societal pressures and harsh economic realities that lie at the core of issues like child marriage and child labour.

We ensure quality education by building teachers' professional skills and competence with the help of local professionals and volunteers from our Teachers Without Borders network. Teachers' ability to provide psychosocial support is essential in crises. Through schools,

we offer activities that support mental health and psychological and social wellbeing for students and teachers.

We also develop digital solutions and resources for learning and teaching. In Ukraine, online learning has been the only way for most students to continue studying. In Kenya, we arrange teacher training remotely from Finland.

Education is crucial as it provides young people with easier access to sustainable livelihoods while promoting stability in communities. Career counselling offers tools for encouraging children and youth to stay in school and helps them find their own career path. Vocational education and training offers opportunities for internships and thereby facilitates access to employment. Quality learning materials and trained teachers can make a real difference in young people's lives and help them become responsible and caring adults. Peace education is another effective tool in building stability.

Our results in 2023



989,036

students at different levels have access to quality education.
48.5 per cent of the students are girls.



10,757

teachers participated in training sessions.



651

school-related structures constructed and rehabilitated.



19,398

persons with disabilities supported.

In collaboration with: [Teachers without Borders](#) | [Omnia Education Partnerships \(OEP\)](#)



Education is crucial even in emergencies. Photo from a metro station school opened in autumn 2023 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD

EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO a livelihood that enables them to support themselves and their families, to increase their wellbeing and to participate in developing their communities as equal citizens.

Our business and vocational education and training programmes link learning to earning by training and mentoring women, young people and refugees for gainful employment or establishing businesses. In South Sudan, for instance, almost 90 per cent of those completing our technical vocational education training (TVET) programme become employed. Besides traditional sectors such as agriculture, trade, and construction, jobs are now available in creative industries such as coding, online services, music, and gaming.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a key role in job creation in developing countries, which is why Finn Church Aid supports the private sector and promotes self-employment in all its programme countries.

FCA Investments, an investment company set up by Finn Church Aid, makes capital and business management skills available for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable SMEs that employ young people and women. These businesses reduce poverty by creating jobs and income opportunities and by building resilient and productive communities. We provide business development services for SMEs before and after financing them to develop key management practices that reduce investment risks and funding costs.

Community cooperatives and savings groups, which provide business loans and other assistance, are at the core of our livelihood work. The savings and loan groups and cooperatives supported by Women's Bank have raised two million euros available for loans to women; tangible proof of the effectiveness of the structures we have created that offer women financial stability. Of all the women supported by the Women's Bank, around 90 per cent have improved their income.

In collaboration with: [Women's Bank](#) | [FCA Investments](#) | [FCA Creative Industries](#)



Laxmi Bhat, 31 (left), and Puja Bhat, 23, received training in mechanics through Finn Church Aid in Dadeldhura, Nepal. Mechanics skills are vital for repairing equipment in their farming-dependent community.
PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN



Our results in 2023



21,143

individuals and enterprises had access to business development services.



5,029

youth benefited from Linking Learning to Earning services aiming towards employment.



1,057

jobs created and maintained in the agriculture and food processing sector through our investment company FCA Investments.

RIGHT TO PEACE

PEACE IS A PREREQUISITE for achieving human rights and sustainable development. When peace prevails, children can go to school, and adults can focus on building secure livelihoods and stable societies.

Finn Church Aid builds peace in some of the world's most fragile countries, such as South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Somalia, and countries suffering from protracted conflicts. In addition to war and conflicts, stability is threatened by a shrinking space for civil society; growing hate speech; and climate change, which contributes to competition for scarce natural resources and forced migration.

Needs are growing, but at the same time international resources and attention are moving away from conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This shift of global attention shrinks the space for peace. Peacebuilding needs to adapt and provide support to local peacemakers, including digital solutions such as social media and radio, to support the active role of civil society and by linking peace to education and livelihoods.

Peace means more than the absence of conflict; we can achieve sustainable peace only if the entire community agrees to implement structural changes that support peaceful coexistence between different groups. Civil society actors in conflict-ridden countries are instrumental in creating inclusive and equitable peace, but they need long-term support.

Peace can be achieved and sustained if it is inclusive. Women, youth and religious and traditional actors are all affected by conflict and therefore also hold the solution to it. Peacebuilding processes often exclude them, which is why we want to make sure their voices are heard.

In collaboration with:

The Network for Religious & Traditional Peacemakers



In the Central African Republic, youth peace clubs are working to eradicate hate speech and create livelihoods for young people. Eurol Maidod (left), Anastasia Pagonendji, Estella Banga and Liliane Ngha in Bangui. PHOTO: BJÖRN UDD



Our results in 2023



9

district councils in Somalia formed with FCA support since 2016. In Burkhaba, a district council was formed last year, and out of 21 elected council members, nine were women.



1,649

civil society groups and networks supported.



17,051

people trained in dialogue building and civil society engagement, among other topics.

FCA WORKS IN CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

Our long-term operations continued in Africa, the Middle East and Asia in 2023. In Europe, our Ukraine country programme established in 2022 continued growing.

Africa

1 Uganda

With 1.4 million refugees, most of them from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda is Africa's largest refugee-hosting country. Finn Church Aid runs educational and entrepreneurship programmes for both refugees and Ugandans.

"I have friends here who give me hope. They have good ideas and encourage me to stay in school, no matter what."



Dorcas Uwamahoro, 18, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, lives in Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda. To adapt to school, she has had to learn English. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

2 South Sudan

Ever since its independence, South Sudan has been afflicted with outbreaks of local violence, which have intermittently escalated into civil war. Conflicts combined with floods and droughts caused by climate change are complicating daily life and access to food. In South Sudan, we focus on peacebuilding, livelihood opportunities for youth and women, as well as training and education.

"With the money from collecting firewood I paid my children's school fees for a year. I now use my income for feeding my family."



Nyola Kong Gatkak fled the war in Sudan to South Sudan. She had to leave everything behind and now collects firewood to provide for her three children. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

3 Somalia

Somalia suffers from a number of complex and interconnected crises. Severe drought caused by climate change is displacing people, and the humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by political instability and conflict. In Somalia, we focus on peacebuilding that supports national reconciliation and inclusive local governance, but we also support education and income opportunities.

4 Kenya

In Kenya's poorest regions, drought brought on by climate change is causing shortages of basic supplies, while disputes over the use of scarce natural resources spark regional conflicts. In Kenya, we support peace work, education and livelihoods. In the capital Nairobi, we help youth from challenging conditions to gain the skills needed in creative sectors such as the music and gaming industries.



"The key to a meaningful life is education. We want to ensure that no one needs to interrupt their education."

Koke Augrace chairs a youth peace club supported by FCA in Mbaiki. The club breeds pigs and sells piglets. Members can borrow money for school fees or other needs. PHOTO: BJÖRN UDD

5 Central African Republic

Central African Republic is recovering from civil war and still suffers from conflicts between armed groups. Our emphasis is on peace education for youth to eradicate hate speech and rumours, livelihood opportunities for women and youth, and protection, first-response support and counselling for survivors of gender-based violence.



Europe

6 Ukraine

Russia's war of aggression has damaged thousands of schools in Ukraine, with hundreds of them in disrepair. Our work in Ukraine focuses on rebuilding schools, providing psychosocial support for teachers and pupils, and supporting education sector development.

"Children today are more fearful and aggressive than before. They want to talk to each other but they can't."

Psychologist **Alina Symonenko** participated in FCA's training programme. She helps children in Kharkiv process their traumas through play. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN



Middle East

7 Syria

More than a decade of conflict has left many in Syria displaced. The earthquake in 2023 increased basic needs. Many also lack access to education or employment. We support particularly teachers and the construction and renovation of school buildings.

"I want my grandchildren, especially the girls, to go to school. Now our family's financial situation is too weak for that."



Amina al-Sindyan, 63, lost her home in Aleppo to the earthquake. The family lived temporarily in a school during the summer of 2023. Her grandchildren attended FCA's club activities. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

8 Jordan

Jordan hosts the second highest number of refugees in the world per capita. In Jordan, we support livelihoods by teaching business skills and with vocational education training.

9 Israel and the Palestinian territories

The war that started in October 2023 has caused a massive humanitarian disaster in Gaza, with widespread impact in the region. Work with our partners in East Jerusalem and the West Bank focuses on psychosocial support and quality education.

Asia

10 Myanmar

Since the military coup in Myanmar, we have focused on education work. Cash transfers to beneficiaries have also become an essential part of both our programme work and direct humanitarian assistance.

11 Cambodia

In Cambodia, there are still large income disparities between urban and rural areas. We have particularly supported the education of children and youth and education sector development. Among other results, career counselling and guidance has been integrated into the national curriculum. Our Cambodia country programme closed at the end of 2023.

12 Nepal

Almost two-thirds of the population of Nepal rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Our work in Nepal focuses on providing women and other vulnerable people with income opportunities and access to education in order to promote the country's long-term development.

"It is important that girls are informed about their rights and about bodily issues such as menstruation and not being forced into early marriage."



Poonam Mahara runs support circles for girls in the Mahotta region. The classes, which cover topics such as menstrual hygiene and sexual rights, aim to engage teenage girls in discussions about important issues related to growing up. PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN

More detailed financial information can be found on page 18.

Finn Church Aid used 89 per cent, a total of EUR 64.8 million, of its operating expenses in 2023 for international aid operations.

RELIEF TO DISASTER-AFFECTED PEOPLE

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE alleviates suffering in emergencies caused by natural disasters and wars.

We support people in affected areas with sufficient nutrition, clean water, health care, accommodation and sanitation. Being able to return to school as quickly as possible gives children and young people a sense of security, while in protracted crises it is important to provide families with opportunities to earn a living.

In addition to delivering emergency assistance, we run country programmes, which offer long-term humanitarian assistance. Many of our programmes focus on supporting displaced people in their home countries or neighbouring states. We aim to combine humanitarian assistance with long-term development cooperation and peacebuilding – known as the triple-nexus approach.

According to international humanitarian principles, everyone is entitled to assistance regardless of their ethnic background, religion or nationality. After international assessment, Finn Church Aid was certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).

Our Results in 2023



48,231

people's access to basic services supported through our disaster responses.



22,105

people were trained in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and environmental protection.

Sondos Ali al-Mhana, 11, in summer 2023 at a shelter for those who lost their homes in the earthquake in Aleppo, Syria.
PHOTO: ANTTI YRJÖNEN



85,346

people supported in Syria after the 2023 earthquake, including emergency relief, psychosocial support and school rehabilitation.

Education maintains hope amid multiple disasters

IT STARTED with a bomb-like sound, just like what we heard throughout the war. I thought we were under attack again. Eventually, I realised that the earth was shaking.

It was the morning of February 6, 2023. I was asleep in our home, on the fourth floor of a building, in the Syrian capital Damascus. In a state of shock, I grabbed my wife and child. Things were falling and breaking apart around us, but fortunately there were no injuries.

I am Syrian, 34 years old. I have lived my entire adult life surrounded by disasters: a decade of war, then the pandemic, now a devastating earthquake. Just before the quake, FCA had expanded its reach to Aleppo, as well as Raqqa, often remembered as the capital of the extremist organisation IS. People in these cities have been living under enormous pressure, and after all the bad things that have happened, all they have wanted is a moment of calm.

For most people, education is what maintains their hope for a better life. Schools also provide physical and psychological protection from violence, trauma and other risks. During my ten years of working with education in emergencies in Syria, the thing that has struck me most is the desire and determination of children and teachers to continue with school.

Education is not only every child's right but an essential engine for reducing poverty and inequality and enabling economic growth, development and peace.

What keeps me going is the persistence of parents, teachers and students who go to great lengths to enable education in their communities. I believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

We must not give up.



PHOTO: KARAM SHAROUF

Karam Sharouf
Program Manager,
FCA Syria

CHANGE REQUIRES RELENTLESS ADVOCACY AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS are in turmoil as the world becomes more polarised. Former developing countries are wielding power in unprecedented ways, requiring a reassessment of our values. Adapting to these changes requires tireless advocacy and open-minded partnerships.

At a time when the Finnish government has decided to make severe cuts in development cooperation; conflicts, economic challenges, and the consequences of the climate crisis are increasing in Europe's neighbouring regions. We work to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable people to audiences in Finland, internationally, and our programme countries. By that, we seek changes in policies, attitudes, and laws.

In our rapidly changing world, significant challenges may appear out of the blue. Russia's war in Ukraine continues, but alongside Ukraine, the war in Gaza and the suffering of civilians dominate the headlines. Through advocacy and partnerships, we also highlight neglected crises, such as in Myanmar and South Sudan.

No one can resolve these crises alone, but it is possible to build better opportunities for livelihoods, education and peace for those living amidst them and alleviate suffering. That is why Finn Church Aid (FCA) depends entirely on carefully selected partnerships in Finland and our programme countries, as well as on long-term collaboration and systematic work to improve our practices.

Thanks to strategically planned and optimally timed partnership work, we have been able to diversify our funding base, which is essential in times of funding cuts. We would not be able to work in our programme countries without the involvement of local civil society and organisations that help us to implement projects.

Our commitment to working with local government also makes us a sought-after partner when expertise is needed in essential processes at both regional and national levels. As a result, we often get involved in significant processes that broadly impact the countries where we operate.

Building and maintaining trusted and lasting partnerships is an essential part of our work, as we need them to deliver effective solutions and ensure the impact of our programmes. In addition to our advocacy, partnership and programme work, we participate in research cooperation. Research data enables us to tell others how our work improves the resilience of societies and people and promotes global justice and the realisation of human rights.

In collaboration with: **Changemaker**

Our results in 2023



We advocated to decision-makers during the Finnish parliamentary elections and government negotiations. Despite funding cuts, the role of NGOs in Finland's development cooperation is emphasised in the government program.



We launched our African Union (AU) Liaison office in Addis Ababa at the beginning of 2023.



We advocated for the importance of vocational education for refugees at a high-level event at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum in Geneva.



FCA's school bus travels around the refugee settlements in Uganda, reaching children, who are out of school. Our project funded by the Lego Foundation inspires children to learn through play and youth to return to school. PHOTO: ESTHER RUTH MBABAZI

PARTNERING WITH PARISHES FOR A MORE JUST WORLD

FINN CHURCH AID is one of the treaty organisations of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, mandated to carry out the international diaconal work of parishes. The Church and its parishes form one of FCA's key stakeholder groups.

Effective networks ensure fruitful collaboration:

- 6** parish contact persons working group meetings
- 37** Common Responsibility Campaign briefings
- 7** training sessions
- 2** vicar working group meetings
- 30** events

"It was essential to see the people and processes behind the Common Responsibility Campaign in Finland. By working together, we can help more children and youth to access school and increase livelihood opportunities in Kenya."

Alexon Mwasi,
Program Manager for FCA Kenya, visited Finland during the start of the campaign in 2023.



PHOTO: VILLE MAALI

"The study trip to Uganda reinforced our understanding of how our support reaches its destination and how respected FCA is. The trip sparked new ideas for developing the parish work and our collaboration."

Mari Puska
Vicar, Mariehamn Parish



WE ORGANISED a panel discussion at the 13th General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. Bishop Kaisamari Hintikka, Executive Director Tomi Järvinen and our Ukraine Project Manager Irina Kudina discussed the importance of education in emergencies. Moderator: Antti Laine.

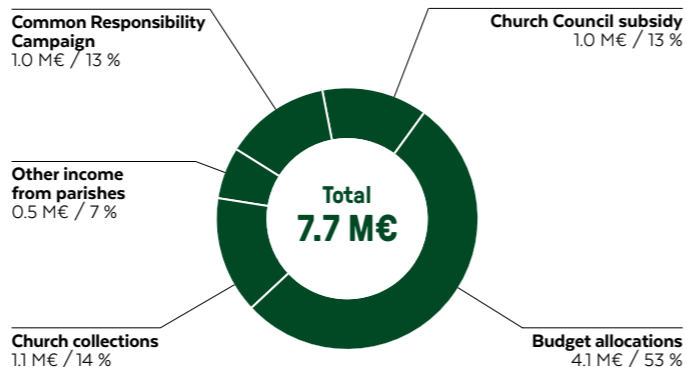
WE RECORDED a studio church for the Public Broadcasting Company Yle in collaboration with the Marhaban community of the Tampere Cathedral Parish and the Lumo vocal ensemble. Liturgy by Tuulia Kokkonen, sermon by Tomi Järvinen. PHOTO: ULLA OINONEN



A STUDY VISIT to Uganda for parish contact persons covered FCA projects in three refugee settlements and Women's Bank projects in Kampala and Mityana. PHOTO: MATIAS UUSISILTA

FUNDS ALLOCATED by parishes are one of the most important sources of support for FCA. In 2022, budget allocations to FCA from parishes amounted to some 4,1 million euros, church collections to almost 1,1 million euros, and the Common Responsibility Campaign resulted in over one million euros to FCA.

Church and parish support in 2023



MAJOR DONORS PROVIDE GENEROUS SUPPORT TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

MAJOR DONORS INCLUDE individuals, foundations or companies. Their sizeable donations help us offer support to the most vulnerable children and families. Major donors understand how multifaceted our work is, and many share our concerns about the global impact of multiple disasters taking place simultaneously.

In 2023, the war in Ukraine touched our major donors deeply and prompted them to direct significant donations to support schools, students and teachers. Inflation and rising food prices, combined with the humanitarian crisis resulting from severe drought, heavy rains and floods, have pushed many people in East Africa to the brink of famine.

Major donors have expressed their will to direct support where it is most needed, and they have for instance supported earthquake victims in Syria and those affected by the cyclone Mocha in Myanmar. They support fragile communities and promote access to education and livelihoods in countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Nepal.

A growing number of major donors donate stock. As a non-profit organisation, FCA does not pay gift tax on stocks or book-entry securities, nor is the donor required to pay tax on potential value increase.

We direct stock donations to a specific project or programme area, in line with the donor's preference. It is important for us to have a trusted and confidential relationship with our donors. We report on our work's progress and the donations' impact. Our donors say they highly appreciate the fact that they can trust us and our work, and that making a donation is very easy. With every major donor, we do our best to find the most suitable and convenient way of working with us.



We organise opportunities for major donors to get acquainted with our work. In January 2024, a group of major donors visited our education and peace projects in Kenya. PHOTO: BJÖRN UDD

A FINANCIALLY BALANCED YEAR


DESPITE THE CHALLENGING and rapidly changing operating environment, 2023 was a financially balanced year for the Finn Church Aid Group.

On the cost side, high inflation and highly volatile currencies affected all our country offices. This has significantly impacted our work, where most of our expenditure consists of implementing programmes in fragile contexts. The group's financial result was slightly negative, totalling 200 000 euros.

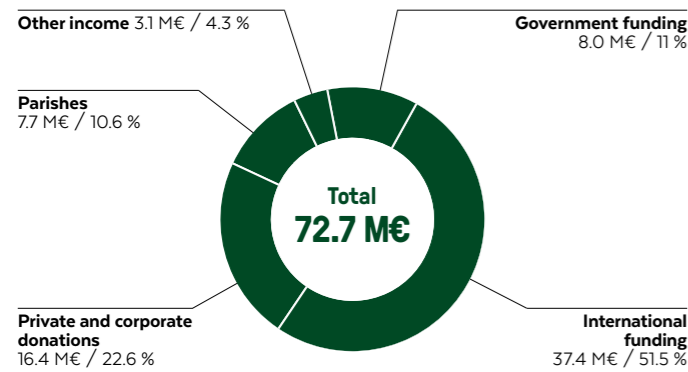
In 2023, our revenue increased by 7.5 per cent compared to the previous year. Cooperation with international institutional donors con-

tinued to grow - income was 10 per cent higher than in the previous year. Fundraising in Finland ended the year with one of our best results ever.

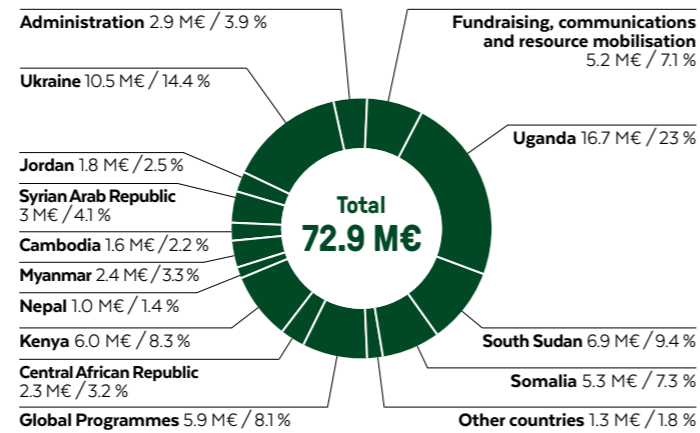
With administrative costs at only 11 per cent, we remain one of the most efficient organisations in terms of overheads, while maintaining a very high level of quality assurance and control.

 **READ MORE** about FCA's financial information by scanning the QR code or go to the address: kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/en/us/finances

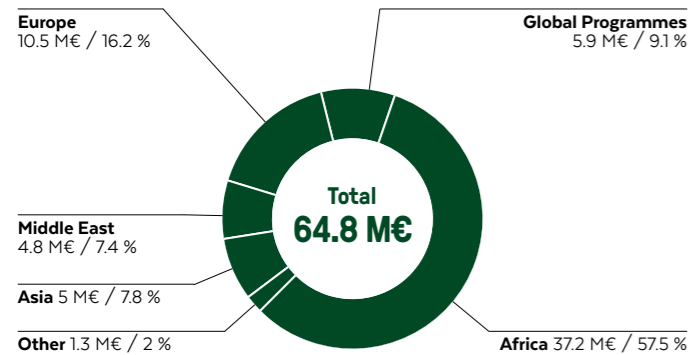
2023 Income



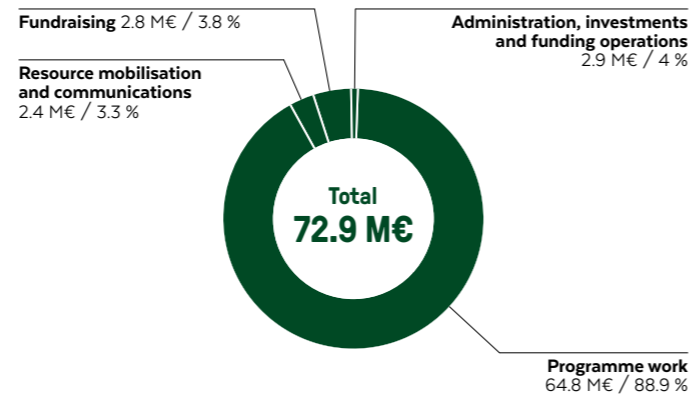
2023 Expenditure



2023 Programme areas



2023 Programme work and support functions



*Figures rounded up

OUR PARTNERS





actalliance

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The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) describes the essential elements of principled, accountable, and high-quality aid work. FCA complies with and is certified against the CHS since 2017.