

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Community media,
made by and for
displaced people.



WWW.REF-FM.ONLINE

n 2025, REF FM Foundation continued to demonstrate the value of community-led media in places where access to reliable, relevant and inclusive information cannot be taken for granted.

Across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, our radio stations provided information, connection and a platform for dialogue. Refugees, host communities and people often underrepresented in mainstream media were the reporters, presenters and producers behind the broadcasts, shaping conversations about the issues that matter to them.

This year, we paid particular attention to understanding our impact. Studies in Bidibidi, Kakuma and Kalobeyei, and Ukerewe showed strong listenership and positive effects on people's lives. Listeners described how the stations helped them understand important issues, access services and feel connected to their communities. Partners expressed strong appreciation for the stations' ability to reach people in a direct, credible and locally relevant way.

Community participation also took new forms. Feedback programmes gave refugees opportunities to raise concerns with organisations such as UNHCR and hear their responses on air. Meanwhile, our established stations generated enough local income each month to cover their teams' salaries, strengthening local ownership and supporting employment.

In the Netherlands, we launched REF FM NL in 's-Hertogenbosch with residents of a local asylum seekers' centre.

We also introduced a new visual identity and a completely new website, giving our work a clearer and more consistent public presence.

At the same time, efforts to establish additional stations elsewhere did not progress as hoped. These experiences reinforced the importance of strong local partnerships, realistic funding and the conditions needed to sustain a station over time.

We ended 2025 with a clearer understanding of our existing network's strengths and the opportunities beyond traditional radio. This laid the foundation for a new strategic direction to take shape in 2026.

We are deeply grateful to our local teams, partners, funders and, above all, our listeners. Their trust, commitment and honest feedback continue to guide our work.

Jurian Stevens
REF FM Foundation



FORE WORD

WHO WE ARE

REF FM Foundation supports community radio made for and by refugees and their host communities. We believe people should have the skills, resources and opportunities to tell their own stories, share information and hold organisations and decision-makers accountable.

Our stations are locally rooted and locally operated. The people behind the microphones live in the communities they serve, speak their languages and understand their everyday concerns. Their programmes combine music, entertainment, practical information, local news and open discussion.

With an FM broadcast range of approximately 20 kilometres, each station focuses on its surrounding community. This creates space for stories that larger media outlets often overlook and gives listeners a direct role in conversations about their lives.

Local income supports financial independence. Stations sell advertising and airtime to NGOs seeking to inform communities about services and important issues. In 2025, all four established FM stations generated enough local income to cover their teams' salaries.

REF FM KK, 88.4 FM

📍 **KAKUMA AND KALOBEYEL, KENYA**

Operated in partnership with FilmAid Kenya, REF FM KK serves refugees and host communities through multilingual music, entertainment and practical information. The station brings different communities and perspectives together, while helping refugee presenters and reporters develop professional media skills.

BIDIBIDI FM, 95.3 FM

📍 **BIDIBIDI, UGANDA**

Working with UNHCR, DW and Straight Talk Foundation, Bidibidi FM combines music, entertainment and community news. The station is financially self-sustaining, with NGO airtime sales contributing to its income. Feedback programmes also allow listeners to raise concerns and hear directly from service providers.

REF FM KYANGWALI, 102.6 FM

📍 KYANGWALI, UGANDA

Implemented with HAF Uganda, REF FM Kyangwali brings together entertainment, local news and educational programmes. Presenters and reporters cover everyday life in the settlement and surrounding community, giving attention to the experiences of refugees and their neighbours.

REF FM 88.4
Our Voice

REF FM UKEREWE, 107.3 FM

📍 UKEREWE, TANZANIA

REF FM Ukerewe combines music, entertainment and local information with a focus on the inclusion of people with albinism. Its programmes challenge discrimination and harmful misconceptions, while people with albinism play an active role behind the microphone and in station management.



REF FM NL, DIGITAL RADIO

📍 'S-HERTOGENBOSCH, THE NETHERLANDS

Launched in 2025 run by asylum seekers and so called 'statushouders', REF FM NL broadcasts online only.

The initiative gives participants opportunities to develop media skills, share their experiences and connect with the surrounding community.



**4 ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY RADIO
INITIATIVES SUPPORTED IN EAST
AFRICA**



**1 NEW RADIO STATION LAUNCHED IN
THE NETHERLANDS**



**3 IMPACT STUDIES CONDUCTED IN
KAKUMA AND KALOBEYEL, BIDIBIDI
AND UKEREWE**



**700.000 LISTENERS REACHED
ACROSS THE PARTICIPATING
STATIONS**

2025 IN NUMBERS



**100% OF THE ESTABLISHED STATIONS
GENERATED LOCAL INCOME TO HELP
COVER THE SALARIES OF THEIR TEAMS**



**40 LOCAL TEAM MEMBERS
EMPLOYED OR ACTIVELY INVOLVED**

1. GIVING COMMUNITIES A VOICE

Our stations continued to create space for refugees and host communities to discuss the issues affecting their lives. Listeners contributed questions, experiences and ideas through interviews, call-ins and community programmes.

2. IMPACT CONFIRMED BY RESEARCH

Impact studies were conducted in Bidibidi, Kakuma and Kalobeyei, and Ukerewe. The results showed that:

- Large parts of the communities regularly listen to the stations.
- Listeners trust the information and consider it relevant to their daily lives.
- Programmes help people access services, understand important issues and feel more connected to their communities.
- Local partners are highly positive about the stations and their ability to reach communities directly.

3. SHARING THE STORY OF REF FM KAKUMA

A promotional film was produced in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, introducing the people behind the station and showing how community-led radio connects people, shares essential information and creates space for refugee voices.

4. A NEW IDENTITY AND WEBSITE.

We introduced new colours, logos and fonts, alongside a completely new website. The rebranding gave REF FM a more consistent identity and a clearer way to present our mission, stations and impact.



HIGHLIGHTS
OF 2025

5. STRENGTHENING LOCAL MEDIA SKILLS

Presenters, reporters, producers and station managers continued to develop skills in journalism, interviewing, editing, technical production and community engagement. For many team members, REF FM provides both employment and valuable professional experience.

7. HOLDING ORGANISATIONS ACCOUNTABLE

Feedback programmes gave refugees an opportunity to question organisations responsible for essential services. Concerns raised by community members were discussed on air, with organisations such as UNHCR and its partners invited to respond publicly.

These programmes help to:

- Make community concerns visible.
- Clarify decisions and correct misinformation.
- Identify gaps in services.
- Create a more direct and equal conversation between communities and organisations.

6. IMPACT CONFIRMED BY RESEARCH

All established stations generated income through advertising, sponsored programmes, announcements and local partnerships. This local income was sufficient to cover the salaries of the core station teams throughout 2025.

This is an important step towards greater local ownership and long-term sustainability.



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

In 2025, REF FM Foundation combined international support with locally generated station income.

Donors and partners supported programme development, training, equipment and network operations. Stations earned local income through advertising, sponsored programmes, announcements and partnerships.

Every established station generated enough local revenue to cover its core team's salaries – an important step towards local ownership and operational sustainability.

Local revenue does not yet cover all costs. External funding remains essential for training, equipment replacement, technical development, monitoring, coordination and new media initiatives.

Our main areas of expenditure were:

- Local radio operations and team salaries
- Training and professional development
- Equipment, maintenance and technical support
- Impact research and evaluation
- Programme development and content production
- Coordination and administration
- Exploration of potential new locations

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



INCOME & FUNDING

Funding category	Amount received
Business development capacity	€70.000,00
Donations for REF FM NL	€55.000,00
Donations REF FM Ukerewe	€10.000,00
Donation REF FM Mahama	€ 2.000,00
Donations REF FM Kyangwali	€1.500,00
Donations unearmakerd	€36.500,00
Total income 2025	€ 175.000,00

REF FM Foundation finances the first 12 months of a radio station. After this initial period, ownership formally transfers to the local implementation partner, which takes responsibility for continued operations and financing. We continue to receive reports from the stations. Our priority is that they remain operational, financially sustainable and relevant to their communities.

Investing in organisational capacity

2025 was the first full year in which the Foundation engaged two paid external professionals for business development. Both worked on an invoiced basis rather than as employees.

Two foundations committed a combined €70.000 annually for three years, totalling €210.000 for the period from 1 December 2024 to 30 November 2027. The Foundation received €70.000 under these commitments in 2025.

This funding is earmarked exclusively for external business development capacity, supporting funding relationships, partnerships and opportunities for future projects. It provides continuity without drawing on grants intended for individual stations.



Lucy den Teuling



Jurian Stevens

Total expenditure was €xxxx. The Foundation focused on the following activities:

- Launching REF FM NL: Funding the start-up and first-year activities of our digital radio initiative in 's-Hertogenbosch.
- Measuring impact: Commissioning studies in Bidibidi, Kakuma and Ukerewe to assess listenership, benefits for communities and partner satisfaction.
- Pursuing broadcasting licences: Paying external consultants to assist with licence applications in potential new locations. No new licences were secured through these efforts in 2025.
- Business development: Paying two external professionals to develop donor relationships, funding proposals and partnerships. Their work was supported by dedicated multi-year funding.
- Rebranding and website: Developing a new visual identity and launching a completely new website.
- Management and administration: Covering organisational coordination, financial administration and reporting.
- In the annual accounts, these costs are grouped into programme expenditure (xxxx%), fundraising (xxxx%), and management and administration (xxxx%). These percentages represent shares of total expenditure.

Expenditure category	Amount
REF FM Netherlands	€64.800,00
Impact Studies	€6.500,00
REF FM current stations cost	€25.700,00
Pursuing broadcasting licences	€1.500,00
Business development*	€77.300,00
Rebranding and website*	€0,00
Technical support & administration	€6.200,00
Total expenditure 2025	€182.000,00

*Amount dedicated and paid 100% by 2 foundations

*Amount directly paid by donor (not in administration)

Financial summary	2025
Total recognised income	€175.000,00
Total expenditure	€182.000,00
Surplus / deficit	- €7.000,00
Reserves and funds at year-end	€17.000,00

Local ownership and revenue

Our four established radio stations operated under local partner ownership. Advertising, announcements, sponsored programmes and NGO airtime generated enough local income to cover team salaries in 2025. These revenues are separate from the Foundation's income. Salary coverage is an important milestone, although additional funding may still be needed for other operating costs and equipment replacement.

In 2025, we began exploring how to extend our community-led approach beyond radio. The impact studies reinforced the value of locally produced media, while our experiences with expansion encouraged us to consider more flexible ways to reach new audiences.

For 2026, we are preparing a broader approach under **REF Media Network**, bringing together three connected activities:

REF_FM

REF FM: Continuing our community radio work and supporting existing stations.

REF_STORIES

REF Stories: Developing short videos and local stories for mobile and social platforms, produced by refugees and host communities.

REF_STUDIO

REF Studio: Developing paid production services through which local teams can create content for organisations and generate income.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Our priorities will be to train local storytellers, build editorial and production skills, establish suitable partnerships and develop sustainable income opportunities.

We will also use the 2025 impact findings to improve our work and continue supporting programmes that allow communities to raise concerns and hold organisations accountable.

The format may evolve, but our purpose remains: enabling people to tell their own stories, access useful information and make their voices heard.

Our work starts with the people behind the microphones: the presenters, reporters, producers, technicians and station managers who serve their communities every day. We thank them for their commitment, creativity and persistence.

We thank our listeners for sharing their questions, experiences and ideas. Their participation gives the stations purpose and keeps them connected to local needs.

We are grateful to FilmAid Kenya, UNHCR, DW, Straight Talk Foundation, HAF Uganda and our partners in Ukerewe, alongside the community organisations and local supporters who contributed throughout the year.

To our donors, volunteers and advisors: thank you for investing in media that gives communities the opportunity to speak, listen and be heard.

THANK YOU

