

RUN HONG KONG

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



REHABILITATING REFUGEES THROUGH  
SPORTS, EDUCATION, AND BEYOND

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# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Dear friends of RUN,

We recently welcomed a new participant to the RUN family - a young woman from East Africa who first arrived in Hong Kong as a minor. Although she's been in Hong Kong for five years now, she has been too scared to venture far out of her room. After joining her first Hiking to Heal women's sports session, she was surprised to discover so much nature in Hong Kong, saying, "How beautiful these hills are, and there are even beaches!"

Welcoming new participants to our programmes is always a reminder of the invaluable work we do with every day. Many of our participants come to us in a similar state of fear, because of the trauma they've experienced, compounded by being alone (or often alone with young children) in a foreign country. For them, our programmes are a chance to start anew - a chance to rebuild their mental and physical health, to unite together in community, and to nurture their skills, confidence, and dreams for the future.

Those dreams for the future can be as simple as living a normal life - being in a place where they are allowed to work and provide for their families, a place that recognises their strengths and values their contributions. Over the past few years, it's been clear that in order to truly help our participants build a better future, we need to get creative about finding alternatives to the current system of refugee resettlement.

We remain committed to our core work of rehabilitation through sports, but we've also invested more resources into building up our education programme for refugees to prepare themselves for the future. Additionally, we've been more proactive about helping our participants to start a new life outside of Hong Kong by building partnerships with organisations in Canada that offer an alternative solution to the traditional

system of resettlement, through a new model of private community sponsorship.

To ensure we can continue providing high quality programmes that meet the needs of our participants, we've also expanded our team to include Cindy Leung (Programme Officer) who supports our programmes and leads IT classes for our participants, Ca Robertson (English Teacher) who prepares our participants for further educational and career opportunities through learning a strong foundation of the English language, and Dani Cassidy (Development Manager) who helps us find the resources we need to continue our work. We have also engaged additional counselling and psychological professionals specialising in trauma to provide pro bono support to our participants.

Although 2019 was a year full of uncertainty for all of us in Hong Kong, we are grateful for supporters like you who ensured that we could keep our lights on and our programmes running to serve Hong Kong's most vulnerable. Thank you for standing with RUN and #WithRefugees.

With our deepest gratitude,

Virginie & Brenda  
Co-Founders  
RUN Hong Kong

# REFUGEES AROUND THE WORLD & IN HONG KONG

## GLOBALLY:

- There are 25.9 million refugees and 3.5 million asylum seekers (as of June 2019)
- 1 person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution



## IN HONG KONG:

- There are 13,000 asylum seekers (as of July 2019)
- Only 0.52% of asylum seekers have their claims recognised
- Refugees and asylum seekers are given a tiny monthly allowance of HK\$1,200 in food vouchers and HK\$1,500 for rent
- Refugees and asylum seekers have no right to work



## AT RUN:

- We served 125 refugees and asylum seekers from 19 countries, including 42 women, 23 men, and 60 children and teenagers
- 30% of our adult participants have been recognised as refugees
- 61% of our adult participants are torture survivors
- 65% of our female participants are survivors of sexual violence
- 21% of our female participants are alone with no family in Hong Kong, an additional 30% are alone with children in Hong Kong

## GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES:

On 17th December 2018, the UN General Assembly presented a plan to strengthen international support for refugees and the countries who host them. This plan, which is known as the Global Compact on Refugees, was affirmed by all 193 Member States of the United Nations. RUN directly supports three of the key objectives as outlined in the Compact to:

- Ease pressure on host countries
- Enhance refugee self-reliance
- Expand access to third-country solutions



# PROGRAMME UPDATES



## REHABILITATION THROUGH SPORTS

The core of RUN's programmes is our sports programmes that offer an opportunity to rehabilitate and recuperate. Studies show the immense power of sports and being outdoors to combat trauma, depression, and other mental health challenges that our participants face. Our sports programmes are designed to improve mental and physical health of vulnerable refugees, through the creation of a safe and dedicated environment (Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being).

At each of our sports sessions, we provide nutritious meals and snacks to supplement the small food stipends our participants receive from the government (for many of our participants, this is the only home-cooked meal they will eat each week). To ensure that all of our participants can take full advantage of our programmes, we also offer childcare and babysitting stipends to mothers during all of our activities.

**Hiking to Heal** is targeted at vulnerable women recovering from severe trauma. While hiking is still the primary focus of this programme, we have also expanded to include other complementary sports including swimming, yoga, self-defence, and rugby. Our sports activities are supplemented with life skills

education, covering topics such as Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), nutrition and women's health. Through Hiking to Heal, we offer gender-equal access to healing for vulnerable refugees through sport (Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality).

Our weekly **Mixed Gender Track Training** is led by a volunteer professional running coach and offers a greater physical challenge. While the temporary closure of Aberdeen Sports Ground meant that we couldn't physically be on a "track" for several months last year, we adapted our training to include road and trail running, beach relays, and other outdoor exercises. We support athletes to participate in local races that span distances anywhere from 5km to 100km, because our experience has shown that working towards and achieving such goals helps to boost self-esteem, and participating in races helps to increase a sense of belonging and integration with the local community.

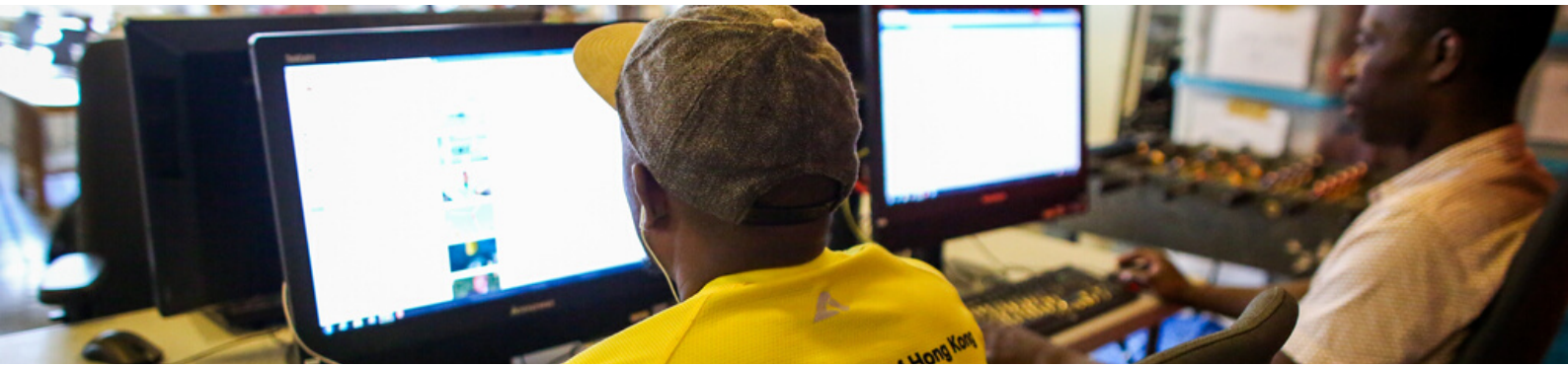
In addition to our weekly sports programmes for adults, we also organise **sports programmes for children and teenagers**, particularly during school breaks. We also organise an annual Christmas party for children and youth, as well as a beach outing during the summer.

In 2019:

- We provided 45 Hiking to Heal sessions for 39 women and 46 Track Training sessions for 55 adults and teenagers.
- We organised 2 months of weekly sports sessions for 30 refugee children aged 12 and under (sadly suspended during the protests).
- 11 teens participated in a 7-day outdoor summer camp, learning orienteering, paddling, and snorkeling.
- Through participating in RUN's sports programmes,
  - 100% report feel physically and mentally stronger
  - 87% report better levels of energy
  - 85% report improved mood
  - 83% report higher confidence
  - 89% report higher self-esteem
  - 85% report improved sleep
  - 70% go to the hospital less
  - 81% of those using medication (painkillers, antidepressants, sleeping aids) report a reduction of their usage
  - 72% say that they are much better able to socialise and make friends
- Our participants competed in 18 local races, including the HK100, AVOHK Reservoir and 5km series and 2 Hong Kong Athletic Association track meets. RUN participants also volunteered in 9 races including international races such as the HK100 Ultra and 9 Dragons.







### PATHS FOR THE FUTURE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

At RUN, we're most known for our sports programmes, but just as important is our education programme, because learning new skills and developing professionally means that our refugee participants can ultimately build a better future for themselves and their families. Building on the success of our pilot education programme started in 2018, we expanded access to education so that every adult RUN participant can exercise their mind, just as they are exercising their bodies. PATHS focuses on **P**rofessional development, **A**ccess to education, **T**raining and service, **H**elp and mentorship, and **S**kill building. Through PATHS, we aim to restore independence and dignity through education and training to prepare for re-entry into the workforce (Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education).

Our goal is to enhance self-reliance by supporting refugees with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to access meaningful work in Hong Kong or in their future country of resettlement so that they can support themselves and their families. Additionally, we are partnering with members of the business community to facilitate mentorship, professional skills workshops, and employment for some refugees (refugees are generally not permitted to work in Hong Kong, but we have obtained exceptional authorisation to work from the Immigration Department on a case-by-case basis).

In 2019:

- 32 participants improved their English from beginner levels through IELTS preparation and computer skills learning G Suite through our weekly in-person classes .
- 22 participants studied online, earning a total of 30 certificates in subjects such as law, business, healthcare, and engineering.
- Building on this foundation, our participants pursued additional skills in a variety of areas:
  - 8 participants graduated from a 6-month caregiving course;
  - 9 participants completed an Arduino course in basic electronics;
  - 4 participants studied coding with our partner Refugeek;
  - 8 participants graduated from MakerBay's creative technologist programme;
  - 2 participants graduated from the Rooftop Republic urban farming academy;
  - 1 participant is now studying at the Hong Kong Adventist University.
- We organised our first mock job fair for 25 participants and 8 of our partner companies.
- We facilitated work placements for 3 participants.
- Through participating in RUN's education programme:
  - 98% say that studying helps them to feel more self-reliant;
  - 87% say that studying helps them feel like they are regaining control of their life;
  - 61% say that they have benefitted from having a mentor.

## HELPING REFUGEES TO START A NEW LIFE

The rate of approval for refugee claims in Hong Kong is dismally low at 0.52%. As Hong Kong has not signed the UN Refugee Convention, even those “lucky” enough to have their refugee claims recognised, cannot stay in Hong Kong permanently, and only 1% of recognised refugees worldwide will be resettled by the UNHCR to another country. With the large numbers of camp-based refugees in need of resettlement, our participants’ applications for resettlement may be seen as less urgent or lower priority. As a result, refugees live in limbo in Hong Kong, forced to rely on charitable support from organisations like RUN, as refugees have no right to work here.

In Canada, a new model of private community sponsorship has been developed to offer an alternative solution to the years of waiting for resettlement. In a nutshell, local communities are able to sponsor refugees to resettle in their community and commit to helping them integrate into their new home for their first year of stay in Canada.

In 2019, we created a **Community Sponsorship Fund** dedicated to covering expenses related to resettlement (as determined by the Canadian government). By working closely with sponsorship agreement holders in Canada and the Canadian consulate in Hong Kong, our aim is to help more refugees start a new life through private community sponsorship in 2020.

In 2019:

- We initiated relationships with 2 sponsorship agreement holders in Canada
- We supported a family of 4 and an individual with ad hoc costs to resettle
- We started the process for community sponsorship for a vulnerable individual



### PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

RUN's participants represent the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong. Our participants have experienced torture, sexual violence, and other forms of abuse, leading to significant trauma before, during, and even after they fled their home countries. Working with adults and children in a vulnerable situation means that we have a responsibility to do everything we can to protect our participants from harm, abuse, exploitation.

In 2019, we attended a private workshop on **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children** which guided us in reviewing and strengthening our safeguarding policies, including policies that outline our staff and volunteer conduct, reporting processes and the way we run our programmes. Our goal is to ensure we keep our participants safe and are able to respond to any concerns about the safety and well-being of our participants.

Starting in 2020, we will require any groups or individuals who have direct contact with our participants (including partner organisations and volunteers) to undergo a mandatory orientation, which will cover our safeguarding policy, including topics like confidentiality, maintaining clear boundaries, and behavioural guidelines.

### GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

RUN participants arrive in Hong Kong with few physical possessions, but they bring with them a variety of skills, and a desire to contribute to the community - whether that means supporting other asylum seekers and refugees or to other vulnerable members of the Hong Kong community like the elderly. This desire has led to several refugee-led initiatives where our participants find ways to use their talents to serve others.

In 2019:

- Our participants who recently became certified caregivers volunteer their newly acquired skills to conduct regular health checks for members of the refugee and asylum seeking population through our partnership with Health in Action and for the elderly through our partnership with the Little Sisters of the Poor St Mary's Home.
- One of our participants who was a sewing teacher in her home country created an upcycle sewing circle where participants get together to learn from each other and improve their skills. This sewing circle gives participants the opportunity to develop self-reliance by learning new skills handcrafting useful household items and socialise with each other.
- Two participants who recently graduated from the Rooftop Republic Academy, where they learned urban farming skills volunteer their time to help grow fresh veggies for RUN's weekly lunches as well as tend to rooftop gardens around our city to help limit our impact on the environment.
- Several participants share their culinary skills with the RUN community by preparing nutritious and tasty dishes to be shared at our weekly post-hiking lunches. These participants also cook for our annual RUN Charity Race and other key events such as holiday parties.
- One of our participants graduated from a parent effectiveness training (PET) and shared the communication and conflict resolution skills she had learned with the RUN community to support other parents in their journey.



## ENGAGING & EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

Responding to the global refugee crisis is a team effort, and we need allies and partners across all sectors on a local, regional, and global level. We are intentional about advocating on behalf of refugees in Hong Kong by educating our community and partnering with like-minded organisations for collective impact.



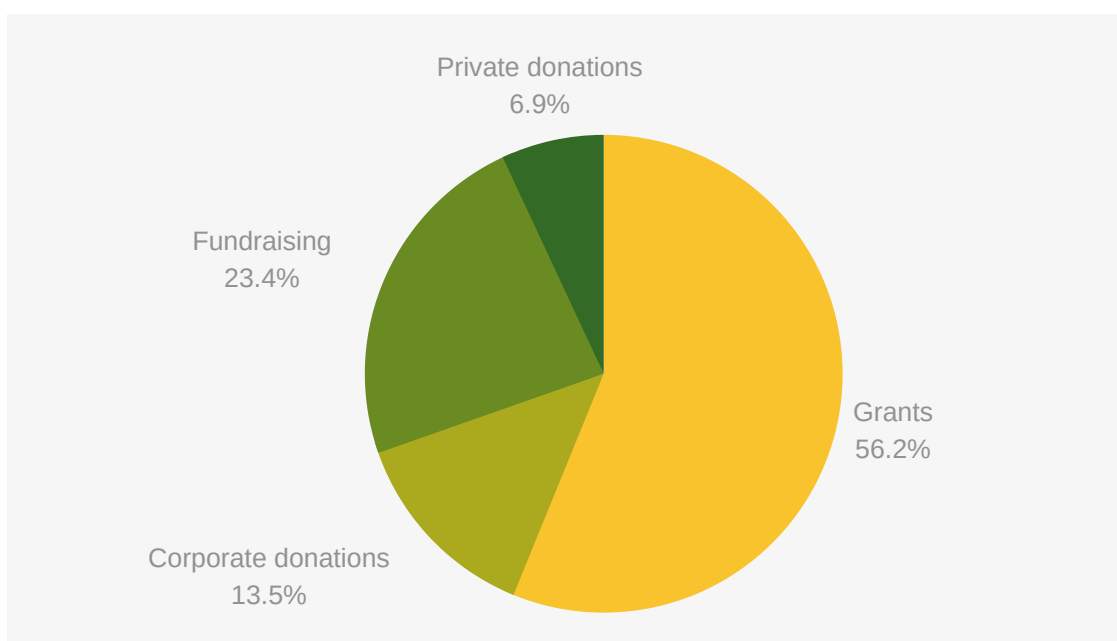
In 2019:

- Our team gave talks and presentations to 4 schools and 5 companies. Additionally, 5 companies deepened their relationship with RUN by joining us at our track training sessions, hikes, and a soccer tournament.
- We hosted 7 teams from HSBC in a refugee-led Great Refugee Challenge designed to educate participants on the situation facing refugees in Hong Kong in a fun and engaging way.
- We worked with our participants to document recipes from their countries of origin, resulting in the RUN Cookbook, a collection of stories and recipes from refugees in Hong Kong. Through the shared language of food, the Cookbook educates readers about the refugee experience.
- Our co-founders attended the UNHCR's Annual Consultations with NGOs in Geneva to give Hong Kong refugees a global voice.
- In collaboration with Branches of Hope and Centre for Refugees, we hosted an education forum, offering information about access to education in Hong Kong to over 80 refugees.
- We continued to work closely with local and regional partners to advance the rights of refugees and asylum seekers through our membership in the Refugee Concern Network (Hong Kong) and the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN).

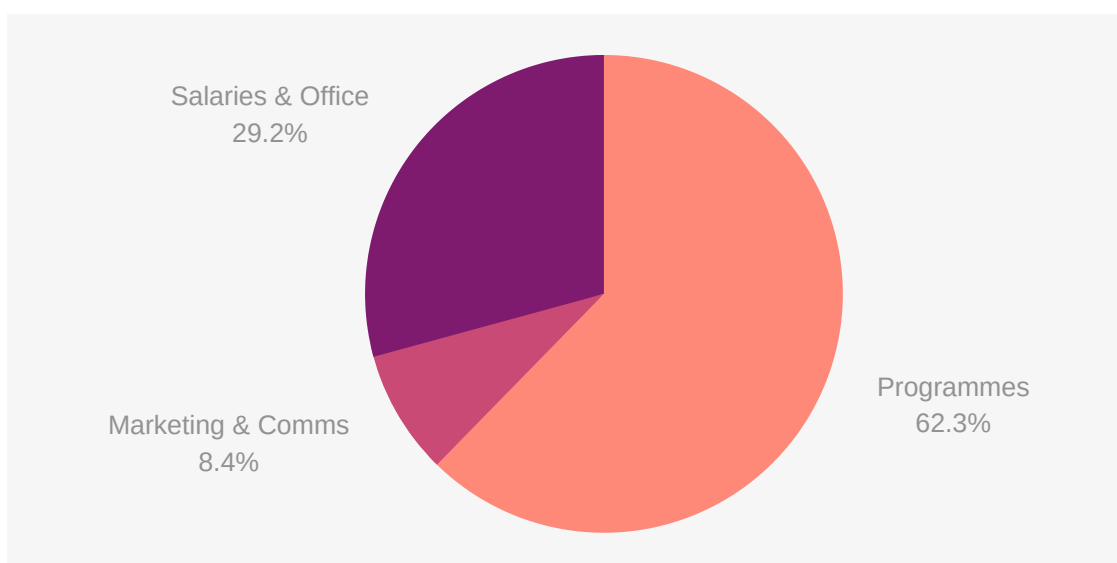
# FINANCIALS

Every dollar we raise means a more hopeful future for our participants, whether that's building mental and physical strength through our sports programmes, developing skills through our education programme, or helping refugees start a new life.

## INCOME (HK\$3,565,174)



## EXPENDITURE (HK\$3,072,031)



# PARTNERS & FUNDERS

We are grateful to the following organisations for sharing our vision to create a resilient and empowered refugee community through sport and for their generous support in 2019:

- Active Global Specialised Caregivers
- American Chamber of Commerce (Hong Kong)
- American Women's Association
- AVOHK
- BuffaloLabs
- Coursera
- Escapade
- Feeding HK
- FoodLink
- Freshfields
- Fung, Yu & Co
- Gibson Dunn
- Gone Running & Gone Runners Club
- HandsOn Hong Kong
- HK100
- Hong Kong Ambulance
- The Hong Kong Club Foundation Limited
- Hong Kong Swimming Academy
- The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Limited
- Jax Coco
- Joint Dynamics
- Kering Foundation
- LinkedIn
- Macquarie
- MakerBay
- NTT
- Permira Foundation
- Proof
- RaceBase
- Racematix
- Racing the Planet
- The Ronald & Rita McAulay Foundation
- Skadden
- Trail Runners Association of Hong Kong





# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2020

At RUN, we recognise that rehabilitation from past traumas is only the beginning. Our ultimate vision is to **create a resilient and empowered refugee community**. That's why our focus in 2020 will be to continue our critical work of rehabilitation through sports, while empowering our participants to build self-reliance and facilitating alternative paths to resettlement.

## CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL-BUILDING & EMPLOYMENT

Building on our initial success with our PATHS for the Future education programme, we will work more closely with our corporate partners to facilitate more job and internship placements for our participants. We also plan to expand our first mock job fair to include more refugees (including those from other NGOs)!

## ENHANCE SELF-RELIANCE & REFUGEE-LED INITIATIVES

Our participants have a range of talents and skills and we want to share these with the community! In 2020, we aim to create more opportunities for our refugee participants to produce beautiful handmade products that can be sold through RUN channels, building an additional income stream to benefit our refugee participants.

## FACILITATE ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO RESETTLEMENT THROUGH PRIVATE COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

As only 1% of refugees worldwide will ever be resettled through the UN, we aim to expand our partnerships with community sponsorship holders in Canada, so that we can enable more of our participants to start a new life in Canada.

## GROW OUR BOARD

As RUN continues to grow our programmes and our impact, we will also ramp up our infrastructure to support our work. In 2020, we'll be welcoming a few new board members who will help strengthen our governance and accountability, steer our organisation, and reach new audiences in the community.

# GET INVOLVED



## DONATE TO OUR COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP FUND

In order to facilitate more of our participants to start a new life in Canada, RUN is committed to fundraising for sponsorship expenses as determined by the Canadian government. You can help our refugee participants to find a better future in a new home country by making a donation to our Community Sponsorship Fund.



## JOIN US IN THE KITCHEN

Buy a copy of the RUN Cookbook and experience a taste of the many cultures represented by our participants. The cookbook includes 49 recipes from 12 different countries and stories of RUN participants representing each country. All proceeds go directly to support RUN's programmes for vulnerable refugees in Hong Kong.



## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR ANNUAL RUN CHARITY RACE

Run for healing, run for freedom, and run #WithRefugees at our annual RUN Charity Race on 7th November 2020. The RUN Charity Race is a fun day out for the whole family, all while fundraising for a great cause. Registrations open in June.



## SIGN UP FOR THE GREAT REFUGEE CHALLENGE

Immerse yourselves in the lives of refugees living in Hong Kong, as you and your team complete a series of exciting challenges and activities! This is ideal for companies or schools wanting to organise a team-building activity that is both fun and educational.



## FUNDRAISE FOR RUN

You can make a difference for refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong by dedicating your next challenge to RUN. Whether you want to run a race, throw a bake sale, or organise a movie night, you can use the opportunity to tell your friends and family about the situation facing refugees in Hong Kong and fundraise on behalf of RUN.

For more information, scan one of the QR codes above or visit our website at [www.runhk.org](http://www.runhk.org).