



# Capacity Annual Report 2020



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# Foreword



Starting up (anew) is how Capacity helps migrants and refugees to engage with their new lives here in Switzerland. What I find most energizing is the culture the team creates—to sum it up, if you can imagine it, and you feel energy from it then you can make it possible. Our entire team had the amazing privilege to work directly with Capacity's entrepreneurs directly on their projects and we find it remarkable to watch them clarify and commit to how they want to contribute to the greater Zurich community.

The 2020 program showed how solid the Capacity concept is after five years of experience, as evidenced by its successful transition of the full program online. Understandably, all missed the in-person interactions.

Still, the team, mentors and candidates kept the same momentum in these times of distancing and even extended their services to alumni. And they even rallied their community of supporters to back new scholarships for 2021.

By providing pro-bono legal advice, Wicki Partner invests (and is committed to invest in the future) in bullet-proofing the candidates' start-ups for the future to be viable and resilient in the real world. We are hopeful that by providing a firm legal foundation for their new ventures they can move forward with confidence and with having experienced legal experts as friends in their corner. Our collaboration with Capacity underscores our steadfast commitment to creating opportunities for a more diverse, vibrant and dynamic community of entrepreneurs in the Swiss marketplace and in our neighbourhoods. We cannot thank the Capacity team enough for the work they do and for the opportunity to grow our own skills together with Capacity!

Balthasar Wicki, Partner, Attorney-at-Law, Wicki Partners AG

*Capacity's legal adviser, teacher and long-time supporter*

# Impact in 2020

## Global perspectives, local action

Refugees and migrants embody potential: the potential for economic and social growth through entrepreneurship: They leverage the intrinsic and extrinsic capacities of people who from around the world who now live in one country, and who share a desire to participate in the local economy as an equal member of society. Capacity supports refugee and migrant entrepreneurs to realise their potential, to create their start-up, and to build a diverse, inclusive and prosperous society. We do this through offering entrepreneurship training programmes, which blend 1:1 mentoring, technical workshops and pitching and networking opportunities.

**"It reminded me also that you can be well educated and face challenges just because of your migrant status and not because of your integration capabilities or willingness."**

**Boost 2020 Coach**



Nagla Fathi / Sudan Culture House

## Reach and effort Entrepreneurs

In total, **29** refugees and migrants engaged with the Capacity Entrepreneurship Programmes in 2020.

## Work Input

**6'400** hours of work-time delivered by the **team**

**950** hours of volunteer work by the **board**

**970** hours volunteered by **mentors, coaches and trainers**



# Launch Phase

## Entrepreneurs

We supported **11** entrepreneurs realising **10** projects.

- 13** people joined the Launch (ideation) phase, 2 as a team
- 2** were forced to leave the programme before completion due to issues caused by COVID-19
- 6** completed the Launch phase but did not progress to the Boost phase
- 5** completed the programme and went on to the Boost

**85%** completion rate of the Launch phase, with a **45%** conversion from Launch to Boost phases

## Trainers, coaches, mentors

Supporting the entrepreneurs during the 4-month Launch phase were:

- 16** Mentors
- 10** Coaches
- 9** Trainers for workshops



Elizabeth Welersmüller – Jatta / Eli's Pieces



Daniella Schweizer / Forest and Associates

## Boost Phase Entrepreneurs

We supported **17** entrepreneurs realising **14** projects.

- 21** entrepreneurs in total joined the Boost (market entry) phase (**14** new participants, in addition to **5** participants coming from the Launch, and **2** alumni/paying participants)
- 2** were forced to leave the programme before completion due to issues caused by COVID-19 and permit difficulties
- 19** entrepreneurs completed the Boost phase

**90%** completion rate of the Boost Phase

## Trainers, coaches, mentors

Supporting the entrepreneurs during the 4-month Boost phase were:

- 17** Mentors
- 17** Coaches
- 16** Trainers for workshops

# Events

During 2020, we organised and facilitated a mix of online and in-person events to engage and support our entrepreneurs and volunteers:

- 24 workshops and group sessions
- 99 coaching sessions
- 29 mentoring partnerships
- 2 mentor orientations
- 2 meet-and-greet events
- 2 volunteering information events (part of the Capacity Engage programme)
- 2 closing events (Pitching a Dream, Pop-Up Fair)
- 11 group check-in calls with entrepreneurs and mentors

We also ran the following activities unrelated to the programme:

- Diversity, inclusion and entrepreneurship workshop with a corporate organisation
- Crowdfunding campaign
- Capacity volunteers networking event







Braveman Moyo in action

## Community engagement and support

Within our volunteering programme Capacity Engage we worked with:

- 7 volunteers supported the Capacity team in their work with many hours of technical and specialist knowledge, including:
  - crowdfunding coordination
  - user experience
  - work integration advise
  - photography
  - talent development
  - communication and translation
  - financial development
  
- 36 attendees joined the Engage volunteering information events

We distributed 6 laptops and 1 internet router to support our participants with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown periods

# Results

**Business** outcomes during/immediately after the Capacity Entrepreneurship Programmes:

- 3 participants founded a single-proprietorship (Einzelfirma)
- 3 participants founded a non-profit organisation (Verein)
- 5 participants plan to launch their business within the next 6 months
- 2 participants noted that their business was already earning (albeit less than half of their income)
- 3 participants received loans or microcredit to support their business development

**Career** outcomes during/immediately after the Capacity Entrepreneurship Programmes:

- 3 participants found a new job
- 3 participants started a course of study



Maria Cristine Duhart / La Escuelita



Lee Avnit / "3rd World Creative"

## Results

Learning and personal development outcomes:

100% of participants reported learnings from the programme

Topics such as pitching, idea definition (Golden Circle), business model development, and prototyping were the best received in terms of knowledge gain

Topics such as legal and financial management were the sessions with the least knowledge gain

$\frac{2}{3}$  of participants reported that participating in the programme had helped them:

- improve their family and personal wellbeing
- feel happier in Switzerland
- participate more actively in their local community

# Outlook to 2021

- **Launch of 2 new initiatives to support the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants**
- **Raising our ambitions for fundraising and reach**
- **Continuing to influence public policy and narratives around migration and inclusion**

As we enter 2021, the pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability and uncertainty of entrepreneurship as a route to financial security. It has emphasised the vulnerability of different groups in society, especially those on low incomes, and has exacerbated existing inequalities.<sup>2</sup>

We move forward with renewed vigor, more ambitious grant proposals, reaching deeper into the Swiss migrant community and doing so with expanded programming. In 2021 we will be launching two new initiatives.

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2. Martínez et al, 2021. Corona und Ungleichheit in der Schweiz: Eine erste Analyse der Verteilungswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie. KOF Studien, Nr. 161, Februar 2021.



Braveman Moyo / One Love Central

## **Access: Labour Market integration.**

Many newcomers require and prefer the stability and security of a job, and indeed a stable income from other sources is recognised as an important factor in entrepreneurial success for newcomers.<sup>3</sup> We are designing our ACCESS programme to support high-skilled people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, who are the most affected by underemployment and deskilling. To draw attention to this valuable but so far under-served pool of talent, the ACCESS programme will function as a bridge between employers, companies committed to diversify their workforce and high-skilled jobseekers. The programme is designed to provide tailored services and training to both parties and more importantly to facilitate direct (human) connection, interactions through active mentorship, coaching and joint events to increase employability of participants and tackle perceived barriers of hiring, retaining and promoting high-skilled people with refugee and migrant background.

## **Academy: Post Programme Business & Integration Support**

Academy aims to provide support to refugees and migrants, through a range of workshops and activities, aimed at supplementing the start-up programme; as well as serving other individuals interested in acquiring new skills. Our curriculum

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3. Mapping refugee and migrant entrepreneurship Ecosystems in Europe. Report from THSN and Impact Hub, 2021. P12

will include items ranging from deep-dive sessions on entrepreneurship topics, peer-support groups and mentoring circles, to sessions focused on resilience, dealing with change, mental well-being etc.

By expanding our areas of expertise and engaging our alumni, new partners and participants from additional target groups, we will increase our reach across communities and offer more opportunities for networking and integration to our talent. This is partly in response to a recognised lack of integration of newcomer entrepreneurs into local, mainstream support programmes and processes,<sup>4</sup> and partly a response to our research and observation of our alumni community. The Academy will also allow us to offer more income-generating activities to our wider community, and thus promote the contact and connection between communities in Switzerland.

### **Advocacy: Aiming for inclusive Societies**

Entering 2021; with a successful crowdfunding behind us and an expanded portfolio of activities, we also see potential to increase our fundraising efforts. Recent submissions to global foundations and competitions, including opportunities offered by Google and MIT, have brought us experience with framing our offering



Elvira Lüthi / Got Boba?

for an international audience, and allowed us to explore different angles of our team's strengths.

Reflecting our increased fundraising ambitions, and building on our 2020 engagements at the UN, international conferences and other venues, we will continue to seek out opportunities to advocate for inclusive societies and socio-economic integration of diverse talents. Whilst we act locally, we think globally - what happens in Switzerland can have influence far beyond, reflecting the global position of this country.

**"I feel like I belong to a community of like minded people wanting to make a difference and create their own niche in Switzerland."**

**2020 Launch participant**

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4. Mapping refugee and migrant entrepreneurship Ecosystems in Europe. Report from THSN and Impact Hub, 2021. P.13



## Capacity in 2020

- Capacity's entrepreneurs, both 2020 participants and alumni, are highly exposed in sectors deeply affected by social distancing, lockdowns and other responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely gastronomy, small-scale import-export, and services for fellow refugees/migrants.<sup>5</sup> This is in contrast to the Swiss economy as a whole, as Switzerland saw its highest ever number of companies being founded in 2020.<sup>6</sup> This has posed a threat to the success of our community.
- Capacity represented Switzerland at the 2020 OECD High-level Policy Forum on Migration and Integration and at a formal ministerial dinner with Ms Karin Keller-Sutter, Federal Councillor and Chair of the 2020 OECD meeting. It was an opportunity to share and showcase the talent and work of refugees and migrants, as well as to advocate for more initiatives similar to Capacity around the world to facilitate their inclusion and socio-economic integration.
- Despite the challenges of moving online thanks to COVID-19, the forced switch online has brought some unexpected gains in terms of accessibility to education for refugees and migrants.

### We developed our alumni support

The 2020 pandemic emphasised the importance of providing ongoing support to alumni once they leave the Capacity Entrepreneurship Programme. In response to the needs of our alumni in 2020, as they adapted to the new reality, we improved our alumni support by:

- Improving peer-to-peer support via simplified communication channels
- Hosting online sessions for alumni to voice needs and foster peer collaborations and support
- Designed alumni learning experiences to support their adaptations to

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5. Mapping refugee and migrant entrepreneurship Ecosystems in Europe. Report from THSN and Impact Hub, 2021. P.16

6. <https://www.ifj.ch/Firmengruendungen-Schweiz-2020>

- online life - including a LinkedIn workshop
- Organised joint events with other local organisations to promote networking and expert inputs on co-founding and partnerships
- Designing an e-Mentoring programme around employability and labour market access with Volunteer Vision

These improvements were made through volunteer effort from the team - small steps that we could deliver without allocated funding, whilst also negotiating our own adaptation to the 'new normal' of 2020. We anticipate that our plans for 2021 with the Academy, as well as our growing portfolio of corporate volunteering activities, will continue to develop our alumni support services.

### **We successfully crowdfunded for 2021**

Capacity's usual fundraising activities were seriously affected by the pandemic. We therefore launched our first private donor initiative. A successful and fun collaboration between the Team and the Board, we raised almost 50,000CHF to fund the participation of 8 refugees in our 2021 Entrepreneurship Programme. The opportunity to trial a 'core start-up' tool like crowdfunding not only helped the Team plan confidently for the start of 2021, but it also enabled us to understand first-hand more about what it takes to plan, deliver and close such a campaign. Our learnings will become the basis of a new fundraising module for our alumni and future participants, as crowdfunding is a well-positioned option in the early lifecycle to kickstart their market entry.

We'd like to thank everyone from within and outside Switzerland who contributed to the campaign, both with financial contributions and by growing our base of followers.



Masturah Galek

### **We adapted to the global pandemic**

As everyone else across the globe, Capacity's Team and Board had to do some serious adaptation to ensure that we could still deliver our promised activities in the socially distanced, online world of 2020. The team, like many others, also faced the issue of juggling primary care activities for children/other family members whilst working from home.

The situation has actually been helpful for us in terms of programme management, because it encouraged us to explore virtual classroom options, which allowed us to reach new segments beyond the Zurich market, and drove a higher completion rate for homework and assignments thanks to easy, automated reminders. Working as we do with a diversity of people with many pressures and needs, the blended learning approach has been enabling for those who are restricted in their availability due to work, family obligations or who would otherwise miss classes due to illness, or who simply cannot afford regular transport tickets to attend workshops in person.

Specific new programmatic actions driven by the pandemic included donations of laptops and internet servers to ensure participants could join the online programme elements. We also offered targeted coaching by the team to individual participants and alumni who were struggling.

Beyond the restrictions, the acquisition of digital skills shifted quickly to be of paramount importance in every context. Therefore, equipping participants with these skills prepares them to access the digital world, an essential step to leave no one behind.

However, it must be noted that a core part of Capacity's success comes from building bridges between different communities - and that is most effectively done in person, and over time. A consistent comment from participants and mentors was how much they missed the in-person interactions and side-learnings that come from spending a day together in a learning environment.

From a management perspective too, it is harder to judge when someone is struggling with something when you cannot observe them in person, or draw them aside for a quick word during a break.

In addition, the pandemic response in Switzerland affected many of our participants mentally and economically (as they did many people in Switzerland).<sup>7</sup> However, because newcomers often do not have as much social support (e.g. family) nearby, aspects such as school closures or loss of employment due to working in hospitality were especially tough. Mental health issues were brought up several times by participants, including as a reason for one participant to leave the programme. Programme design for 2021 therefore has considered very strongly how to enable flexible engagement, provide as much support as possible for both professional but also personal growth, and to recreate virtually the usual lively and supportive approach to our work.

**"It's very inspiring to be constantly surrounded by people who work hard to make their dreams come true."**

**Boost 2020 Mentor**

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7. Martínez et al, 2021. Corona und Ungleichheit in der Schweiz: Eine erste Analyse der Verteilungswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie. KOF Studien, Nr. 161, Februar 2021.







Ana Maria Angarita with Ms Karin Keller-Sutter, Federal Council  
OECD High-level Policy Forum on Migration and Integration, Paris

## Events attended by Capacity

### Thought Leadership

- OECD High-level Policy Forum on Migration and Integration and a formal ministerial dinner with Ms Karin Keller-Sutter, Federal Councillor and Chair of the 2020 OECD meeting in Paris, France. Capacity participated along with the Swiss delegation of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). Ana Maria Angarita, January 2020.
  - Swissnex San Francisco. Online talk 'Beyond Silicon Valley: why inclusion is important right now'. Ana Maria Angarita and Valentina Velandia, June 2020
  - Academy of Management panelist on TIM Plenary panel on Immigration and Innovation. Emily Elsner, August 2020.
- EURAXESS National Focus Group on diversity in Academia. Emily Elsner and Adrienn Gyory, October 2020.
- Forum #INFOCUS (expert discussion platform for UN, public sector and business sector on sustainable development and expanding inclusion). Interview as part of the 2020 online conference, Valentina Velandia, November 2020.



Valentina Velandia

## Events attended by Capacity

### Community action

- Active participation in the Round Table of NGOs in the Canton of Zurich on the topic of "Education and professional integration for refugees and Sans-Papiers". Co-organisation of the campaign 'Bildung für Alle -jetzt'. Isabel Brücher, 2020
- Alumni mixer event between Capacity & SINGA, July 2020
- Intrinsic workshop on radical inclusion for future educators - Valentina Velandia, Nov 2020

### Programme and people investment

- Lead and Influence with Impact (Geneva Centre for Security Policy). Adrienn Gyory and Ana Maria Angarita, Sep - Oct 2020.
- Lean Data Approaches to Measuring Social Impact (PlusAcumen online course) - Emily Elsner, October 2020



## About Capacity

Capacity is a non-profit talent and startup incubator for refugees and migrants based in Zürich. Capacity's programmes are designed to facilitate their socio-economic integration and inclusion in Swiss society. Within Capacity's entrepreneurship programme, founded in 2015 and the first of its kind in Zurich, refugees & migrants choose how they want to use their experience and talents to drive their own livelihoods. The design of the programme accelerates their integration.

- 113** Graduated entrepreneurs by April 2021
- 30%** refugees
- 65%** women
- 57+** nationalities
- 250+** local mentors, trainers and coaches
- 1000+** Growing community of members
- 6+** corporate partners
- 220+** corporate volunteers



Andualem Bekele / Ethiopian Style Burger

## Our Impact

Capacity's purpose is building people.

We aim to enable people to find a sustainable way of life where they can unfold their potential.

Our impact -unlike other start-up incubators- is evaluated with a holistic approach with the individual at the center.

### For Refugees and Migrants

Who can leverage qualifications, knowledge, skills, and network to secure economic independence and achieve socio-economic inclusion

### For Corporate Volunteers

Who can facilitate socio-economic participation for refugees and migrants by personally investing in more inclusive, robust local economies

### For Society

Where collaboration between local and migrant populations results in challenged stereotypes, engendered empathy, and long-term job creation



## Financial Sustainability

Financial and organisational sustainability continues to be in the forefront for Capacity. Over the last 6 years, Capacity has leveraged sponsorship and partnerships with several major firms, through corporate volunteering, with some firms supporting us over several years and others joining more recently. However, despite the strong relationships with partners and sponsors, and a strong ability to leverage in-kind donations for the programmes, Capacity is still operating with a deficit of around  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the funds needed to cover staff costs and programme resources.

However, the organisational challenge of delivering activities that can generate value for society, namely running programmes for vulnerable groups, whilst finding funds to cover the costs which cannot be covered by those groups, remains an issue. Overhead costs, such as fundraising, research and development, and networking, are under-recognised and not covered by many funders, leading to a 'non-profit deficit cycle'.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, more and more stakeholders such as foundations are starting to acknowledge that in order to continuously create value for society, nonprofits need to be supported in non-programmatic, organisational management/sustainability activities such as funding acquisition.

Capacity continues to focus on this resourcing gap in our engagements with funders, whilst also exploring new sources of funding. In 2020, we were able to generate funds from the community via crowdfunding, and are also developing consultancy services around the themes of inclusion, diversity and talent development.

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8. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_nonprofit\\_starvation\\_cycle](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_nonprofit_starvation_cycle)



## Case Studies

### Claudia Okoth

Claudia was one of our entrepreneurs of the 2020 Boost Programme. She is a multi-faceted talented woman. A professional singer and a designer, Claudia runs a creative African art and fashion business with an urban modern taste called Masika Art & Design. She crafts authentic handmade pieces of art such as clothes, bags, paintings and sculptures out of used and new materials – creating colourful unique designs. She made the most of the programme by developing a comprehensive strategy and business plan, and ran a pop-up store in Brugg for a couple of months.

Claudia is a force and her contagious optimism and joy brought the group of entrepreneurs closer together. She definitely brings the Kenyan sunshine to Switzerland, as she says!

Contact: <https://masikaart.com/>



Claudia Okoth / Masika Art & Design



## Irmak Bischof

Irmak is a determined and passionate entrepreneur. She is an educated gastronome and chef trained in French cuisine with experience working in high-end restaurants and hotels & resorts. Her project, Whet That Appetite is an easy-to-use and intuitive platform for community building through food, culture, and curiosity. During the programme, she took great steps to develop her business and introduce it to Switzerland. Not only did she further structure her value proposition, but she also developed her website and teamed up with a group of talented volunteers in different countries to further develop her project.

Contact: [contact@whetthatappetite.com](mailto:contact@whetthatappetite.com)

**Claudia and Irmak** had an immediate connection when they met on the programme, and during the pandemic they decided to join forces to develop an additional project called "Mama's Food", an African takeaway service that also supports marginalised girls and women in Kenya through an NGO called Hofogi. They combined their powers, Claudia's love for "Mama's Food" and her commitment to giving back in her native Kenya, and Irmak's knowledge of the food and drink business and their growing friendship. Their resourcefulness, energy and commitment have been truly inspiring and remarkable.

Contact: <https://afrochoscht.ch/>

## Gilary Sonia Adriancen

Gilary came to Capacity with only a dream. She participated in the Launch and Boost programmes, and within almost a year she started operating her business. Iyari offers different exotic types of organic and fair trade superfoods from Latin America (e.g. Camu-Camu, the fruit with the highest vitamin C content in the world). She also partners with local communities and small cooperatives in the region that grow and dry the superfoods.

Her knowledge, dedication, commitment and positive attitude have taken Gilary a long way, and we look forward to seeing how her business grows and evolves. She has developed her branding and is currently building a collaboration with a business partner.

Email: [gs.adriancen@gmail.com](mailto:gs.adriancen@gmail.com) /  
[kontakt@iyari.ch](mailto:kontakt@iyari.ch)

Website: [www.iyari.ch](http://www.iyari.ch) (under construction)



Gilary Sonia Adriancen / iyari



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to all our partners, collaborators and friends for your full support over the last year and for being part of another remarkable year. Thank you to all the generous donors - we would not have been able to run the programme without your support. Also, thank you to our loyal crowd of volunteers, who assisted us with their valuable expertise, translations, advice, mentoring, coaching, training, networking and much more. You strengthen our organisation and support us to deliver high quality programmes and widen our impact in the communities we serve. Finally, thank you, our community, for your dedication, power, and vital engagement, as we together are building a more inclusive society.



Domino Francis & Noon Ibrahim / Corridors of peace



**VALENTINA S. VELANDIA**  
 Gender Policy, Migration and Social  
 Entrepreneurship  
 Capacity: Co-founder & Partnership  
 Curator



**ANA MARIA ANGARITA**  
 International Relations & Migration  
 Capacity: Co-Founder &  
 Programme/Partnership Manager



**ISABEL BRÜCHER**  
 Architect & Historian  
 Capacity: Co-founder,  
 Strategy & Fundraising



**JULIETA NOVOA**  
 Supply Chain Practitioner  
 & Business Enabler  
 Capacity: Project Manager



**BLENDASCHMUTZ**  
 Graphic Design  
 Capacity:  
 Event Management



**CHRISTINA MITTMASER**  
 PhD student at Université de Neuchâtel  
 Capacity: Researcher



**ADRIENN GYÖRY, PhD.**  
 Social Policy Expert



**EMILY ELSNER PhD.**  
 Human Geography | Impact  
 assessment  
 Capacity: Co-Founder & Impact  
 Measurement



**LAURA CLEMENTE**  
 Project Management with  
 Clinical Research Background  
 Capacity: Design Thinking &  
 Communication Management



**EVGENIYA VODOLAZOVA**  
 Psychologist  
 Capacity: Talent Development Expert



**Team**



You can also  
become an actor  
of change



Support  
Capacity



UBS



ebay





"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style"

Capacity Entrepreneur, 2019

# Contact

# us

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