

**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL



Annual Report 2020

# Humanitarian Strategic Surge Capacity

DRC Standby Roster



# The Danish Refugee Council Standby Roster

## **Annual Report 2020**

Danish Refugee Council is an international humanitarian displacement organization, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons in 40 countries through provision of protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The Danish Refugee Council Standby Roster is an instrument to support UN agencies with specialized professionals to fill short-term staffing gaps and thereby improve the emergency response to humanitarian displacement crises that enables faster and more effective support to people in need.



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# 1

## Foreword



**Susanne Brokmose**  
Head of the DRC Standby Roster

The year of 2020 has been named an “annus horribilis” and it has in many ways been a horrible year. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic millions of already vulnerable people have been put at even greater risks as movements have been restricted and protection systems weakened, leaving many vulnerable unable to access assistance.

Since its establishment nearly 30 years ago, the DRC Standby Roster has deployed thousands of high quality and skilled experts to the UN. These people have supported and strengthened the UN’s capacity to deliver timely, effective, and accountable humanitarian response to people of concern. The year of 2020 was no exception. 234 DRC Standby Roster members left their homes and families to contribute to the work of the UN and DRC, and thereby alleviating suffering for those persons in need.

To all of our members, our deployees, our trainers, and our volunteers, as well as the DRC Standby Roster staff – you have each played an important role in delivering humanitarian assistance across the world in what might have been the most difficult year in the lifetime of the DRC Standby Roster. I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart.



## 2

# DRC Standby Roster: The Year in Review

In 2020, the DRC Standby Roster was moved to the Humanitarian Strategic Surge Capacity division within the DRC organisation. In addition, the former ‘Member Roster’ was renamed the ‘Humanitarian Response Roster’ and a new Registration Roster was established as a separate roster. Thus, the DRC Standby Roster team managed four deployment schemes for UN operations in 2020: The Humanitarian Response Roster, the Resettlement Roster, the Registration Roster and the EU Aid Volunteers Roster.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone across countries and continents. At the DRC Standby Roster we have, as with the entire organization, risen to the challenge and worked hard on reprogramming our procedures and activities to continue to deliver humanitarian assistance. The below is a brief summary of some of the most important events of the year.

In January and February, the DRC Standby Roster’s work on annual financial and narrative reporting for donors was interrupted by the news of COVID-19. At the end of February, a monitoring mission took place in Colombia and at that time we did not know this mission was going to be the only one in 2020. In mid-March the situation worsened, and most DRC offices closed down. The DRC Standby Roster team worked hard in the following months from their respective homes. We endeavored to support all our experts on mission, in particular with regards to information-sharing and developing policies and guidance, as we came to terms with the new reality and what that meant for the program, our deployees in the field and our donors. Underlining the “right to withdraw” was a key element and later DRC as a whole assessed and categorized all DRC staff according to degree of functional importance, hence we implemented “no right to remain” for all our EU Aid Volunteers. It was an extremely difficult situation as the conditions varied across countries and returning home was not always the safest solution.

2020 proved that the DRC Standby Roster is indeed an emergency roster. Very swiftly procedures for deployment were adapted to ensure the overall well-being of the deployees. This included collecting information from the UN on COVID-19 measures, health facilities and intensifying all communication with our deployees in the field. The coordination also increased both internally at DRC, as the DRC Standby Roster worked closely with the Human Resources department on compliance matters and externally with the UN on the possibility of continuing to deploy experts.

The collaboration of the whole Standby Partnership Network, a coalition of organizations involved in humanitarian surge capacity response, was also strengthened to ensure the sharing of best practices, while operating in this new context. From March to May all new deployments were put on hold. However, in late spring new procedures allowed us to resume deployments. With a work from home modality option, experts were able to share their skills with the field duty stations until they could travel safely.

The Humanitarian Response Roster's induction trainings planned for April and May were cancelled. The training material was then revised and reworked to create a four-day online induction training, which was piloted and repeated in September and November very successfully.

In June, the DRC Standby Roster team managed to develop and submit three consortium proposals for the 2020 call on EU Aid Volunteer (EUAV) initiative to recruit, train and deploy 58 volunteers to DRC and UNHCR operations. The proposals were to follow the two ongoing and very successful EU Aid Volunteer projects from the 2018 call. However, in late December the EU very unexpectedly cancelled the entire call. This has meant that the EU Aid Volunteer Roster and programme will cease by the end of April 2021, which has been a huge disappointment for us.

August added to the already difficult situation: The Lebanon explosion, which caused tremendous damage and lives lost, unfortunately injured one of DRC's deployees. Just a few days later another tragic event occurred as a DRC deployee passed away while on mission. It was a very difficult time for all.

2020 did however also result in positive outcomes. We developed and finalized our Monitoring Framework and initiated the development of a Debriefing Toolkit, to better support deployees as they process their experiences post-mission. The DRC Standby Roster team was trained on how to deliver better psychological support to deployees, and we piloted a group debriefing workshop. We made efforts to better include age, gender and diversity, as well as inclusion into our procedures and work. We also drafted a strategy for how we can use social media to further our reach.

Despite the many obstacles and challenges in 2020, we did manage to reach the expected number of deployments. A total of 234 deployments were facilitated and administrated during 2020, equaling 1,304 months. Most deployments went to the UN, however DRC country operations received 46 experts equaling almost 20% of all deployments in 2020. The experts were deployed to 57 different countries with Rwanda receiving the highest number of deployment months followed by Uganda and Tunisia.

The resettlement profile is by far the most deployed in 2020. This is reflective of our Deployment Partnership Agreement with UNHCR, in which we specifically deploy resettlement experts through our Resettlement Roster. Additional top profiles deployed were logisticians, information managers, protection specialists and cluster coordinators.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that humanitarian needs do not cease even during a global pandemic. Due to the global scale-up we have only seen a small decrease in the number of requests received from the UN partners. However, requests have been received from countries that normally do not request surge capacity assistance.

When it comes to recruitment, we welcomed a total of 152 new members onto the DRC Standby Roster. The majority (89 persons) became part of the Resettlement Roster, 24 became new members of the Registration Roster, 27 joined the Humanitarian Response Roster and lastly the EU Aid Volunteer Roster added 12 new volunteers to their pool.



# 3

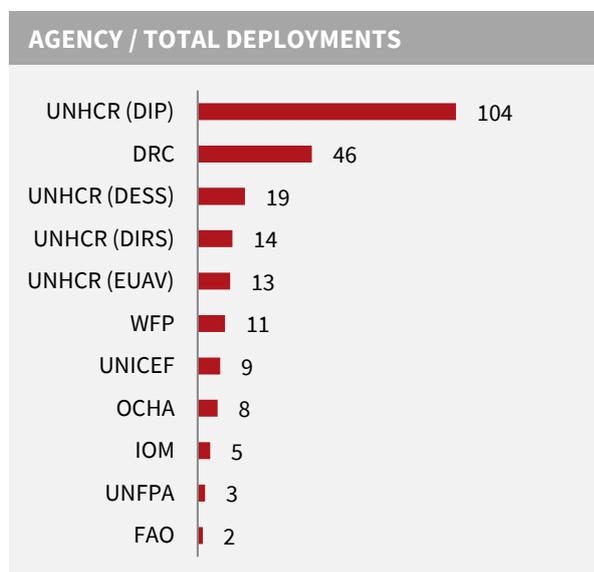
## Deployments in 2020

The deployments in 2020 were indeed affected by the global pandemic: New deployments were put on hold from March to mid-May. Ongoing deployments were extended as people could not leave their duty stations. Roles and responsibilities as outlined in the deployees' Terms of Reference were changed to respond to the new environment, as was the case for new deployments. Despite these challenges, a record high number of deployment months were nevertheless delivered in 2020.

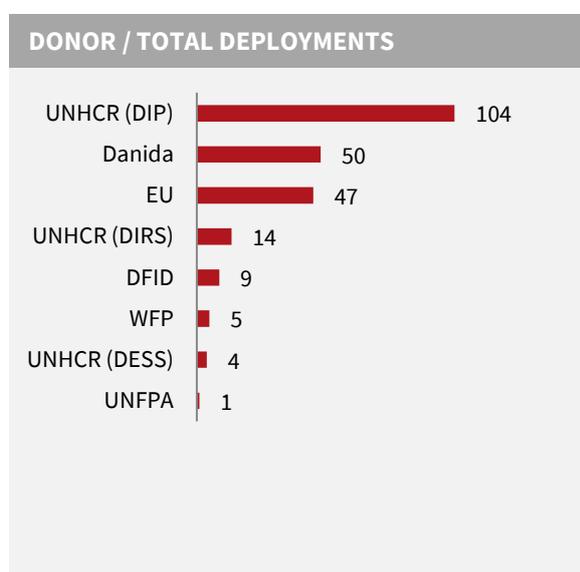
### All DRC Standby Rosters:



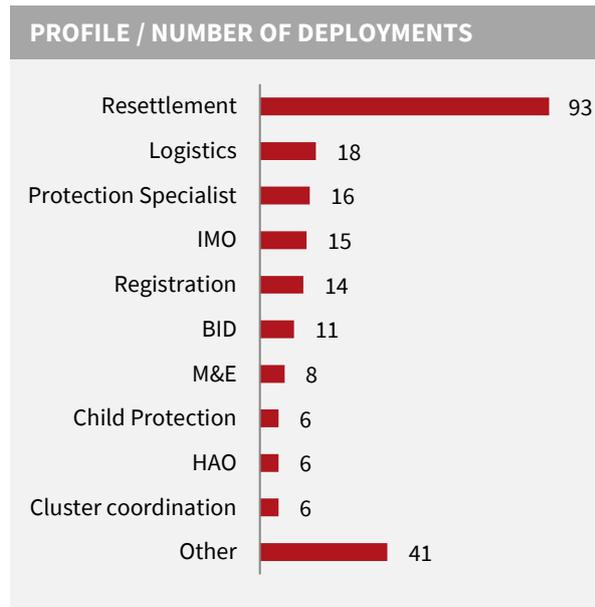
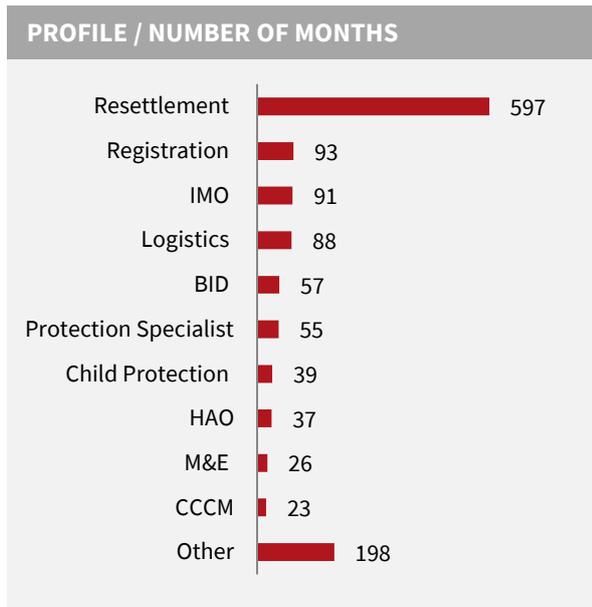
### By Agency:



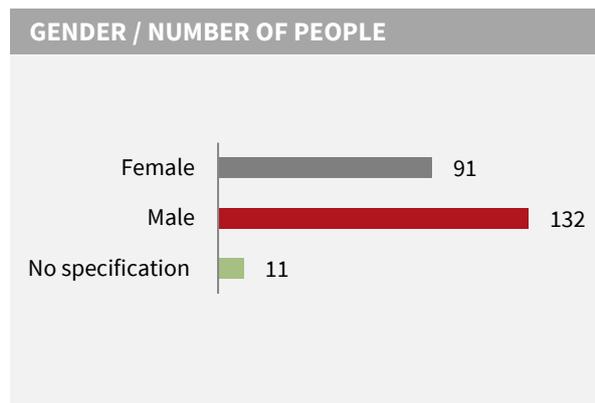
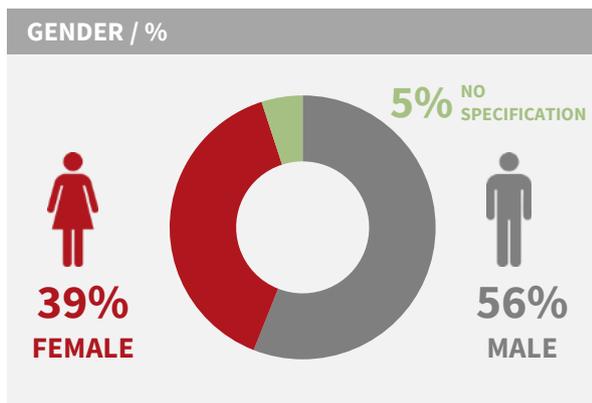
### By Donor:



## By Profile:



## By Gender:

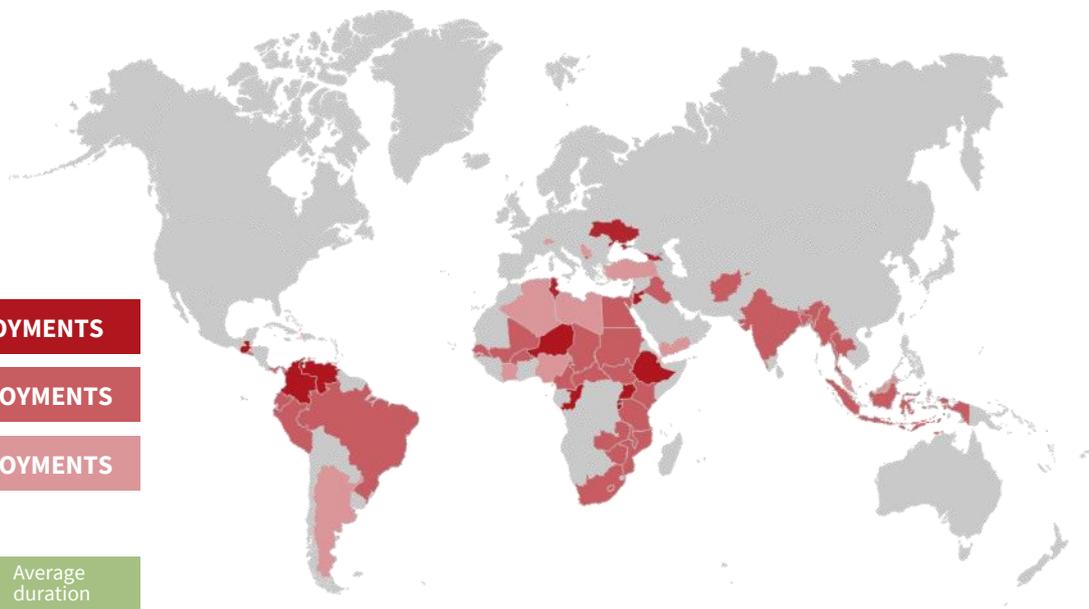


## BY COUNTRY

**57**  
COUNTRIES

- +5 DEPLOYMENTS
- 3-5 DEPLOYMENTS
- 1-2 DEPLOYMENTS

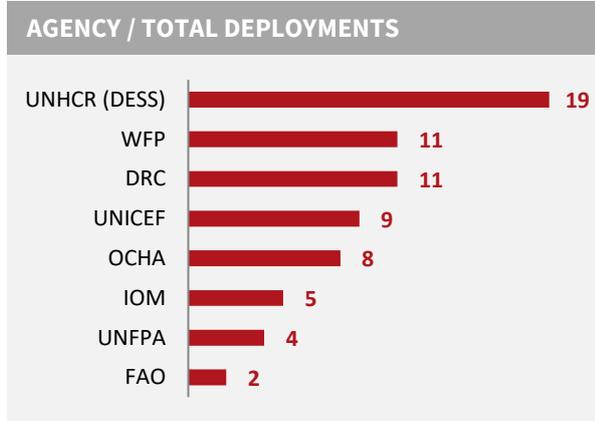
**6,3 months** Average duration



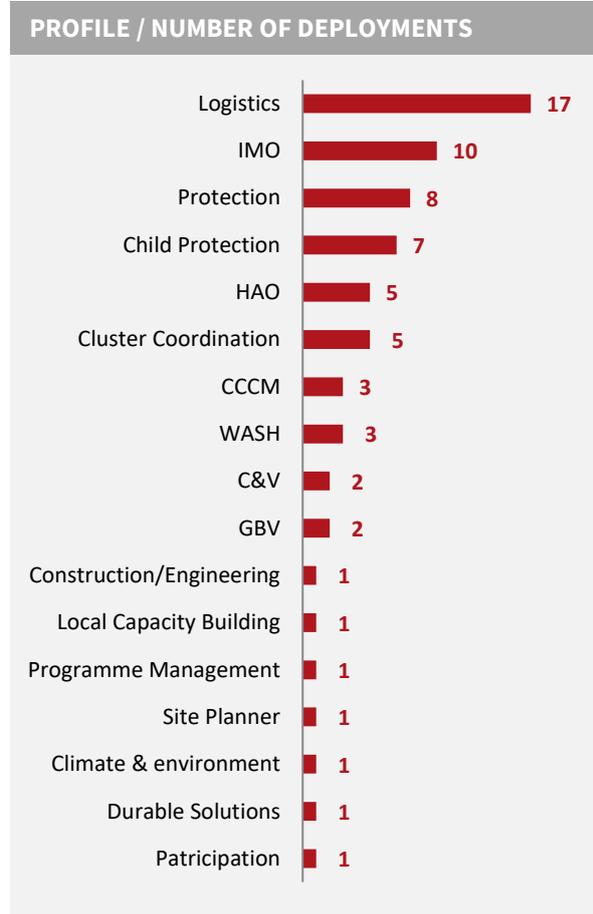
# Humanitarian Response Roster:



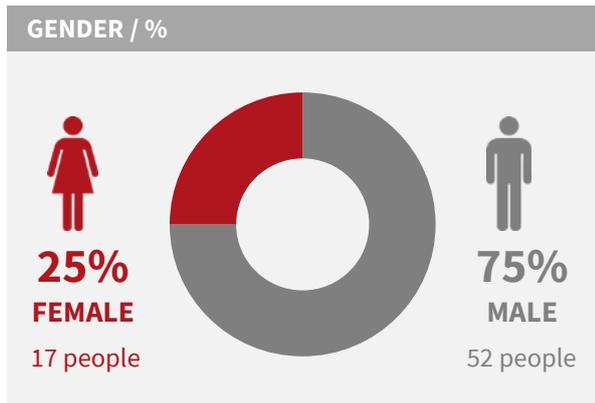
## By Agency:



## By profile:



## By Gender:

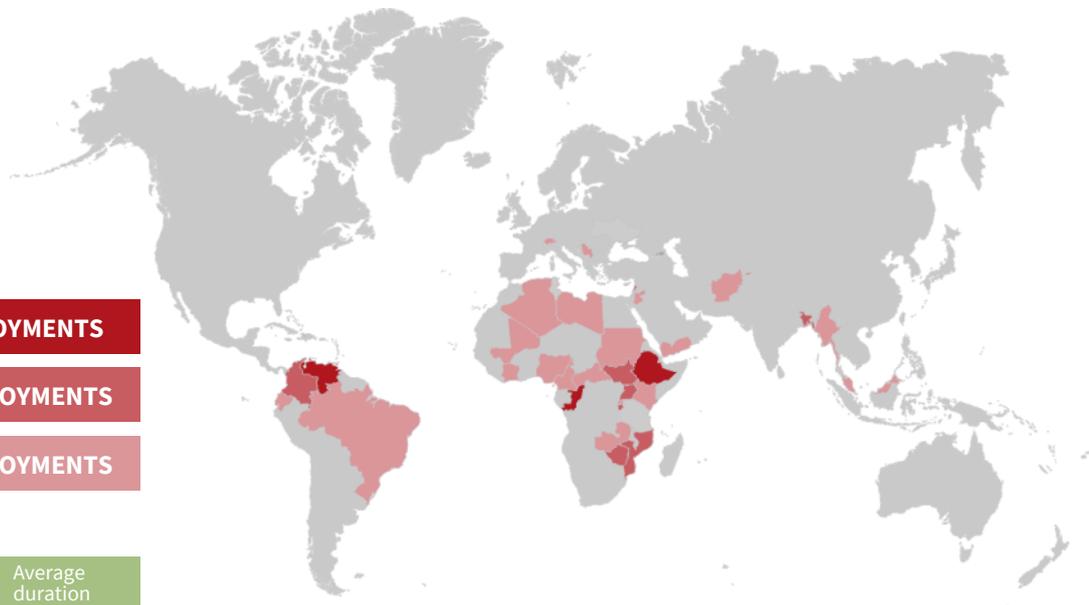


## BY COUNTRY

**27 COUNTRIES**



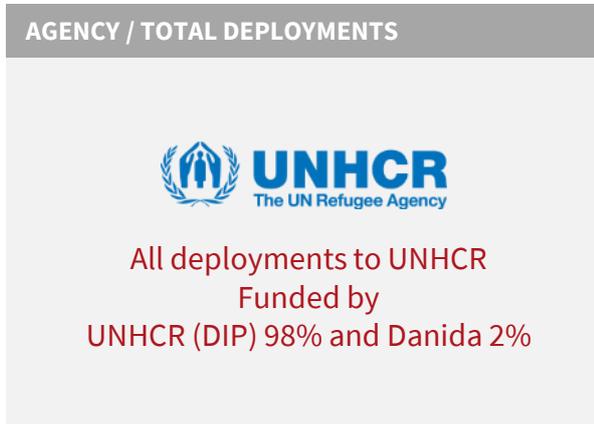
**5,7 months** Average duration



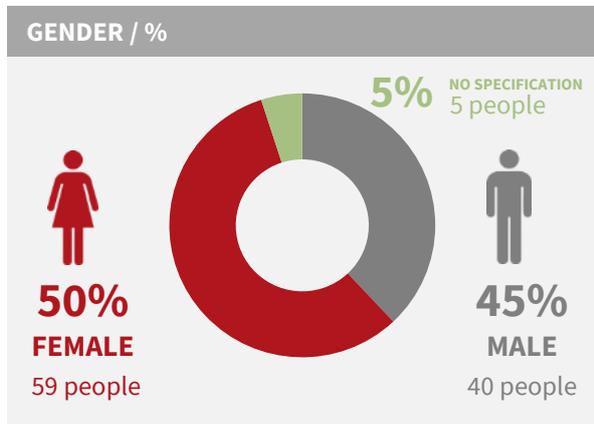
## Resettlement Roster:



### By Agency:



### By Gender:



## BY COUNTRY

**28**  
COUNTRIES



**+5 DEPLOYMENTS**

**3-5 DEPLOYMENTS**

**1-2 DEPLOYMENTS**

**7,47 months** Average duration

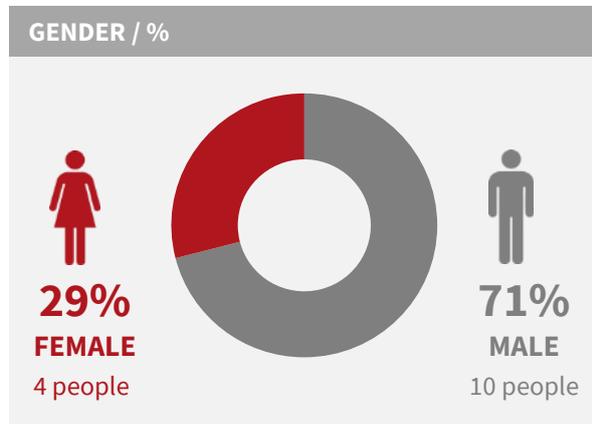
## Registration Roster:



### By Agency:



### By Gender:



### BY COUNTRY

**11**  
COUNTRIES

**+5 DEPLOYMENTS**

**3-5 DEPLOYMENTS**

**1-2 DEPLOYMENTS**

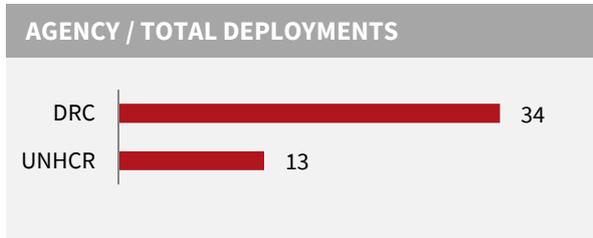
**7, 7 months** Average duration



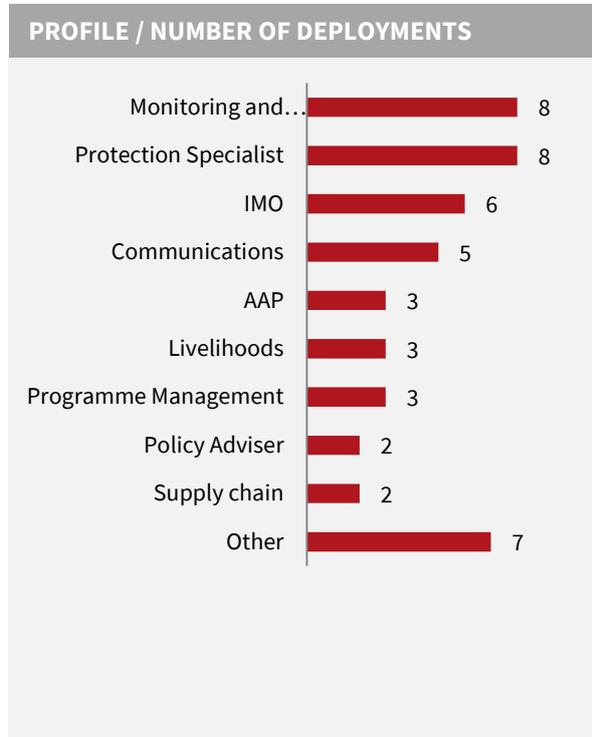
## EU Aid Volunteer Roster:



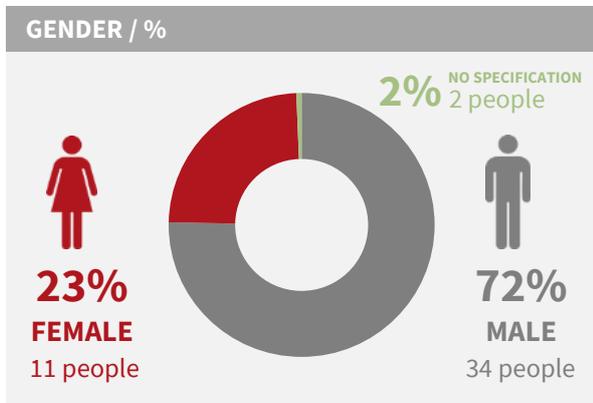
### By Agency:



### By profile:



### By Gender:



## BY COUNTRY

**13 COUNTRIES**



**3,85 months** Average duration



# 4

## Achievements in 2020

Across all our rosters, deployees have throughout 2020 delivered impressive results and made a significant difference and impact in the countries of deployment. A small selection of their long list of achievements is presented below.

### **Resettlement and Registration Rosters:**

The overall objective of the Resettlement Roster is to strengthen UNHCR's resettlement processing capacity and thereby provide protection for the most vulnerable refugees in the world. During 2020 the DRC deployees working in UNHCR operations assisted 19,301 individuals by determining either refugee status, their eligibility for being resettled, or in case of a vulnerable minor, by determining the best solution in the interest of the child (BID). Overall, 52% of the assessed persons of concern were from MENA with Syrians as the biggest group, while 35% were from Africa with the majority coming from DR Congo, Eritrea, and Sudan. For BID assessments, most children originated from DR Congo with Syria, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Guatemala as the four following countries of origin. Most of the resettlement cases prepared and cleared for submission during 2020 have been for Canada (985), secondly to Sweden (886), thirdly Norway (523) and Australia (449). All BID assessments were submitted to Sweden and Norway.

The newest roster in the DRC Standby Roster portfolio is the DRC Registration Roster. This was established to strengthen UNHCR's capacity to register and identify refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern. The highly skilled and experienced DRC experts within identity management and registration were involved in numerous essential tasks: registration of new arrivals, new-borns, and unregistered individuals; verification exercises, data cleaning, training of staff and government users in registration methodologies; development of registration strategies; and SOPs and data quality reports. All of these activities paved the way for thousands of people to access basic assistance and protection.

### **Humanitarian Response Roster:**

In Goma, in DR Congo, a DRC expert deployed to UNICEF worked successfully with information management. During her six-month mission she improved data collection and analysis in a way that made the work of the Ebola response better targeted, as a result of clearer information. By focusing the analysis of epidemiological data on women and children, the DRC deployee enabled UNICEF to adjust its interventions to directly target the most vulnerable beneficiaries, leading to a greater efficiency in assistance.

Also in the DR Congo, a DRC Shelter/WASH Specialist worked to design, manage and supervise the implementation of the WASH and shelter interventions by IOM in Bunia, Goma and Tanganyaka. He introduced new cost-effective designs in respect of the local culture, he developed monitoring tools for all construction activities and lastly, he contributed to the shelter/WASH monitoring sheet in close collaboration with IOM's global Displacement Tracking Matrix for all IDP sites in Eastern DR Congo.

In Bangladesh, another DRC deployee worked as a GBV Programming Specialist for UNFPA, conducting capacity development training for partners within women-friendly spaces, psycho-social care service and GBV case management. On the job trainings were provided to 75 caseworkers, managers and midwives from three flood-affected districts, thereby keeping case management records safe and confidential. In addition, she conducted a case management 'Training of Trainers' for 45 previously trained case workers and managers and introduced UNFPA Minimum Standards for preventing and responding to GBV in Emergencies and IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV in Humanitarian Actions for a larger group of volunteers. Lastly, the DRC deployee led the distribution of 5,172 dignity kits for women and transgender individuals.

On the other side of the globe, in Caracas, Venezuela, a logistics expert worked hard with UNFPA to ensure that supplies to support the programmes in Venezuela were successful. Initially working from Caracas but during the COVID-19 lockdown in the country, he had to work remotely from Europe. This was challenging due to the time difference but indeed also challenging as the transportation of goods around the world was severely affected by the pandemic. This expert managed to establish an excellent coordination with the local procurement team and other UN agencies to guarantee that supplies were entered on humanitarian flights as the traditional dispatch routes were closed.

### **Supporting DRC Country Operations:**

Part of our Danida funding is allocated for strategic human resource gaps in DRC country operations and at the global level. In 2020, the deployments to DRC operations totaled 46 deployments, across eight different countries. They all supported DRC's work, with a particular focus on protection, durable solutions, resilience, and information management. Some deployments were of particular interest. The first was the deployment of a Regional Information Management Specialist working exclusively on support to handling COVID-19 in the Asia region. In East Africa two newly recruited experts from our former EU Aid Volunteer Roster deployed to work with climate change in Kenya, and participation and accountability in Uganda. Another important supported deployment to DRC operations was the Protection Information Management Officer based in Geneva, co-leading the Information and Analysis Working Group under the structure of the Global Protection Cluster. With this support DRC has been able to contribute to the work on protection analysis in particular, and also learning and capacity building with the aim of supporting the effective implementation of Protection Clusters' core functions.

### **The DRC Standby Roster Team:**

During the course of 2020, two important toolkits were developed. In 2019, the work on the DRC Standby Roster Monitoring Framework had already begun in response to a need for a framework of steps and tools for monitoring DRC deployments. The information it generates is part of DRCs accountability to donors and deployees and it can be used to support learning and continuous improvement, to evaluate achievement of deployment objectives, inform improvements to recruitment, pre-deployment preparation and management of deployees, as well as the relationship with the receiving partner. In February, the framework was finalised and tested during a mission to Colombia while additional planned testing was cancelled due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The second toolkit developed in 2020 was the DRC Standby Roster's Debriefing and Resilience Toolkit. This resource has been developed as part of DRC's commitment to deployee well-being. It is designed to support deployees when their deployment ends, whether they are returning home or moving on to another deployment. Coming home can often be more challenging than going away. Which is why, at the DRC Standby Roster, we want to make sure our deployees have tools and resources at their disposal. This will help them to reflect once at home and make good decisions about their well-being and their future. The toolkit will be tested by a selection of DRC deployees who have recently returned home from deployment in early 2021 and rolled out in May 2021.

## Interesting facts:

**1,060** Active members

At the end of 2020, the total number of active members of the four rosters managed by the DRC Standby Roster was 1060 persons from 105 different countries. Italian nationals were still the largest group with 99 members equaling 9% of the total. The second highest nationality was Kenyans, and the third was Danes. The gender balance among members is almost equal: 524 are females, 530 males and six unidentified. Four members have on missions for a total of more than 70 months each, while the member with most deployment months has been in the field for a total of nearly seven years.

**554** New requests

The Humanitarian Response Roster received 456 new requests during 2020, however due to the limitations of the Danida funding, nominations were done for only 101 of those requests. The picture looks a bit different when it comes to the Resettlement Roster: 77 new requests were received of which 56 were filled equaling a fill rate of 78%, as 16 requests were cancelled or closed.

**>100** Flight tickets changed

Due to travel restrictions and the halt on flights, the DRC Standby Roster team cancelled or rebooked more than 100 flight tickets during 2020.

**85%** of the registration experts from Africa

It is important to the DRC Standby Roster that we have a culturally diverse pool of experts, though some continents and nations are represented more than others. At present, 85% of the experts deployed through the Registration Roster originate from Africa, while this goes for 40% of the deployees on the Humanitarian Response Roster. In fact, 10% of all deployees on the Humanitarian Response Roster in 2020 were Kenyan nationals. Kenyans are also highly represented among the resettlement deployees, with 23% in total. The Resettlement Roster is as well characterized by having the highest percentage of deployees originating from countries outside of the African and European continents.





# 5

## Stories from the Field

In this Annual Report we would also like to give the word to three of those who have contributed to making the DRC Standby Roster successful.



### **Djerandouba Succès**

*Deployed as Registration and Identity Management Officer to UNHCR Central African Republic*

My name is Djerandouba Succès, and I recently joined UNHCR Branch Office, Bangui, as a Danish Refugee Council (DRC) deployee in the capacity of Registration and Identity Management Officer.

As the staff in charge of registration, upon arrival in my duty station, I immediately joined a team of protection and registration colleagues and embarked on my first major activity, which was a biometric registration exercise for the Congolese refugees in Toko-Kota in Kouango region, a remote community located approximately 480 km away from the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR). The key outcome of the activity was to ensure provision of better protection and assistance to the refugees who fled to CAR since May 2020.

My roles included, among others, planning, coordination with internal UNHCR colleagues and external partners (including local authorities in the refugee host community, UN Security, local partners, refugee population) and monitoring implementation of the activity. Also, I prepared daily statistic activity reports and sent to UNHCR CAR management and all staff.

Before commencement of the activity, a tented registration center was set-up, and the center had the following arrangements in place: reception, waiting areas, latrines, and safe drinking water thus respecting dignity of the refugees. Other rooms of the center were used for processing the refugees and their families for the biometric registration exercise. Moreover, COVID-19 prevention measures were practiced throughout the activity.

The activity was successfully carried out reaching 95% of the targeted refugee population. However, I must recognize the resilience of the refugees and their host community for the efforts in meeting day-to-day challenges particularly during this period of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we prepared to leave Toko-Kota, the refugee community leader on behalf of the refugees approached the team and said, “Thank you! Now we feel much safer because we and our families have valid registration record, and we are now able to move freely”.

The activity was a great start for me; because I was new in the operation and able to contribute successfully to an activity that is critical to ensuring better protection to refugees; and I did this in collaboration with excellent colleagues and partners.



## Collins Ondachi

*Deployed as a Resettlement Expert to UNHCR in Nyamata, Rwanda*

I arrived in Nyamata, Rwanda, on 26 September 2019 as a Resettlement Expert deployed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to UNHCR to work in the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) that was just being set up. At the time, the Government of Rwanda had signed an agreement with the African Union (AU) and UNHCR in Addis Ababa to provide urgent and lifesaving assistance to African refugees and asylum seekers stuck in Libya, and those held in various detention centers across Libya.

Libya has been a major transit route for refugees from Africa trying to reach Europe in a desperate attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat. When I touched down that chilly evening at Kigali International Airport in late September, nothing could have really prepared me for the roller-coaster of emotions I would endure in the weeks and months that awaited me.

A few days following my arrival, the first batch of evacuees from Libya arrived in Rwanda. Among them was a mother with her son who were to become among my very first interviewees at the ETM. Her short, tired strides into the interview room were akin to that of a long-distance traveler in need of some rest. She spoke in very low tones as she introduced herself and went on to listen attentively as I explained what was expected of her and myself during the interview. Then, with her eyes heavy with tears, she looked up at me and thanked me for offering to listen to her story.

What followed were horrendous narratives of torture, mutilation, humiliation and grief. I had to sit there and be strong for her. I reassured her everything was going to be fine. And though I thought that my reassurances were not enough to take away her suffering, at least at that moment it was the only thing that I could give her. It was really fulfilling to have given her a listening ear and gained her trust in such a way that she felt comfortable to talk about her experiences. As we concluded our interview, she was thankful and mentioned that she felt like her load was lighter having talked about her experiences. I soon after referred her case for psychosocial support and other necessary services within the ETM as I continued processing her case for resettlement consideration.

Two months later, the woman I first interviewed was among the first group of refugees to be resettled to a third country. I vividly recall her excitement when she approached me to inform me of the news that she will be travelling on resettlement to a third country in a few days' time to start a new life. I informed her it wasn't anything that I did, but that some resettlement countries had decided to willingly open their doors to her and other vulnerable people in similar situations. Although I never saw her depart, I could somehow picture the grim expression on her face had been replaced with a smile of hope. This is one of many similar stories where innocent young boys and girls went through horrible situations and started to see a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel after they reached the ETM center in Rwanda.

In the end, my contribution to the refugees' lives at the ETM is an assessment of needs and recommendation for resettlement. It is not only satisfying to see my work in terms of numbers, but it is also so heartwarming to see individuals who had lost all hope in life at one-point continue to dream of new possibilities for life.

I am convinced that in a small way, I make a difference in the lives of refugees by being part of a process that sees them get a second shot at life. That after all the harsh experiences they went through in their home countries and on their dangerous journeys to a safe asylum country, resettlement countries can still give them a place to call home.





## Hugh Swift

*Deployed as Logistics Capacity Assessment Specialist to WFP Liberia*

I arrived in Monrovia on the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, after being in West Africa for a few years, to write the Logistics Capacity Assessment on behalf of the Logistics Cluster. Since my last visit to Monrovia, all UN offices have been regrouped into one location, which made my task easy, and better again I found an apartment next door to the UN office.

I contacted my colleagues, and WFP Rome, and everything was going well with my initial tasks. After guidance from HQ and the Country Representative, I rewrote the 40 + questionnaires involved in the Logistics Capacity Assessment to be more country specific. We had just started the interviews, when on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April a State of Emergency was declared in Liberia and on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the UN commenced their Business Continuity Plan. Which really changed the UNs priorities both locally and globally.

Two of the four international staff decided to leave Liberia and return to their home countries, and we transferred the operation from the UN offices to the Freeport of Monrovia. Likewise, my TOR changed at this point.

Fortunately, over my two last missions I have been involved in the tracking of warehousing and transport of pharmaceuticals, otherwise my learning curve would have been a lot steeper. That being said, the level of politics involved in the Liberian COVID-19 response, which is probably not dissimilar to the COVID-19 responses elsewhere, is considerably adding to the level of complexity of our RITA work (a software often used by the Logistics Cluster for the management of NFI).

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 response in Liberia maybe a long affair is based on the Liberian Ministry of Health's ability to increase the level of testing. We must understand that, globally, governments are under tremendous pressure to reopen their economies. Unfortunately, in many countries there seems to be greater conflict and misunderstanding between the reopening of their economies and the containment of their public health issue(s). There is no shortage of humanitarian work coming up as the general condition of the world will take a long time to recover.





# 6

## Training and Capacity Building

Key to retaining a professional, relevant and talented pool of experts is providing continuous support in strengthening our members' skills and competencies. The DRC Standby Roster currently facilitates one type of training, namely induction trainings for the various rosters. However, technical UN trainings and DRC HEAT trainings are offered to members who nominate themselves.

2020 was as well a difficult year seen from a training perspective. Only 57 members participated in a DRC Standby Roster supported training activity. In January and February, the EUAV Roster conducted two face-to-face induction trainings for eight new EU Aid Volunteers, while the bigger induction training for the Humanitarian Response Roster planned in April and May were both cancelled. Instead, the team adapted the training material into an online induction training. In September and November, the Humanitarian Response Roster conducted two successful trainings for a total of 43 participants. The original training, which is aligned with the "Common Induction Training Package" developed under the Standby Partnership Network was reduced as some sessions were incompatible with the online modality. Instead of the final simulation session, individual meetings were held with each participant and the deployment focal points. All UN trainings were cancelled from March and for the remainder of the year, hence only one DRC Standby Roster member attended a UN training in 2020.

During the first half of 2020, the global pandemic limited travel and new deployments were put on hold. Considering the unique circumstances, the DRC Standby Roster decided to offer financial support for all types of relevant online trainings. The ambition was not only to ensure the continued capacity building of members but also it was a mean to support those between contracts. We targeted members with no new assignments in sight and those who felt isolated with a lot of time at their disposal. Four members received support for trainings within protection, child protection and gender mainstreaming.

The debriefing workshop concept that was piloted in 2019 was facilitated face-to-face twice in January and May 2020 for eight participants as well as four times online.



# 7

## Recruitment

In order to maintain a strong and relevant pool of experts, evaluations of all members need to be conducted on an annual basis to exclude those who are no longer relevant or active. Moreover, data collection and analysis are used to compare the number of UN requests received for specific technical profiles, with the number and profiles of active members in the database. This mapping exercise informs the DRC Standby Roster team on which profiles to recruit for, which are crucial for future humanitarian responses. Hence, recruitment for selected profiles needs to be conducted on a regular basis to supplement the existing pool of members.

Generally, recruitment was not prioritised to the usual degree in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the respective increase in workload and less favourable perspectives of deployments. Hence, 152 new members were welcomed to the Humanitarian Strategic Surge Capacity family. A large number of new members were welcomed in January 2020, off the back of a larger recruitment project undertaken in the last quarter of 2019. The main profiles were protection/child protection, GBV and cash experts. Other profiles were CCCM, information management, WASH and climate & environment. Another large number of new members joined the Resettlement Roster in the autumn due to an increase of deployments.

In the Registration Roster, **24 new members** were welcomed in 2020, of which **92%** are from the Global South and **29%** are females.

Contrary to the other rosters, the Resettlement Roster had a busy year in recruitment, as **89 new members** were welcomed. **58%** of the new members are from the Global South and **58%** are females.

With the **12 new volunteers** recruited for the EU Aid Volunteer Roster, the recruitment has been completed.

In the Humanitarian Response Roster, **27 new members** were welcomed in 2020, of which **33%** are from the Global South.



## 8

# Duty of Care

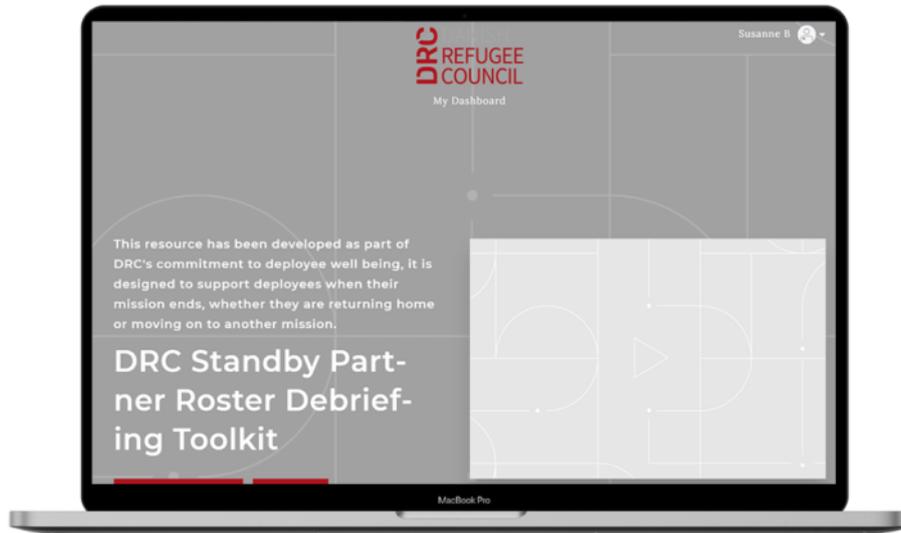
Duty of Care is about individual wellbeing, welfare, compliance and good practice. The DRC Standby Roster gives high priority to staff care and supporting the well-being of deployees. We recognize that we are only as good as the performance of our deployees, however it is not only a matter of efficiency and performance, but also a matter of ethics and ensuring that the people we engage with receive the best possible support and care. We will not consciously expose anyone to unacceptable levels of risk, and we exercise due diligence to make sure no one suffers avoidable mental or physical harm.

DRC and the DRC Standby Roster deployees operate in some of the most dangerous places in the world and numerous employees both work and live under very tough conditions. It is often not only security threats or a never-ending workload that pose major challenges, but also the feeling of isolation, a lack of privacy, bad or even non-existent supervision, poor accommodation, unhealthy food, illness or a difficult relationship with the home-based families. These can all be significant stress factors affecting the well-being of the DRC Standby Roster deployee. With the global COVID-19 pandemic, the threat to our deployees' well being has only been worsened, hence during 2020 we initiated additional actions and procedures to ensure optimal care.

We introduced additional pre-deployment procedures collecting information on national health facilities and measures at duty stations, as well as the UN support and mitigating measures. The briefing before departure was expanded to include relevant COVID-19 topics and the deployees were linked up with the regional and global safety advisors in DRC if deemed relevant. We worked closely with our DRC Human Resource department to ensure flexibility in the contractual terms, including the option of a temporary remote contract start, while at the same time ensuring compliance with national legislation and human resource regulation. We also extended contracts (and insurance) for our deployees if they could not return home after deployment, due to flight cancellations or closed airports.

The DRC Standby Roster team shared with the DRC deployees in the field various and regular communication and advice on how to increase own self-care. Many resources for online training and relevant reading were also offered. In 2020, DRC also entered a new partnership with the KonTerra Group, who is specialized in supporting employees in international humanitarian and development organizations. In a new "Employee Resilience Program" all DRC deployees and their families at home have access to free confidential consultations on a variety of topics related to maintaining their personal resilience and wellbeing. It is our hope that many DRC deployees will use this opportunity to speak confidentially with a trained, objective professional to manage any issue related to their workplace, personal or family.

Another aspect that is often overlooked is the process of returning home from a mission, both in terms of health and wellbeing, but also in terms of relationships and concerns for one's future work and career. To support this and make sure our deployees and members continue well in their lives, we developed a "Debriefing Toolkit" during 2020. With the assistance of an external consultant, we have developed an online resource to support deployees when their mission ends. It includes information about common issues returning deployees can face in their work and personal lives. It poses reflection questions designed to prompt thinking and it highlights tools and resources the deployees can use to process the experience and make positive decisions about their future. It is a way of taking stock and focusing on one's wellbeing. The toolkit is undergoing testing and will be released in May 2021.



Lastly, in 2020 the DRC Standby Roster team went through a full-day training with two psychologists from the organization "Psychologist Across Borders" who specialize in supervising and talking to people returning from humanitarian missions abroad. During the training, the DRC Standby Roster team enhanced their skills in conducting confidential personal debriefings, learning various strategies for communication through role plays and discussions on real situations. With all the above-mentioned activities, it is our hope we will be able to support our DRC deployees even better.





## 9

# Special Topic of the Year: COVID-19

Despite the many new initiatives and swift reprogramming of the DRC Standby Roster activities, there have been various challenges that were difficult to solve, as a result of COVID-19. The general halt to new deployments in the period from March to mid-May meant that some deployees had to work remotely from their home countries or countries of residence for shorter and longer period of times. For those on mission, many of them had their leave and R&R plans cancelled. Moreover, because of government-imposed measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, some deployees had to quarantine upon arrival at the duty station for up to 14 days, which postponed their onboarding with the receiving UN operation. Finally, the pandemic influenced some deployees' ability to fulfil their tasks, responsibilities, and expected deliverables for certain periods of the year. Most of them had their ToRs amended to include COVID-19 related response, however some activities like face-to-face interviews and monitoring in camps were either abandoned or turned into virtual meetings. This was a less satisfying outcome due to the lack of personal interaction. Many deployees also reported that tasks were more time consuming from home due to logistical difficulties such as limited access to printers, scanners, and internet and phone connectivity problems but also difference in time zones requiring DRC deployees to work late hours and even at night to match the time zone at the field duty station.

Deployees have faced unprecedented stressful and uncertain times in countries with high levels of COVID-19 infection, weak health systems, increased crime rates, negative sentiments towards foreigners, quarantine, self-isolation, restrictions of movements and deferred R&R and without physical contact to families and loved ones. As a result, productivity levels in terms of measured indicators for some deployees have been reduced over the course of 2020. Nonetheless, many deployees have managed to contribute to the operations in a wealth of other ways that has been praised again and again in the performance appraisal reports received from the UN supervisors.

For the DRC Standby Roster team COVID-19 also posed some challenges with regards to grants management. The ability to ensure full financial implementation of the project was challenged, because of a range of uncertainties which made it difficult to predict future spending. These uncertainties included, besides from uncertainties related to contract extensions of deployees into 2021, changing travel restrictions, varying government-imposed quarantine rules, lock downs, availability of flights, fluctuating flight costs, as well as limited possibilities of taking R&R.

Finally, the pandemic impacted the DRC Standby Roster team’s ability to conduct monitoring and evaluation visits in 2020 as planned. The reason being that non-critical business travel was not allowed from March for the remainder of 2020 as part of DRC’s response to the pandemic. Nevertheless, many other monitoring activities have been implemented throughout the year, including regular correspondence with deployees and UN representatives via email, Skype, Microsoft Teams and phone; debriefing sessions with deployees carried out by DRC Standby Roster focal points, as well as online reporting on monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis from both deployees and UN supervisors.

The key lesson learnt here from the past year that will be taken forward for consideration is the possibility for more flexible contractual and insurance terms for deployees. This includes (but is not limited to) remote working at the start and end of contract, as well as more flexible regulations regarding flight tickets and cancellations.



# 10

## Thanks to our Members, Donors and Partners

Over the past 30 years, the DRC Standby Roster has deployed thousands of experts and specialists to UN's humanitarian relief operations all over the world. However, this would not have been possible without our excellent, loyal and committed members. Currently, the DRC Standby Roster has over 1,000 members across four rosters with a broad variety of professional profiles and core competencies who make a difference for persons in need every single day. We could not support this vital work without our committed donors, of which a special thank goes to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida, who has supported the DRC Standby Roster since the beginning in 1991. Lastly a warm felt appreciation to our UN agencies, the DRC country operations and the range of partners who have all contributed and played a key role in the work and achievements of the DRC Standby Roster in 2020.



# The DRC Standby Roster Team

Please meet the DRC Standby Roster staff who worked in the team during 2020.



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**Andrew Menshikov,**  
Graphic designer who has been an extra addition  
to the DRC Standby Roster team in 2020.  
Credit to him for this publication.



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