



# **Blockchain's Unique Potential:**

## Transforming Lives & the Humanitarian Sector for Refugee Solutions



**David Casey**

# A little bit of context...



**2014**

My first use case was operating a coliving marketplace mostly in the Global South, and we started using Bitcoin to pay out merchants.



**2015**

Launched my first digital currency on the Bitcoin blockchain, using the Colored Coins protocol



**2020**

Launched Resource a mutual credit and barter protocol



**2022**

Launched a mutual credit (i.e. “barter”) protocol on the Celo blockchain called ReSource, for cashless B2B commerce

I'm also a Celo Scout, working with the Celo venture ecosystem to source mobile fintech startups from the global south.

# Today I run two event series called



Funding the  
Commons



Earth  
Commons

We just completed our 11th conference, our first design jam session and our second residency and hackathon last week in Thailand!





At FtC we build a bridge **between builders, funders, and researchers** focused on transforming the **mechanisms for public goods**.



# The Ingredients of Funding the *Commons* & Earth Commons

- Conferences
  - Hackathons
    - Builder residencies
      - Working Groups
    - Funding Experiments

# What **Problems** do refugees face that **blockchain solves?**



## IDENTITY

Access to a digital identity: Often refugees have no passport or government-issued ID.



## BANKING

Access to bank accounts and secure portability of savings across borders when fleeing under duress.



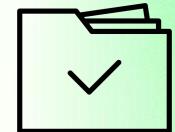
## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Access to a basic income and micro-work opportunities via “Learn-to-Earn” & PGF for local infrastructure.



## SAFETY

Safe transport & storage of value



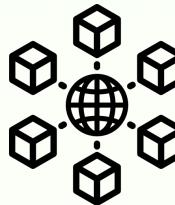
## ARCHIVING

Censorship resistant media preservation

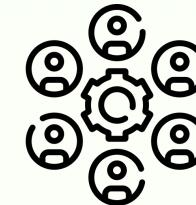
# What **Problems** does the blockchain industry face that **refugees help solve?**



## IDENTITY



## BANKING



## WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Blockchain companies have a ~\$5b+ user acquisition budget in 2024 devoted to early stage users of their platforms (mostly airdrops).

The refugee use case provides the blockchain industry with a socially beneficial use case that demonstrates the merits of blockchain technology to governments, international bodies, and the general public.

Blockchain needs more people with the skills & real-world perspective to create and expand the industry.

# The very first song out of the studio being built in the Burundian community is here!

"One Blood" featuring the United All Stars refugees from the Burundian, Congolese, South Sudanese, Ugandan and their mentors. They sang in 6 different languages in the song  
🔥 Enjoy!

NOTE: THE SONG IS NOT YET RELEASED OFFICIALLY, KINDLY DON'T SHARE OR POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA.



**LISTEN TO ONE BLOOD!**



# Uganda Pilot: Music Studio with Refunite

## **OBJECTIVE:**

Test distribution pipes with Refunite, while establishing a refugee-led music studio for economic and social empowerment and measuring impact.

## **PARTNER:**

Refunite originated in 2007 as a platform to reunite lost families. They have been using the bitcoin network for many years to transfer humanitarian aid funds to refugee camps across Africa, touching tens of millions of lives through their work.

## **KEY ACTIVITIES:**

- Skill-building and music production.
- Generation of music NFTs for refugee income generation.

**150**

**BURUNDIAN  
MUSICIANS**

**5K+**

**COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS ENGAGED**



# SEA Pilot: Humanitarian Aid for Burmese population

## **OBJECTIVE:**

Test reliability crypto-to-fiat off-ramps across Thailand for various populations with diverse identification documents.  
Target beneficiary population: Burmese refugees.

## **PARTNER:**

*Coalapay*: platform specialized in coordinating the delivery of humanitarian aid payments from large NGO's to grassroots organizations in various war-torn countries, including Burma and Sudan.

*Stellar Foundation*: Layer 1 blockchain specialized in crypto to fiat off-ramps, including Moneygram.



Stellar



coala pay

# Early Learnings

Crypto p2p payments are illegal in Thailand and Myanmar.

Crypto regulation in Thailand and Myanmar makes local NGO's very hesitant to participate in crypto-related activities, for fear of being shut down.

Stellar provides a solution that enables blockchain-based money transfers to be received in fiat via institutional off-ramp partners.

We have found these off-ramps to be accessible in Thailand, but of course refugees face KYC issues.

Burmese tend to have above average crypto literacy out of necessity, but by no means is it universal.

**UPCOMING...**

# Celo Africa Pilot: Videography School

**OBJECTIVE:**

Introduce Refunite network to EVM technology:  
Opera MiniPay on Celo blockchain.

**FUNDER:** Celo.

**PARTNER:** Refunite, Opera MiniPay, Holonym.  
MiniPay is an embedded mobile browser wallet  
in Opera, the third most common mobile  
browser in Africa, with 8% market penetration  
(~45 million people).

Holonym is a ZK-based identity or credential  
proving solution, ensure both privacy and trust.

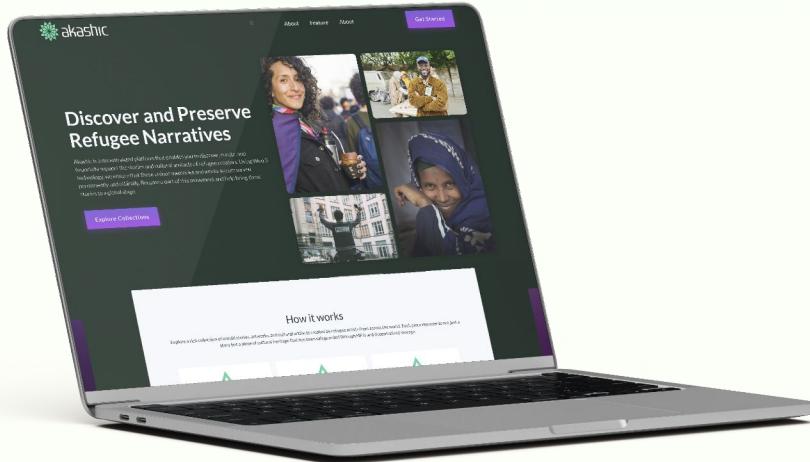
**KEY ACTIVITIES:**

- Test adoption of Ethereum L2 (Celo) via Opera MiniPay.
- PoC digitizing Refunite's "offline KYC" solution using Hats Protocol and Holonym.



# Where is this all going: Akashic

A crowdfunding platform and decentralized archive for refugee creators.



- Enables refugees to share their stories with the world through mixed media, connecting them directly to global contributors who can mint their stories as NFT's.
- Building on Kickstarter's new crowdfunding protocol, Celo, and Opera MiniPay.
- Filecoin for decentralized storage and archiving.
- Will use ZK identity solutions such as Holonym for safeguarding sensitive information
- Envisioned to be a refugee-governed DAO
- Incubated by Funding the Commons team and builder alumni from our residency.

# Get involved. Let's build!



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