



Refugee
Info Bus

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Our History.....	2
Internet Access.....	3
Legal Rights Education.....	5
Collaborative Multimedia.....	8
Where We Work.....	10
Calais.....	11
Greece.....	12
Who We Are.....	13
Financials.....	14





REFUGEE INFO BUS

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1168538

INTRODUCTION

Working at the frontlines of Europe's ongoing refugee crisis, Refugee Info Bus is committed to empowering individuals through access to technology, legal rights education and collaborative multimedia.

Our mobile approach allows us to respond with speed and precision to the evolving situation on the ground, providing assistance to those living in camps, both sanctioned and improvised, across France and Greece

OUR VISION

Our vision is for refugees and displaced persons to have access to, and be empowered by, technology and rights information, whilst also ensuring that they have a platform to be heard.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide a vital space in which some of society's most vulnerable are able to access the Internet, gain a legal and rights education, and participate in collaborative citizen journalism.

OUR HISTORY

Refugee Info Bus was founded in Calais's "Jungle" in March 2016 as the brainchild of a group of friends who had been volunteering in the camp for several months.

Our first Info Bus began life as an old horsebox, purchased, stripped-out, cleaned-up, and converted into a mobile office and Wi-Fi hotspot for refugees and asylum seekers living in northern France. Within a year, we facilitated over 91,000 Wi-Fi logins and delivered more than 1,000 workshops to 50,000+ individuals on the UK and French asylum systems.

In early 2017, the Refugee Info Bus expanded to Greece and continues to provide the core services of access to Wi-Fi, technology, legal information and a platform for citizen journalism.





INTERNET ACCESS

The power of connectivity to those who need it most.

While many refugees in Europe have a smartphone, funds to buy credit are less common; as a result individuals are unable to access the Internet in order either to communicate with family and friends or to plan their future. The Refugee Info Bus has a model to meet this unfulfilled need, piloted and successfully expanded. Whilst many excellent NGOs are providing support to those who have settled in Europe, Refugee Info Bus specialises in supporting those who are on the move.

We provide Internet in mobile vans, with technology that can comfortably deal with around 100 connections at any one time. We also provide phone charging facilities, enabling refugees to charge their phones while they connect to the Internet. This creates a space where refugees can sit and relax for a few hours each day, chatting with friends, sharing music, playing games, or gaining access to the other services that the Info Bus provides.

According to the United Nations, Internet access is a human right. For refugees, it is a lifeline, allowing them to keep in touch with their families and loved ones on the other side of the world. It is also essential as a source of news, information and education. It gives people a chance to build an identity beyond being a refugee. Listening to music, watching the latest football or cricket match, or just checking Facebook is as important to displaced people as it is to anybody else.

"When I arrived [in Europe] I had not spoken to my mum for more than two months...I had no mobile phone, with laptops and WiFi I could talk to my family in Sudan to let them know I am still alive"

- Mudatha



LEGAL RIGHTS EDUCATION

We help refugees to help themselves by providing the information necessary for individuals to take back some control over their own lives using existing legal frameworks.

Claiming asylum is a complicated legal process refugees need to know about. These individuals will themselves be their own strongest advocates. From the first asylum interview to the appeals process, we provide information on the asylum process, including claiming family reunification, in France, Greece and the UK in refugees' own languages. We provide this information so that refugees can make informed decisions about their future, partnering with fellow NGOs to gather and translate up-to-date legal information. In providing this information, we are also able to debunk myths about the asylum process.

Refugee Info Bus carries out legal and rights education through a range of outreach techniques, including workshops, handouts, digital content, social media engagement, and one-on-one casework sessions in people's native languages.

As the Refugee Info Bus project grew, we found we were able to maximise our impact through training refugee volunteers to help as "advocates", guiding others through the bureaucratic systems typical of the French and Greek asylum system.





"I met the Refugee Info Bus on Chios and I already had two rejections, I felt hopeless and alone. No NGOs or governments respected us. I knew nothing about the EU-Turkey Deal, or what to say in my interview. I was ready to give up hope as I had been stuck on the island for 4 months. I thought I would never leave my tent or the island.

Then, I met the Info Bus team who told me not to give up. They helped me submit documents that helped me pass my admissibility interview. When I saw the information that they were giving out, I knew that I would have passed my interview straight away if I had been given that information before."

- Mohammed



YALA NHKI VIDEOS

In October 2017, Refugee Info Bus began the production of the Yala Nhki video series. Co-opting visual media as a strategic tool to empower refugees, these multilingual videos provide clear and accessible explanations of the complex asylum system. The series has been devised and produced by our video team based in Athens, with refugee team members taking on research, production, and presenting roles. Speaking to an audience of whom they have been part, team members are able to reach their peers, dispelling some of the complexities and frustrations that characterise the ever-changing goal posts of the Greek and European asylum system.

Videos are filmed in front of a green screen and deliver information in a simple and digestible format. Currently presenters speak in Arabic and Farsi, with English subtitles overlaid so that these videos might also act as a resource for English-speaking allies. The topics addressed in the videos are decided upon in reaction to the issues and problems most commonly encountered by individuals in transit.

In making the videos, our researchers are committed to communication the most up-to-date and accurate information available. We verify the details on which these videos are based using the insight and intelligence of relevant organisations, government bodies, and partner lawyers and advocates working with asylum seekers in Athens.

Topics and questions addressed in videos released in 2017 included: special cases; leaving Greece; the EU-Turkey deal; leaving the islands; the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA); getting a Greek social security number (AMKA); the EU-Afghanistan deal; and procedure and rights in detention.

These videos have proven themselves to be a powerful and democratic educational tool, able to cater to an audience made up of people from different countries, who speak many different languages, and with varying level of literacy. The videos have also served to increase traffic to Refugee Info Bus's social media channels, helping us raise our profile, and deepen our impact amongst both refugees and allies.

10 VIDEOS

288.2K VIEWS



COLLABORATIVE MULTIMEDIA

Journalism, storytelling and educational media.

Through providing a platform for collaborative journalism, we work in solidarity with refugees helping individuals and communities communicate the hardships they have suffered to a global audience. The need is significant. Refugees' own voices have been consistently maligned in the media's handling of the ongoing crisis through silencing, collectivisation and de-contextualisation. Refugee Info Bus is committed to facilitating the end of such approaches, all of which serve to reproduce broader hierarchies in the European political and social sphere, keeping individuals decidedly outside of 'our' communities of belonging.

Our team also works to tell the stories refugees want to tell. Giving a voice to those who have had everything else taken away. We do this work by providing workshops in photography and journalism, empowering refugees to raise awareness of the conditions they face and the need for their rights to be recognised. We also create our own video and written content for use across our own social media channels and allied media outlets. Our first hand reportage has assisted in revealing what has really happened on the ground in a way that is both respectful and collaborative.



CITIZEN PHOTO ESSAY

In March 2016, photographer Beatrice-Lily Lorigan headed up Refugee Info Bus's Citizen Photo Essay initiative. Handing out 40 disposable cameras to refugees living the Calais Jungle, the project was designed to allow refugees to document their own lives, resisting and overwriting the spectatorial perspectives disseminated by the mainstream media.

In July, we published the photographs that were taken as a result of the initiative of the Refugee Info Bus's Facebook page. The images provide an intimate portrait of the

situation in Calais as seen by those living there. These are moments of the ordinary, which invite viewers to recognise and engage with the former residents of the "Jungle" not as "others" but as fellow men, women and children, whose lives continued even as the temporary shelters around them were torn down.

The photographs garnered attention from local and national media outlets, and were exhibited at the Barbican, Europe's largest performing arts centre. The quiet witness they hold to the "Jungle" are now an important part of the historical record.



WHERE WE WORK

In 2016-17, Refugee Info Bus operated in northern France and central Greece, delivering Internet access, legal rights education, and collaborative multimedia work around Calais, Athens and the surrounding islands.





CALAIS, FRANCE

In October 2017, French authorities bulldozed the Calais Jungle. More than a year later and hundreds of asylum seekers are living on the streets and in the wooded areas in and around the town in Northern France. The conditions are critical, with refugees and asylum seekers facing the routine confiscation of personal items, physical abuse, and the disruption of aid delivery.

In the absence of a centralised camp, the Calais Info Bus has teamed up with fellow NGOs, including Help Refugees and Utopia 56, to coordinate the delivery of our services. This approach has enabled us to offer internet access, legal rights education, and collaborative multimedia to more than 700 individuals in five locations in the Calais area, six days a week.

As part of our daily service, the Calais Info Bus provided: free WiFi; phone charging facilities; tech help and assistance; referrals to specialised service providers; daily world news; access to information on European asylum and migration laws and policies; advice on how to claim asylum in France and the UK; and the collection of testimonies for use in the media.

In 2017, the Calais Info Bus dedicated significant effort to making the most of the time and energy of new short- and long-term volunteers arriving in Calais. In the summer months, the Info Bus became a weekly meeting space in which volunteers from the different NGOs and organisations operating in Calais could raise questions and participate in the discussion of current priorities.

By cultivating the kind of sustained, trustful, and expansive relationships on which successful collaboration depends, the Calais Info Bus has been able to make powerful allies of both those we assist and fellow service providers.



GREECE

Throughout 2016 and 2017, the number of people arriving in Greece across land and sea borders continued to rise. Measures to confront this challenge, including the 2016 EU migration deal with Turkey, have failed to create a bold, orderly system for individuals to seek protection in Europe and instead fundamentally undermined both the EU's commitment to upholding the basic principles of refugee protection and its ostensible dedication to human rights.

More than 60,000 individuals are stranded in Greece, with many living in formal camps which are at twice or three times their holding capacity. The fear of being returned to Turkey haunts these camps, the spectre only becoming more terrifying as the human rights situations there deteriorates.

Expanding our operations to Greece in March 2017, Refugee Info Bus has worked in several camps, all stretched to breaking point by Europe's "containment policy". This has included the Lavrio Camp, the Ritsona Camp, the Elefsina Camp, as well as the Souda and Vial Camps on Chios.

Whilst in these camps Refugee Info Bus: provided free WiFi and access to laptops and tablets for camp residents; hosted one-on-one and group information sessions on European and Greek asylum law and procedures; distributed multilingual legal information packs dealing with topics such as the admissibility interview; travelled weekly to the Greek Asylum Service in order to obtain updates on and lobby for decisions with regards to individuals' legal status; made referrals to qualified Greek and European lawyers; collected visual evidence and testimonials demonstrating overcrowded and unsanitary camp conditions; and hosted photography and citizen journalism workshops.

In May 2017, in partnership with the Refugee Rights Data Project, Refugee Info Bus assisted in carrying out an investigation of the human rights issues and humanitarian standards on the island of Chios. Research conducted focussed on two of the island's camps, Souda, a makeshift settlement which stands within an old fortress in Chios Town, and Vial, originally an official 'hotspot camp' located in the mountains about 20 km south-west of the town. At the time of the study, UNHCR estimated that there were 3,782 refugees on the island of Chios, a figure close to three times as high as the UNHCR guideline maximum of 1,300 and triple the 1,000 cap proposed by the European Commission. The research found the island at breaking point.



FINANCIALS

OUR FINANCES SO FAR

	2016-17*
INCOME	
DONATIONS	10,945.18
GRANTS	92,141.51
OTHER INCOME	5,683.31
TOTAL INCOME	108,770.00

EXPENDITURE

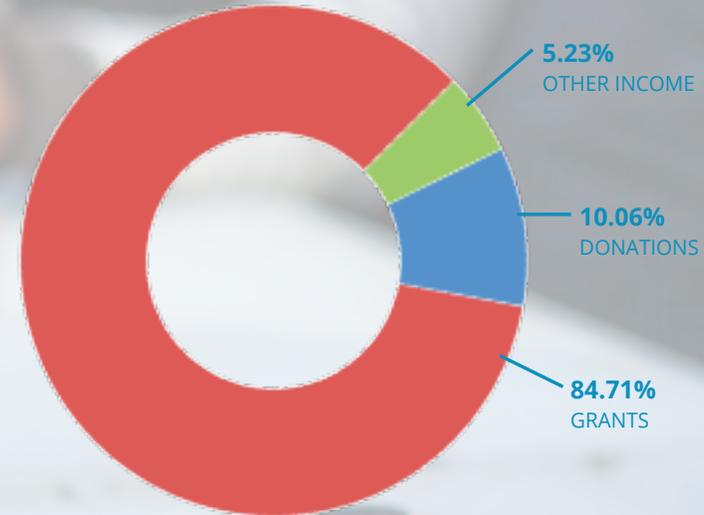
COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME	999.00
PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES	84,840.13
BANK CHARGES & INTEREST	1,599.45
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT COSTS	10,952.82
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	98,391.40

NET ASSETS

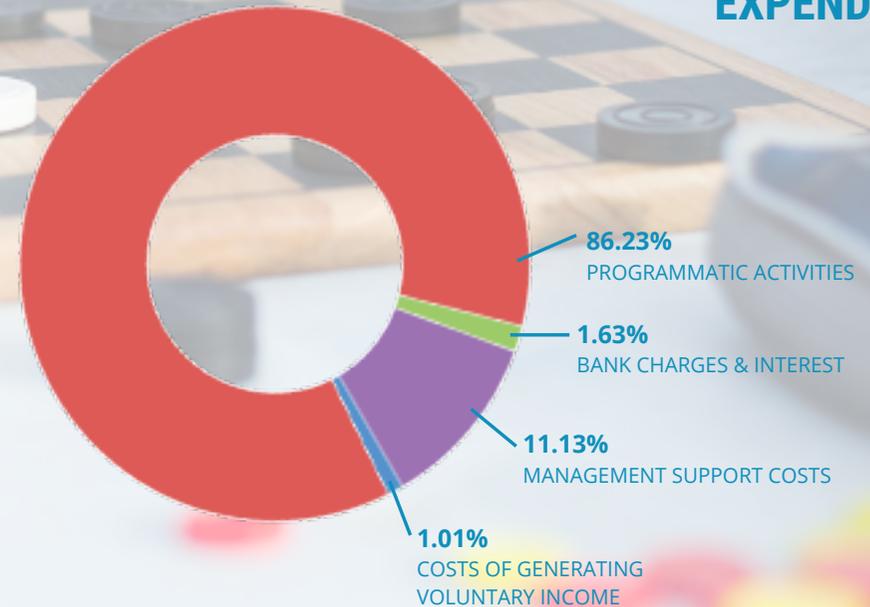
TOTAL	10,378.60
--------------	------------------

*August 2016-December 2017. April 2017-December 2017 Financials subject to audit

INCOME



EXPENDITURE





PO Box 68392
London, E7 7EQ

T: +44(0)7415423971
E: mail@refugeeinfobus.com

www.refugeeinfobus.com
[@RefugeeInfoBus](https://www.instagram.com/RefugeeInfoBus)

Registered Charity Number: 1168538