
Annual Report 2023

Indigo Volunteers



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1 Overview

Indigo's Purpose, Vision, Mission & Values

Indigo Volunteers responsibly supports refugees across the European migration route. We envision a global community where people are inspired and equipped to help each other and have therefore set our mission to amplify the impact of our humanitarian partners through volunteer connections, wellbeing support, and organisational development. In working towards this goal, we are guided by our organisational values and the principles of Responsible Volunteering.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Humility

We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers; we welcome feedback and strive to continuously learn.

Accountability

We follow through on our commitments; we are honest and transparent.

Human-centred

We put relationships, lasting collaborations, and human wellbeing at the centre of everything we do.

RESPONSIBLE VOLUNTEERING

For Indigo Volunteers, Responsible Volunteering is centred around the needs, preferences, and aspirations of the recipient communities. It focuses on sustainable solutions rooted in collaboration between volunteers, organisations, and those whom they support. Responsible volunteering nurtures the safety and wellbeing of all parties and acknowledges everyone's inherent human worth.

2 Indigo Recruitment Programme

The Indigo Recruitment Programme sits at the core of our operations. It involves the matching of suitable volunteers to the needs and requests of grassroots organisations supporting refugees and displaced people along the European migratory route.

Impact data 2023

334 VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS

<i>Number of volunteer applications</i>	2,321
<i>Number of days worked by volunteers as a result of Indigo matching</i>	26,857
<i>Financial value of donated hours in £¹</i>	3,343,696.50

52 CHARITY PARTNERS

<i>Total number of charity partners</i>	52
<i>Total numbers of partners and non-partners supported²</i>	106
<i>Number of new partners/projects onboarded³</i>	9

¹ Calculated assuming a single working day contains 7.5 hours of work at a rate of £16.6 per hour (average UK salary). Both numbers are stipulative in that working hours may vary between organisations and that hourly rates vary depending on the skill level necessary for the placement.

² This number includes our 49 registered charity partners, and another 57 charity organisations that benefitted from our additional services (excluding volunteer-matching).

³ Projects refers to new missions within existing partners.

Creating a ripple effect

As an umbrella organisation our impact goes beyond the work done by volunteers, the organisational development and training sessions we facilitate, and the wellbeing support we help provide for our humanitarian partners. Volunteering lights a fire in people that inspires them to stay active and create positive change when they return to their home countries. As a result of their placement with Indigo, volunteers have, for example, 1) inspired friends and family to get involved; 2) returned to volunteer with the same organisation directly; 3) raised funds for the organisation they volunteered with; 4) spread awareness about the refugee situation; 5) volunteered or became politically active in their home countries; 6) pursued a humanitarian career or even started their own NGOs. Indigo is proud to serve as a stepping stone for volunteers to become proactive humanitarians and caring activists aspiring for a kinder world.

Achievements

Redefining Indigo's Strategy

This year we made the difficult but necessary decision to pause our volunteer matching services from July to September to focus on diversifying our fundraising to ensure the continuation of Indigo's work. During this pause, we redefined Indigo's approach to fundraising and developed a strategy that kept charity needs at the core of our focus, while ensuring our operational efficacy. On October 1st we successfully reopened our applications and volunteer matching services. We have also since developed a new programme, "*Indigo Mentors*", that will help develop and professionalise our charity partners even further through corporate connections, while providing Indigo with a sustainable income stream.

Read more about "*Indigo Mentors*", [below](#).

The Volunteer Hub

As a testament to our commitment to fostering a supportive environment for volunteers that encourages safe and responsible volunteering practices, we developed and launched our new Volunteer Hub. The hub is a digital, centralised platform packed with learning materials, support resources, and guidance for volunteers to thrive in their roles.

It serves as a comprehensive repository, and includes the following areas:

1. *Overview of our charity and services*: Volunteers can find Indigo's mission, values and concept of responsible volunteering as well a Quiz to check their readiness before volunteering.
2. *Preparation resources*: Training, courses, podcasts, and news sources to prepare and learn about the context of the European refugee crisis and core concepts of the humanitarian field such as safeguarding.

3. *Guidance on talking with the charity:* Suggestion on what to discuss with the charity before securing a placement.
4. *Logistics:* Guidance on budgeting, travel, insurance, and more.
5. *Access to Indigo's support resources:* Including our wellbeing support network, live training opportunities, and our feedback and complaints channels.

Planning Indigo Mentors

Following open dialogue with our charity partners in 2023 to assess their needs, we became aware of the common issues they face; a lack of technical and organisational development skills within their teams, limited visibility, and a call for more opportunities for collaboration with businesses. In response, we set out to create a new branch of Indigo that breaks down the barriers between corporates and charity partners through remote volunteering.

We therefore started planning "*Indigo Mentors*", a project through which employees will have the opportunity to utilise their volunteer days to provide mentorship, training, and consultations to charities in the humanitarian sector that need guidance to further their mission.

Partner's Needs Assessment

In September, we conducted needs assessment sessions with our partner organisations to better inform our decision when designing Indigo's strategy for 2024. 14 charity partners participated, bringing in their perspective on topics around visibility, funding and operational capacity, recruitment and retention of volunteers, and connection and connectivity in the sector.

Through the needs assessment, we came to the following conclusions:

- Funding is a major issue: The lack of visibility and reduced media focus on the refugee crisis in Europe, alongside the reduced opportunities for funding, is affecting grassroots charities both at

a financial and operational level.

- Charities are operating at an unsustainable level: Most charities are missing essential skills and resources in their teams which makes them unable to grow, but they lack the time and money to invest in these areas,
- High reliance on volunteers: Charities often cannot afford to hire staff, and therefore depend on skilled and long-term volunteers to run their vital projects, but recruiting and retaining volunteers is a real and ongoing challenge.
- The political and wider environment our charity partners operate in makes it difficult to be proactive instead of reactive.
- Charities appreciate opportunities: Connection with other charities and professionals can help charities learn and develop, access new resources, increase visibility of the refugee crisis, and collaborate to gain funding.

System & Process Analysis

In 2023, we developed our data collection processes by migrating our data tracking to a new Reporting Platform, making use of Google Apps Script and Google Looker Studio. Thanks to this, the whole team has transparent and easy access to Indigo's impact data, making it easier to both inform our next steps and showcase the results of our work..

Challenges

Limited funding - Operational Pause

Sadly, fundraising continues to remain a challenge for many grassroots organisations operating across Europe, including our partner projects. The key reasons contributing to this issue are the reduced visibility of the sector and the existing economic crisis. As media focus has shifted away from the refugee crisis in Europe, the frequency and magnitude of individual donations has decreased as the general public is less informed on the existing needs. The financial crisis post-Covid has also led to a reduced financial capacity to donate and support charities, thus also contributing to a lower number of donations.

Reduced visibility has also resulted in a smaller pool of grant opportunities for humanitarian charities. Available grants have become smaller, usually offering up to £10,000, and the duration of support has been reduced, for an average of 2-3 years, to now most grants averaging coverage from 9-12 months.

While the need for charity work and support remains as relevant as ever, reduced opportunities for funding have been a great obstacle both for Indigo and our partner projects. The great lack of financial security experienced during the summer of 2023, led us to pause our volunteer matching services for a period of three months in order to focus on the diversification of fundraising activities and the creation of a new fundraising strategy. From July to October, our core team focused on the development and implementation of a new fundraising strategy with a focus on these different areas: *Trust & Grants, Events, Campaigns, Major Donors, Donations, Corporates, Talks & Interviews, Self Generating.*

Continued lack of visibility

The general shift in support climate affecting the refugee crisis in Europe and our sector more in general, has impacted our charity and our partner projects as well.

After running a needs assessment with our charity partners in the fall of 2023, we concluded that fundraising remains one of the biggest challenges for grassroots organisations in Europe. The consequences of this shift, exasperated by the decreased visibility of the refugee crisis, are so severe that three of our charity partners permanently closed in 2023 due to a lack of funding. Their closure left a gap in the services that people in displacement receive, as the high level of need and the size of the populations they used to support has not decreased

HR Capacity

In 2023, Indigo continued operating with a core team of five, which is a very small team when you look at our impact. Nonetheless, our team remained heavily underresourced which has been a constant barrier to our growth and ambition to support refugees. Due to the challenging financial context, in 2023 we began covering our HR gaps by working more closely with large volunteer and intern teams. New volunteers brought energy, and expertise, and we welcomed the diverse backgrounds and perspectives our team benefitted from. Nonetheless, we experienced challenges in retaining volunteers beyond a 4-6 month period due to a lack of funds. This also caused us to frequently engage in recruiting and onboarding new volunteers, which is a disruptive and time-consuming process.

In 2024, we aim to create structured recruitment cycles that will minimise operational disruption without leaving our team understaffed.

Reduced capacity to meet partners' needs

As a consequence of our reduced HR capacity and limited funding, all of Indigo's programmes were affected. We were unable to realise our partner expansion plan where we hoped to onboard some of the 30+ charities in our waiting list, with the exception of two medical projects that became Indigo partners to ensure we continued to provide medical volunteering opportunities. We continued to support 52 charity partners, focusing on responding to their primary need of receiving volunteer applications through our matching services. We were unable to proceed onboarding new projects in our waiting list. Similarly, our current capacity limited the expansion of our Wellbeing support network.

Testimonials

“Indigo Volunteers have been a great asset for a grassroots organisation like us.

Over the year, we have seen their process strength, adapting to the needs of both organisations and potential volunteers. In addition to bringing to us volunteers who are absolutely essential to our projects, they have been key actors in the protection of incoming volunteers. Indeed, they provide volunteers with training that organisations don't always have the capacity to offer, as well as invaluable mental health support.

They have been major actors in making our domain safer, more professional, and more sustainable.”

Claire, Volunteer Coordinator at Yoga and Sports with Refugees, Greece

“I have been signed up to Indigo Volunteers for a number of years and am now happy that I have time to do a volunteer placement. The process was so easy, creating a profile and within weeks I had offers from a number of NGOs - all of which offered a range of opportunities and were all amazing. I am happy to have spoken to and had meetings with a number of them and learned more about the work being done to support refugees.

I am now going to Greece for 3 months and as exciting as that is, the prospect is daunting but I am happy to be going, knowing the NGO I am working with is great.

Thank you Indigo for making this happen!”

Sarah Bonner, Volunteer in Greece

3 Wellbeing support

Indigo Support Network

Programme Overview

All Indigo volunteers and partners can access mental health and coaching support through our free Wellbeing Support Network should they want to. Shared as a contact list of support professionals through a dedicated page of our website, volunteers receive this resource before they go on the field and can access it anonymously and confidentially throughout and after their volunteering placement. Through this, we hope to stimulate conversations regarding self-care within the sector as longer-term support can help combat issues of stress and burnout, and hope to challenge the unhealthy culture that often permeates the sector. We aim to normalise the discussion around mental health and remind partners of the natural incentive to take it seriously: Only a healthy team can operate effectively.

Impact Data

135.25 HOURS OF SUPPORT (20% increase since 2022)

<i>Number of mental health support sessions</i>	121
<i>Number of coaching support sessions</i>	11
<i>Number of new people who made use of our support network</i>	82
<i>Total duration of support sessions provided in hours</i>	135.25

4 Organisational Development

Connect, Share, Collaborate

In January of this year, we developed Indigo's first Organisational Development (OD) strategy centred around the needs of our partner organisations. As an umbrella organisation, we share knowledge and resources amongst our network and actively encourage collaboration between projects through our Organisational Development programme. Having connections with a huge network of charities and other professionals, it would be a lost opportunity not to take advantage of all the skills and knowledge at hand. After all, only by exchanging the lessons learnt along the way can we progress as a sector.

In practice, our OD programme involves using knowledge, training and resources to help organisations run better and aims to improve existing operations and engagement in ethical humanitarian work.

Following conversations and feedback from our charity partners and volunteers around their OD needs, we ran the following activities in 2023:

Calmness and Relaxation Workshop

The "Calmness & Relaxation Workshop", delivered by Ermina Isanovic, a certified cognitive and behavioural hypnotherapist, continued running during the spring of 2023. Considering the high-stress environment many of our partners operate in, we wanted to provide a space for volunteers to develop self-care skills and learn to manage their wellbeing. The workshops equipped participants with evidence-based tools to manage stress and anxiety and to learn how to move from "survival mode" to "thriving mode". Participants reported feeling confident in spotting stress and anxiety since attending the workshops, and equipped with the practical tools they learned from the workshop to achieve calmness and relaxation. Throughout 2023, 3 workshops were delivered and attended by a total of 26 participants.

Brigid Greene

In March, we started a new collaboration with Brigid Greene, a specialist with experience in facilitating Team Building activities. Brigid not only ran a team building space for our team, but also offered team building sessions to all of Indigo's partners. In March, 11 organisations were connected with Brigid to learn more and schedule a session for their teams, while in April, our partners Refugee Aid Serbia and The Educational Equality Institute confirmed that they received training and resources from Brigid.

Brigid also created a list of team building activities that can be accessed by our all of Indigo's charity partners through our [Resource Sharing platform](#). This creates a positive, long term opportunity for charities to nurture their team environments and create safer, more welcoming spaces for their volunteers.

The Pandora Project partnership

In 2023, our main focus for Organisational Development was on our collaboration with The Pandora Project. In May, the expansive elements of our OD strategy were put on pause due to resource limitations that forced us to shift our focus towards fundraising. During this time, existing collaboration were be continued but no additional resources were invested to grow our offering of training and workshops. Nonetheless, our Volunteer Hub remained accessible to volunteers, and we focused on providing quality training through a single collaboration with The Pandora Project.

This partnership is unique as there are few live training opportunities that are so specialised to the refugee sector in Europe. After officialising our partnership at the end of 2022 and identifying training topics that yielded the highest interest, we delivered the following training in 2023 in collaboration with The Pandora Project.

Psychological First Aid

The Psychological First Aid (PFA) training is a two hour session that equips participants with essential skills to provide psychological support in emergency and crisis situations. Through this training,

attendees learnt the main steps of PFA and how to apply them effectively during an emergency, with discussions covering responsible ways to offer assistance and self-care strategies during interventions. Interactive activities throughout the training facilitate the application of learned concepts, ensuring participants are well-prepared to handle challenging scenarios. This training received very high interest and was held 6 times throughout the year with a total of 74 individuals receiving training.

“The Psychological First Aid Training offered by the Pandora Project in partnership with Indigo was incredibly empowering and engaging with the diverse perspectives of participants. The training program was interactive and thought-provoking with the aim to assist global leaders and our organizations deliver real impact, remotely and on the field. An exceptionally well-facilitated workshop with an innovative approach to help make a difference amongst marginalized communities. Overall, a comprehensive and balanced design of an international training program that aimed to make it an inclusive safe space for all participants.”

- Jasmine Sethi, attendee

Privilege & Humanitarian Aid

The “Privilege & Humanitarian Aid” is a two-hour session that encourages participants to reflect on the meaning of privilege and penalty, and how it applies to individuals, society, and the systems that shape it. The session includes a range of activities, including individual reflection and group discussions.

Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue and Resilience

The training on “Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, and Resilience” is a two-hour session addressing the challenges faced by humanitarian aid workers who are exposed to traumatic events, either directly or indirectly. This training delves into the meaning and origins of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and resilience, while also examining their symptoms and signs. Participants engaged in discussions on preventive strategies to mitigate the impact of these challenges, emphasising the significance of building resilience both personally and professionally.

Stress Management

The training on “Stress Management” is a two-hour session providing a comprehensive understanding of stress, its origins, and its different signs and symptoms. Participants learnt to recognise stress and explore effective strategies to stop or prevent its negative effects. Through a series of introspective exercises and small group activities, participants gain valuable insights into the subject and develop personalised stress management plans. The training encouraged participants to take ownership of their mental health and emphasised the importance of ensuring a positive impact on others amidst challenging circumstances.

Review and Growth

In November, after a period of review and needs-evaluation, we were assured of the extreme success of this collaboration and the continuous need for training on the offered topics. Our collaboration continued through the end of 2023. To make the sessions more accessible, we offered discounted/free options available for our charity partners for whom the training may not be affordable.

CONNECT, SHARE, COLLABORATE

<i>Number of times we shared individual resources and opportunities</i>	517
<i>Number of times we connected people outside our regular recruitment program</i>	36
<i>Total workshops delivered</i>	16
<i>Total hours of workshops delivered</i>	32
<i>Total workshop attendees</i>	193

5 Stakeholder Engagement

Marketing

Volunteer recruitment

In 2023, amidst the ongoing challenges of the refugee crisis, the demand for volunteers from our grassroots partners continued to soar. Recognising the critical need for expanded outreach and engagement, we focused on bolstering our volunteer recruitment efforts to meet the pressing demands on the ground. Especially in the first half of the year, the amplification and diversification of the volunteer recruitment efforts and diversification of was our prime focus. We utilised the SEE-, THINK-, DO-, CARE-Model to develop a strategy that would attract our target audiences and create increased engagement.

Fundraising

A pivotal realisation this year was the intrinsic link between marketing and fundraising. Our endeavours in these areas have become increasingly synchronised, aiming to maximise our reach and ensure Indigo's sustainability.

Notable fundraising initiatives included the successful execution of a fundraising auction and the development of a Pitch Deck for the "Chapters Festival", a refugee led event in the Netherlands enabling people of all backgrounds to come together to attend workshops, build connections, experience cultures, and celebrate the humanity we all share. Due to a lack of sponsorship, this project was put on pause at the beginning of the summer.

We also took part in the Royal Parks Half Marathon and raised funds for Indigo via committed friends and volunteers. Our team ran through some of London's most beautiful parks to gather donations that helped support our projects.

Nonetheless, our largest fundraising success in 2023 came through our participation in the Big Give Christmas Challenge, an exciting fundraising campaign that doubles the impact of donations made via matching donations.

For the Big Give Christmas Challenge, we executed a strategic mini-campaign using a multi-channel approach to maximise our reach. We meticulously planned our content distribution across various platforms, ensuring that our message resonated with a diverse audience. Additionally, we implemented an ambitious outreach campaign, contacting over 300 influencers and prominent Instagram channels to share our content. This concerted effort was designed to amplify our visibility and impact, engaging both new and existing supporters in our mission and significantly increasing our fundraising efforts during this critical period. We were ecstatic to raise over 200% of our planned goal.

Team growth

A significant milestone for Indigo in 2023 was the expansion of our team through the introduction of a volunteer-based internship program. This allowed us to tap into a reservoir of talent and enthusiasm, significantly increasing our output and optimising the content we produce. The program attracted a diverse group of individuals, ranging from marketing enthusiasts to content creators and strategy experts, each bringing a fresh perspective and a shared commitment to our cause.

The interns were instrumental in driving our marketing strategy forward, developing engaging materials that resonated with our audiences and highlighted the impactful work of our volunteers and partners. Through their contributions, we make the stories of our volunteers and humanitarian partners more compelling and relatable. This not only helped in our recruitment efforts but also played a crucial role in our fundraising campaigns, providing a deeper insight into the tangible difference that Indigo's impact has on supporting refugees.

Furthermore, the internship program fostered a culture of creativity and continuous learning within our marketing team. Interns were encouraged to experiment with new ideas and approaches, leading to improvements in our social media engagement, website user experience, and overall digital presence. This collaborative environment enabled both personal and professional growth for the interns, while

significantly benefiting our marketing efforts.

The success of the volunteer-based internship program in 2023 has laid a solid foundation for its continuation and expansion in the coming years. It has proven to be a win-win, offering valuable hands-on experience for the interns while enhancing Indigo's capacity to support refugees and volunteers effectively.

Other Indigo Partnerships & Collaborations

In 2023 the need for beneficial partnerships became more apparent than ever. Although the drive for funding was a primary concern, we explored how alternative support could also help Indigo thrive. This included collaborations with individuals, companies, and initiatives who offered support in various areas, with a focus on proactive planning alongside clarity to our supporters. This diverse range of collaborations has been a shaping force for the Indigo Mentors programme, as we have experienced first-hand the positive impact of collaboration and we hope to expand both the number and type of partnerships in the coming years.

Steen Yde

Our board member, Steen Yde, continued offering valuable training and support with strategic planning and project development to our leadership team.

Action4InternationalDevelopment (A4ID)

The current socio-economic state of the UK and Europe has required Indigo to explore what a sustainable future for a charity looks like. For this reason, we therefore began a collaboration with A4ID to explore alternative registration options for our charity within the EU and receive specialist advice around those.

Home Office

Our chairlady Sarah and three of her colleagues who work at the Home Office utilised their corporate volunteer days to join Indigo for our 1st remote Strategy Day. Sarah and her team planned and facilitated the strategy day, keeping in mind the need of the Indigo team to create a strategic plan that is financially sustainable and meets the needs of our charity partners.

OK Positive

We collaborated with OK Positive, a company offering an early warning system to help identify mental health issues in the workplace. In addition to sharing their platform with our charity partners, the OK Positive team kindly offered pro bono assistance to Indigo connecting us with corporate partners to broaden our network and providing feedback on some of our blog posts.

Arnhem Together

In collaboration with Arnhem Together, we organised a local fundraising walk in Arnhem, Netherlands, to raise awareness of the refugee crisis in Europe. This event was called 'Walk, jog or run 5k for Refugees' and was combined with a challenge where participants would spend a few minutes before leaving home to pack all essentials in a backpack to partially simulate the refugee experience.

ProZ

Through this wonderful partnership with ProZ, we have been able to receive translation support to make our resources and content accessible to our audience.

Bradley Employment Consulting

We gained valuable legal support and advice from Prisca Bradley from the Bradley Employment Consulting firm.

Alex Green

We were fortunate to continue our collaboration with Alex Green, a marketing consultant with extensive experience in the sector. He helped us develop our communications during our urgent operational pause, to ensure that we communicated clearly its purpose and our upcoming plans.

Kalium

Throughout 2023, we were fortunate to collaborate with Kalium and their team of highly skilled SEO writers and content creators. Caroline, Doug, and Richard provided comprehensive and frequent mentoring on SEO-friendly content ideas, writing styles for blog posts, identifying marketing personas and keyword research for website content. As we planned Indigo Mentors, they were particularly helpful in identifying search terms and content ideas related to the programme, meaning we could optimise our outreach across platforms.

With Thanks To

We would like to extend a big thank you to our Board of Trustees who have been a steadfast form of support throughout this year. We have been truly lucky to receive expert advice from a board with such a diverse mix of skills and experiences and are grateful for the time they have given our charity.

Further, Indigo continues to enjoy great support from the people it engages into its mission. Not only do volunteers offer their time and expertise to work with us and our partners, we are also grateful to the great number of people and partners who have expressed their support and trust financially.

Delivering our projects was only made possible through the support of our funders

 **CHOOSE
LOVE** **LUSH** **The Forrester
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CHARITABLE TRUST

and the over 210 donations from private individuals and businesses who supported us by donating over 310 times.