
Annual Report 2021

Indigo Volunteers



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1 Overview

Indigo's Purpose, Vision, Mission & Values

Indigo Volunteers is built to *unleash everyone's potential to help*. We envision a world where people are inspired and equipped to help each other and have set our mission to ensure that grassroots humanitarians have the resources and connections to provide vital assistance to refugees and displaced people. In working towards this goal, we are guided by our organisational values and the principles of Responsible Volunteering.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Connectedness

We bring people together and ensure that everyone is heard, respected and valued; fruitful and lasting collaborations are our prime measure of success.

Humility

We do not presume that we have all the answers; we listen rather than preach; we are open to consider different points of view; we always strive to question and improve ourselves first.

Accountability

We follow through on our commitments; we are honest and transparent; we take responsibility for our actions and lead by example.

Innovation

We are inquisitive and don't take things at face value; we speak up and challenge the norm; we always strive to learn and create positive change.

Humanity

We believe in the growth of people and put them at the centre of everything we do; we stand in solidarity; we are kind and charitable to everyone we encounter.

RESPONSIBLE VOLUNTEERING

For Indigo Volunteers, Responsible Volunteering is centered 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 their inherent human worth.

A year in review

To properly elaborate on the achievements and challenges 2021 had in store for us, a few contextual remarks are necessary.

Changes in HR

The year began with us recruiting a new board in March 2021. Comprising five individuals from various different backgrounds, this drastically increased our decision making capabilities in that it allowed us to better differentiate between strategic and operational concerns. With the board focusing on questions of governance and overall direction, our CEO was able to dedicate more resources towards the day-to-day running of the charity. Not only did this make for a much more efficient division of labour, it also established clear and effective accountability pathways.

With support from the new board, Indigo's founder and CEO Holly Penalver was then able to embark on her maternity leave. Filling in as Interim CEO for the period of April to November, Stijn van der Leest was hired having previously worked with the team as a strategic consultant. Additionally, the role of Head of Programmes & Partnerships was revised and filled by Marina Kokkinou, with the recruitment of two new coordinators as well as a part-time Content Marketing Manager completing our new operational team.

Covid-19

Much like in the previous year, the global COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect our operations. After having paused our recruitment programme for most of 2020, we were able to start receiving applications again in January 2021 - now under drastically different circumstances.

To ensure the health and safety of all involved, our partners underwent a [thorough assessment process](#) evaluating their operations in light of COVID-19. This was aimed at reassuring volunteers that the organisation they volunteered with was taking reasonable actions to minimise the risks posed by international team members working with vulnerable populations. Similarly, the arrival and eventual availability of vaccines for most of Europe had us adapt our recruitment processes once more in the second half of the year: Volunteers were invited to disclose their vaccination status which we would then use to match them to partners operating under corresponding vaccine protocols.

2 Indigo Recruitment Programme

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

Impact data 2021

292 VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS

<i>Number of volunteer applications</i>	1,428
<i>Number of days worked by volunteers as a result of Indigo matching</i>	18,022
<i>Financial value of donated hours in £¹</i>	1,081,320

58 SUPPORTED GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

<i>Total number of partners currently registered with Indigo</i>	58
<i>Number of partners with volunteers from Indigo</i>	39
<i>Number of new partners onboarded</i>	3

¹ Calculated assuming a single working day contains 7.5 hours of work at a rate of £8 per hour. Both numbers are stipulative in that working hours vary widely between organisations and that hourly rates vary depending on the skill level necessary for the placement.

Achievements

Indigo Field Trips

Continuing our mission to provide grassroots humanitarians with the connections and resources they need, Indigo has historically placed much of its focus on keeping in touch with the needs and interests of its partners. To this end, and once the state of the pandemic allowed for it, we were able to meet with 27 of our partners face to face this year. Visiting projects in Athens, Chios, Lesbos, Samos and the North of Greece, as well as in Belgrade, Serbia, these visits proved vital in collecting feedback on the services we deliver, how they can be improved to better integrate into our partners' operations and what additional programmes we should consider in the years ahead.

System & Process Analysis

The second half of 2021 has seen us dedicate significant resources towards the evaluation and development of our operational infrastructure. Mainly based on Google Workspace and Salesforce, the suspicion had long been that the way we process information and facilitate our services could be streamlined and improved upon. Equipped with a new roadmap, result of an in-depth systems review, we began implementing the first sets of changes allowing us to provide a smoother experience to those engaged in our services while also significantly decreasing the administrative burden we face when facilitating them. More specifically, we have introduced new functionality to facilitate online training, have reviewed our volunteer journey, and have drastically improved our partner management efforts by centralising data capturing processes.

Training Facilitation

In collaboration with external consultants, we have introduced a new webinar facilitation mechanism. Based on Salesforce, webinars are created, advertised, signed up to and managed all from within the

same platform meaning not only a massively reduced workload for our team but also more accurate data reporting on webinar participation and engagement.

Volunteer Journey

Building on feedback from partners and volunteers, we started to review the journey volunteers follow when signing up through our website. In the future, this process will integrate more tightly with our partner management efforts, communicate more clearly what actions we need volunteers to take, and give volunteers the choice to receive marketing communications from us if they wish to do so.

Partner Management

To better monitor the highly dynamic context our partners find themselves in we have introduced new partner management processes. Where in the past a lot of the information in regards to the situation of our partners on the ground was dispersed between various notebooks, documents and spreadsheets, we now make better use of our centralised CRM system allowing our team to capture, collect and maintain information on every organisation within our network. This highly increases Indigo's long term sustainability in that partnership knowledge is less dependent on specific team members but entirely built on a scalable system of engagement protocols, documentation, and knowledge retention.

In conjunction with this - and building on the highly valuable output gained from our field visits - we also saw a need to collect such information in a more structured and standardised way. With COVID-19 having disrupted the natural flow of collaboration between organisations (and the inherent nature of Indigo's work being mostly remote by default), a solid Partner Communications plan was necessary. Combining a mix of in-person meetings, calls and due diligence checks, our goal was to both retain a clearer understanding of our partners' operations as well as not unnecessarily burden them with keeping us in the loop.

Both of these factors combined, our partner management efforts have drastically increased in effectiveness and sustainability. Especially the introduction of regular calls over the phone or video have seen partner engagement develop a new dynamic. Not only are partners provided with a platform to discuss the softer, hard-to-codify aspects of volunteer recruitment such as soft skills and team

dynamics; they also seem to be more engaged in general, reaching out to ask for our support, sharing critical feedback and letting us know how we're doing in regards to the services we provide.

Challenges

Changing Covid-19 restrictions

While 2021 saw us and our partners start to work with international volunteers again, the impact of Covid-19 continued to affect service delivery throughout the year. Not only were our partners forced to continuously adjust their operations in order to uphold best practice and comply with governmental restrictions, widespread and highly volatile travel restrictions also posed significant challenges to international volunteers ready to dedicate their time and skills. While those able to join an organisation on the ground generally tended to stay for longer periods of time, this unfortunately also meant that 2021 saw us place fewer volunteers than we would have liked to.

Brexit

The UK's decision to leave the European Union continued to affect us, having historically relied heavily on large numbers of British volunteers joining our partners on the continent. With visa restrictions following Brexit making it difficult for UK nationals to remain inside the EU for more than three months at a time, this posed challenges especially for recruitment efforts in Northern France. The region is physically close to the UK meaning that over the past years it has grown increasingly dependent on the steady supply of volunteers and resources making their way across the channel. Keeping in mind the continuous challenges Brexit (as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic) will cause to our recruitment efforts, a big strategic focus for the years ahead will therefore be to further diversify our audience and public narrative. While we will remain a British charity at heart (and legally), we have started to redirect our marketing efforts to appeal to a broader range of nationalities and have started to evaluate what an increased focus on local volunteering could look like.

Change in our partners needs

Much like ourselves, the past two years have seen our partners massively shift their focus as well. Following our field visits, it became clear that the days of massive numbers of international volunteers being necessary to run a project may slowly be a thing of the past. With the global pandemic having made it difficult for internationals to join operations on the ground, many of our partners saw themselves forced to adopt a way of working that required less support from abroad. Whether this was by changing the way services were delivered or by more closely working with volunteers from the refugee and migrant community, the need for international volunteers appears to have shifted: While they continue to be vital for the success of many of our partners' operations it is now much less about the sheer number of volunteers able to join a team on the ground than it is about their specific skills and qualifications. As a general reflection of the grassroots sector that has slowly moved away from conceiving of their work as *crisis* relief, this change not only means that our partners are finding ways to operate more sustainably, it also poses interesting questions for Indigo's future as a charity predominantly focused on recruitment. We will continue to support our partners with volunteers for as long as we can, however, a different focus in terms of our recruitment strategy may be necessary for the post-Covid era.

Shift to remote work

While 2020 had already seen us adopt a fully remote working environment, 2021 only had us further commit to it. Not only did it push us to introduce new solutions to how we collaborate and exchange information from afar, the changes we saw to the Indigo team also meant we needed to onboard new team members without ever sitting down with them at the same desk. This has generally worked well for our internal operations, but proved more challenging when trying to stay in touch with our partners. The overhaul of our partner management efforts will, however, hopefully allow us to address this concern long term.

Testimonials

"Indigo has helped me make a good connection to NGOs and I have felt in safe and good hands during the process and been less concerned about whether or not I will arrive in a good place. Indigo has provided good information about the refugee situation in Europe if wanted, and has educated me on the right way to volunteer which I think is very positive. Furthermore I feel like I have become a part of a bigger network of volunteers and I feel that there is a safety net, meaning that there is someone outside of the NGO where I'm volunteering, where I can ask questions and seek concealing if needed. Some very good resources provided by Indigo."

Cecilie Ejlersen, Volunteer with Samos Volunteers (Greece)

"Indigo has been vital in connecting Collective Aid Calais with volunteers especially considering the difficulties most if not all organisations in Calais have been experiencing. [...] Not only does Indigo directly provide us with potential volunteers who might be interested in joining our team, but they are available to respond to and check up on both the prospective volunteer and Collective Aid. Indigo makes sure that all parties involved with the process are regularly contacted, and makes themselves available for any questions or concerns regarding the process. The care and attention given by the Indigo team shows a true commitment and care for interested individuals to join an organisation that best suits them. Not only this, but I feel confident that Indigo fulfills requests for specific qualities and skills of the individual, while respecting the different level of experiences of all potential volunteers."

Soline Le Compte, Volunteer Coordinator at Collective Aid (France)

3 Wellbeing support

Humanitarian Wellbeing Pilot

Programme Overview

This year Indigo Volunteers collaborated with The Human Hive and Refugee Trauma Initiative to roll out a Humanitarian Wellbeing Pilot. The aim was to train grassroots humanitarian partner organisations working to support refugees across Greece, France, and the Balkans to embed better well-being policies and practices within their organisations. While Refugee Trauma Initiative and The Human Hive focused on the delivery and execution of the pilot, Indigo was responsible for organisational aspects and outreach.

When the mental health of teams and volunteers is affected, this inevitably has a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of the very people they have traveled to help. The success of entire programmes can be disrupted by teams and volunteers feeling overwhelmed by their work and this in turn can be incredibly counterproductive to direct delivery and the overall efficacy of the sector.

In 2021 we saw the pilot launch, run and finish. The pilot worked with three separate groups: 1) The Senior Leadership Teams of 10 participating organisations served by Indigo Volunteers 2) Wellbeing Coordinators placed within those organisations, and 3) Volunteers coming to work in the field through Indigo Volunteers.

Throughout the pilot, the following activities took place:

- The entire cohort of participants - both Senior Leadership representatives and the appointed Wellbeing Coordinator per organisation, participated in sessions focused on each of our four key wellbeing pillars; Safety, Belonging, Purpose, and Identity.
- A monthly schedule of the following took place:

- One Wellbeing training session for both Senior Leadership representatives & Wellbeing Coordinators

- One Reflective Practice session for Wellbeing Coordinators

The purpose of the reflective practice sessions was to provide a space in which participants could reflect on their experiences of implementing wellbeing practice in their organisations: what was going well and challenges they were facing.

- One Policy Workshop for Senior Leadership representatives

These sessions focused on a different policy area governing the most important stages in the volunteering / staff journey that the coalition team felt were key to ensuring consistent wellbeing practice in organisations. The sessions reviewed with participants whether the four Wellbeing Pillars were embedded in each policy document, and the extent to which documents were 'live' documents that were implemented in practice in each organisation, or static documents that did not bear relevance to colleagues in their day to day work.

- Two three-part General Volunteer trainings attended by volunteers before beginning their volunteering journey. These involved specialist-, trauma- and identity-informed training and prepared volunteers for the unique demands of working with displaced people seeking international protection.

The Humanitarian Wellbeing Pilot ended in October, and the programme's evaluation remains in progress. Overall, the feedback received was positive, and following constructive suggestions as well as the learnings gained from this first pilot, the coalition has already begun exploring what a second version could look like.

Impact Data

<i>Wellbeing training sessions - Number of individual participants</i>	19
<i>Policy workshops - Number of individual participants</i>	12
<i>Volunteer Trainings - Number of individual participants</i>	77

Indigo Support Network

Programme Overview

Through the Indigo Support Network, volunteers can receive Mental Health and/or Coaching support. Effectively a contact list of support professionals, volunteers receive this resource before they go on the field and can access it anonymously and confidentially throughout and post 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 burn out, and challenge the unhealthy culture that often permeates the sector. We aim to normalise the discussion around mental health by reminding partners of the natural incentive to take it seriously: Only a healthy team can operate effectively.

In 2021, we introduced a third dimension to our support network by including mental health support resources in multiple languages. Many of the operations carried out by our partners rely on the support of members from the refugee and migrant community who may not find conversing in languages other than English. By diversifying the amount of languages in which support from our network can be drawn, we hope to reach even more volunteers from various backgrounds.

To ensure this service continues to be offered at the highest standard, we have also reviewed how we process data around the Indigo Support Network service delivery. Easier access to feedback mechanisms for supporting partners and volunteers, as well as a centralised way of collecting impact data allows us to retain a clear picture of how to develop the service further in the future.

Impact Data

47 HOURS OF SUPPORT

<i>Number of mental health support sessions</i>	55
<i>Number of coaching support sessions</i>	15
<i>Total number of people who made use of our support network</i>	59
<i>Total duration of support sessions provided in hours</i>	51

4 Capacity Building

Connect, Share, Facilitate

Spearheading a network of grassroots actors engaged towards similar goals, much can be gained from collaborating with one another, and only by exchanging the lessons learnt along the way can we progress as a sector. In order to attempt to summarise the various different ways in which we aim to build our network and expand on the benefits that come with this process, the following mantra revealed itself: At the heart of it, what Indigo does is to *connect*, *share*, and *facilitate*.

We *connect* people by offering recruitment services and introducing those with similar queries, challenges, and ideas to one another. We *share* guidance documentation carefully developed from the vast array of approaches employed by our partners, and share opportunities to grow, learn or receive other types of support where they arise. Finally, we *facilitate* training sessions for partners and volunteers alike, organise psycho-social support for those who feel they could use it, and offer mediation where things go amiss.

2021 was - for many of us - predominantly a year of adaptation and introspection. While many partners decided to shift their operational focus towards being less reliant on international volunteers, we used this time to thoroughly evaluate the very setup our charity runs on. We still connected, shared and facilitated as before, but considering the needs of our partners, the bigger focus was on making sure we can do so even better in the year ahead. With a strong partner flow and a sizable Wellbeing support arm firmly implanted, we conducted extensive research on the needs of our partners and volunteers for the year ahead. Using this information, we hope to double down on our guiding mantra in 2022.

CONNECT, SHARE, FACILITATE

Number of times we shared individual resources and opportunities

86

Number of times we connected people outside our regular recruitment program

7

Empowerment Self-Defence Training

This year we collaborated with Empowerment Self Defence (ESD) Global and supported the delivery of two ESD trainings. ESD provides humanitarian workers with a better understanding of setting boundaries, assertive communication techniques strengthening intuition and identifying, setting and maintaining one's boundaries. This training was made available across our network of partners and volunteers.

Conscious Activism Training

Two trainings were organised in May and June 2021 by Conscious Activism, which offered participants tools on navigating secondary trauma and self-regulation tools to increase resiliency in NGO staff and volunteers.

5 Stakeholder Engagement

Marketing

The addition of the Content Marketing Manager, Sabina, into our team transformed our visibility and media presence. During her first month working for Indigo (July 2021), Sabina focused on testing different content styles and tracking metrics, to optimise performance.

In developing a more strategic approach to our marketing, we created a new Tone of Voice document to inform our overall communication strategy and updated our Branding Guidelines. We also ran an audit of the current website, ahead of an upgrade in 2022, and began mapping out an extensive marketing strategy for 2022.

In addition, we increased our outreach by re-starting Indigo's monthly newsletter and using our media accounts to highlight the work of our partners, current opportunities to get involved with Indigo, key events happening on the ground, and more.

Finally, at the end of the year we launched The Big Give fundraiser and raised £4,800 to support our operations in 2022.

Other Indigo Partnerships & Collaborations

UNLRN

The whole team attended a 'Burn Out Training' run by Selina from UNLRN. This was as a response to results uncovered in a survey conducted by UNLRN earlier this year that showed the team was burnt out. This training was an important space to hold and helped the team to learn about the symptoms of

burn-out, how to avoid burn-out and how to recover from burn-out. Throughout the rest of the year long partnership, UNLRN delivered four additional trainings on:

- Listening circle
- Unconscious bias
- Anti racism
- Microaggressions and conflict management

Anne-Maartje Oud

In October the Indigo team attended a session on “Feedback” facilitated by Anne-Maartje from The Behaviour Company, learning how to give feedback to each other and what mechanism we will implement in our daily work. As multiple new members joined the Indigo team in the second half of 2021, taking time to build on our internal communication and collaboration has been critical.

Cyber Security Firm

Throughout the year, the team has worked closely with an external cyber security firm. With their guidance, various changes have been made to the way we operate and maintain our infrastructure keeping in mind the long-term safety of the data we hold and process. We hope to make some of the lessons we’ve learnt from this available to partners in the coming year.

Legal Support

In light of Brexit and the emergence of UK GDPR, Indigo has spent the year focusing on reassessing its data protection efforts. In collaboration with legal support from field experts, we have introduced a new [privacy policy](#) for our website and reworked our records of processing. Combined with our work on operational infrastructure and the security of the data we process, data protection is a cornerstone of our daily work and service delivery.

Technical Support

Last but not least, Indigo is in the fortunate position to benefit from the Salesforce's Power of Us programme, the Google for Nonprofits platform as well as the Slack for Nonprofits programme. Additionally, two consultants have provided ongoing, voluntary support in maintaining and developing our Salesforce org.

With Thanks To

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**



**GLOBAL
WHOLE BEING
FUND** Caring for
humanity on the move

and the over 90 individuals who supported us by donating 130 times.