

ANNUAL REPORT

Project Play



2022

www.project-play.org





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LETTER FROM THE BOARD



2022 was a busy year for Project Play! Getting properly back on our feet following Covid-19 disruptions, we worked with over 1350 children across 314 sessions (our highest number of sessions since we began). Our weekly themes took us on quite a journey - from rainbows and colour to superheroes and fantasy creatures, from food, taste and smell to science and nature, and from sports and games to identity and self-love. And that barely scratches the surface!

2022 also saw us visited by magical guests. [Changing Stories](#) lit up our tent with interactive theatre, large scale painting and comedy gold, [Musique Sans Frontières](#) inspired us with music and a host of instruments, and [Wind Up Penguin](#) dazzled us with their spectacular, interactive musical performance.

We are infinitely grateful to our volunteers, partners on the ground and to you, the Project Play family, for your continued support this year. From our Ground Team fundraiser in the Spring, to ice-skating challenges and a truly iconic drag show this Christmas, we've been humbled by your fundraising efforts, monetary and physical donations - big and small.

We'd like to extend a particular thank you to the wonderful people at [Outdoor Play and Learning \(OPAL\)](#), who've been supporting us with monthly donations since 2020. We're deeply grateful for your ongoing support, and look forward to another year in partnership.

Yet despite these moments of joy, the tireless pursuit of hostile policies by both France and the UK means that the border remains violent and deadly. The children we work with are exposed to routine state hostility and daily violations of their fundamental rights. We stand in solidarity with all those forced to live in these hostile conditions and risk their lives seeking safety, and will continue to fight for a future in which no-one is subject to this.

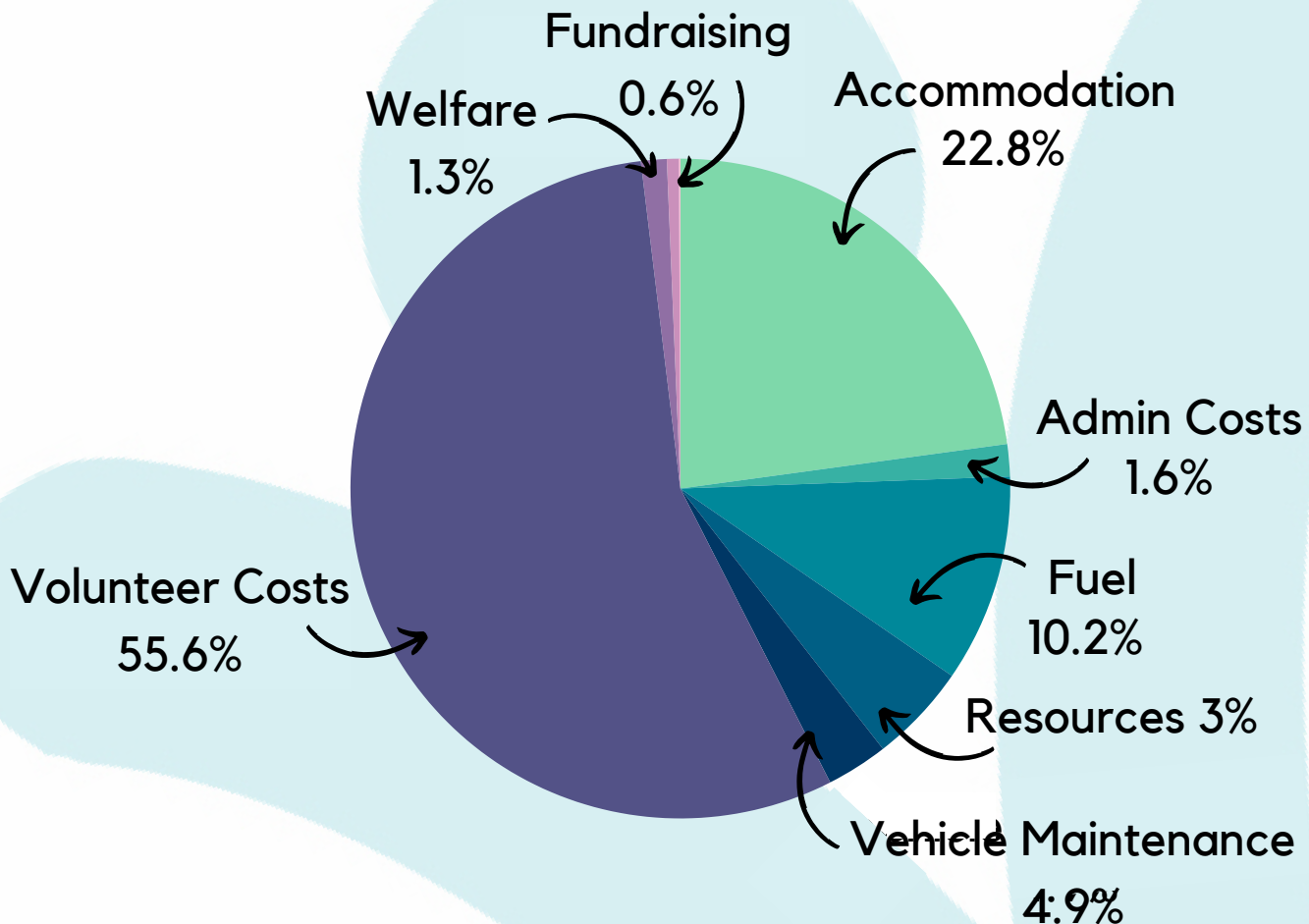
Our work, and the work of our partner organisations in Calais and Dunkirk, could not happen without your support. We cannot thank you enough.

Thank you all!

Big love from Claire, Col, Rachel, Tiph, Katie and the Project Play family x x

OUR YEAR IN GRAPHS

Expenditure:
€92,510.41 (~£80,619.09)

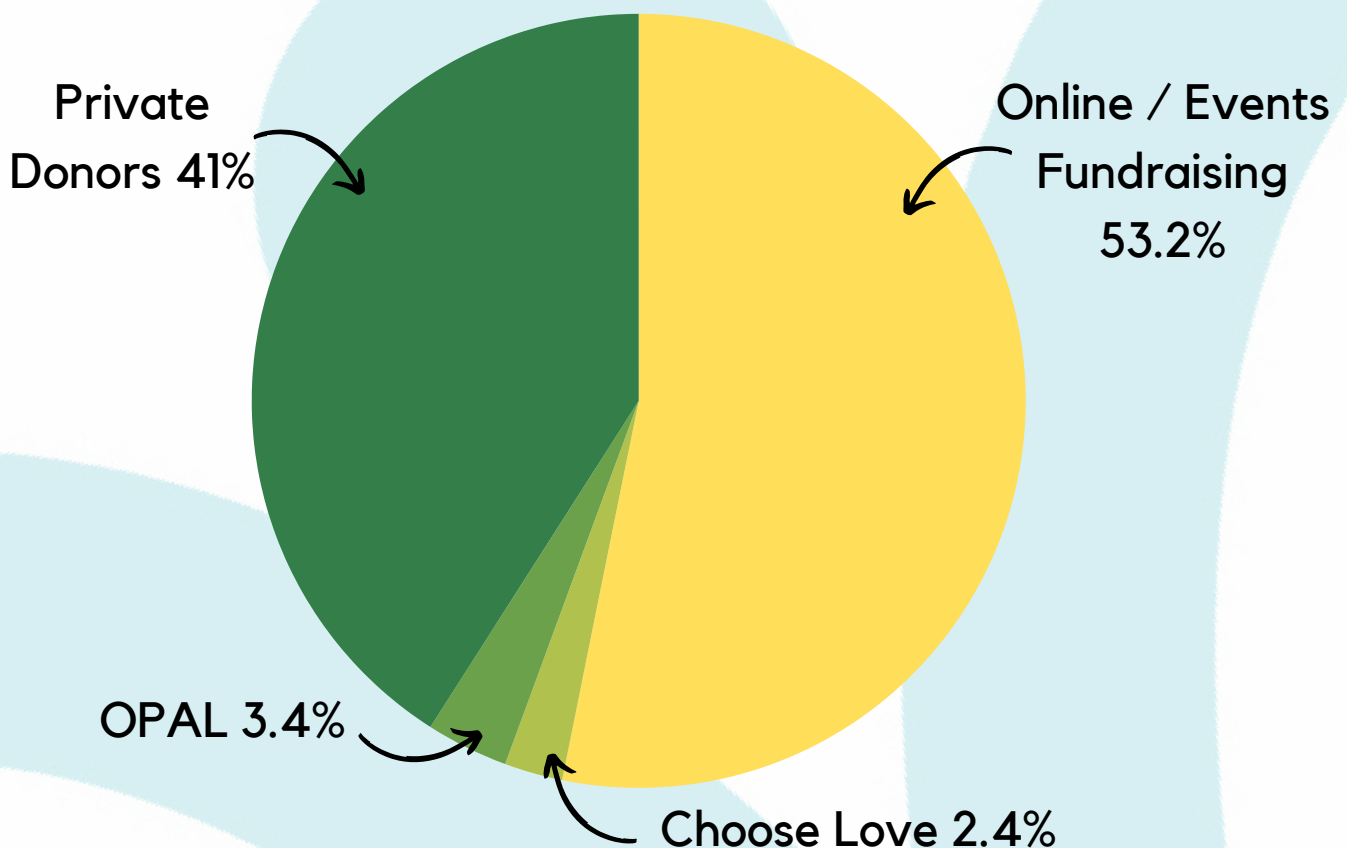


We continuously strive to minimize operational expenses, ensuring that each donated penny or cent directly contributes to sustaining our vital service. We are immensely grateful for the generosity of supporters who provide the materials and resources that enable us to deliver engaging and enriching sessions. This allows us to keep our costs low.

A significant portion of our budget is allocated to Volunteer Costs (V.C.). We are committed to assembling the best possible team to ensure our service can best meet the needs of the children we work with. In turn, we work to ensure that our incredible team members receive the necessary support to ensure their sustained commitment. We assist coordinators with living expenses, covering essentials such as food, accommodation and welfare, helping ensure their presence with us for extended periods. This is fundamental to fostering continuity and stability in our service, and maximising the impact we're able to have on the lives of the children we work with.

OUR YEAR IN GRAPHS

Income: £69715
(approx. €79,092.58)



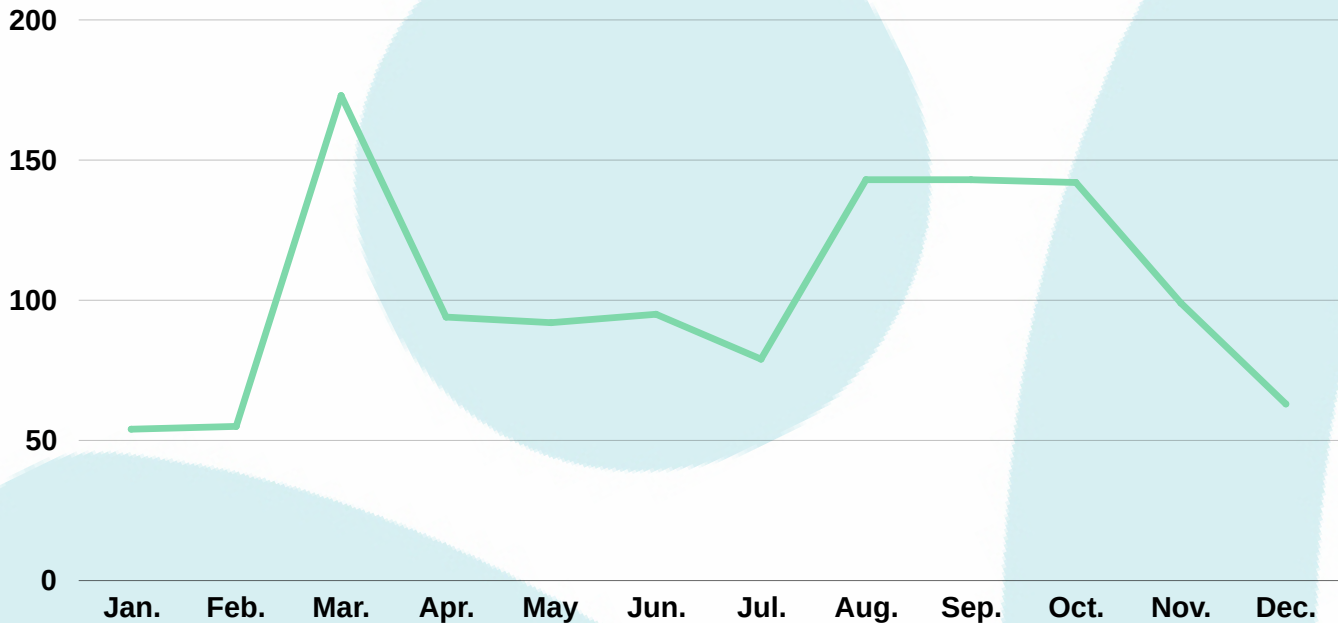
2022 was a very busy year for fundraising! Choose Love, our main donor withdrew from northern France at the end of 2021. Previously, they had been funding our volunteer stipend costs - these are our greatest expense, and one which is hard to procure from the majority of grant funders. We are very thankful for their support, which allowed us to find some brilliant coordinators who could passionately run and develop our little organisation! Their support was invaluable whilst they maintained a presence on the France-UK border and they allowed us to plant the seeds of growth.

Losing this funding was a difficult moment for us - we didn't know if we would be able to fill the gap left and support our volunteer coordinators. Thankfully, and with tears of relief, the Project Play family really came through! Our long term supporters, OPAL, continued to give a generous monthly donation and support our work. Our volunteers and supporters got creative and knocked it out of the ball park with fundraisers galore - from drag shows to a tiny transport fundraiser! And one anonymous donor gave very generously. We can not be more thankful to everyone that supported us at this challenging time. We have never been so touched by our community's heart - **if you made a donation, of any size, THANK YOU - we kept playing!!!**

OUR YEAR IN GRAPHS

THE CHILDREN WE WORKED WITH

Number of Children*



This year we worked with at least 1350 children, an average of 112 each month. The number of children is hard to monitor due to fast turnovers of families and constant evictions of living sites, meaning the children we see can change week to week and session to session. This year, the number of children we worked with fluctuated significantly - due to evictions, weather conditions and other factors.

Ages of Children*



*- the number of children we work with is not representative of the total number of children on the move in northern France. Because of changes in our data collection, age data was only recorded in March, May, November and December, but trends were consistent over each of these months.

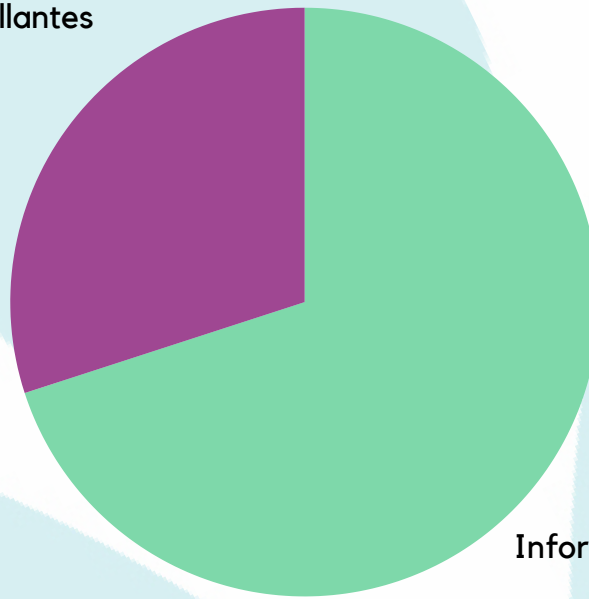
OUR YEAR IN GRAPHS

THE SESSIONS WE RAN

Locations

Maisons Accueillantes
30%

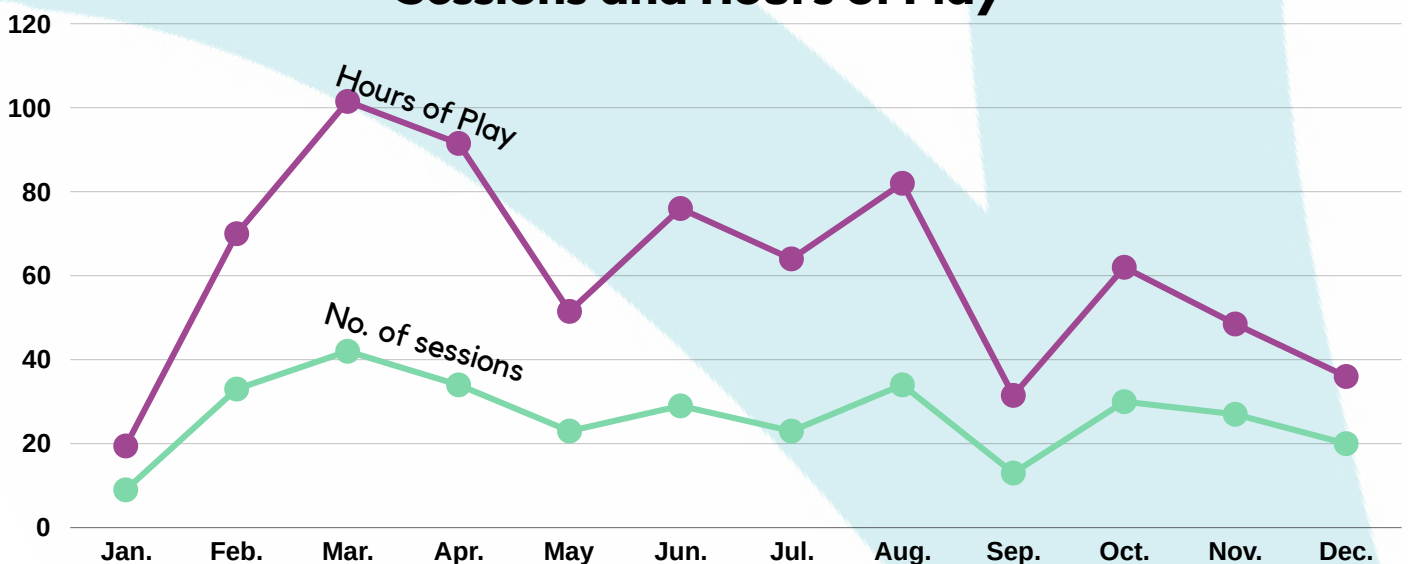
We worked at three different maisons accueillantes - a safe house and community centre run by an NGO, and an independent safe house.



We worked at two different informal settlements in 2022. The majority of our sessions take place in the Grande-Synthe camp.

Informal Settlements
70%

Sessions and Hours of Play



In 2022 we ran a total of 314 sessions, facilitating 721 hours of play.

Evictions and other security concerns prevented us from running our normal sessions in early summer, whilst our service in September was significantly impacted by issues with our van. We were still able to facilitate an average of 26 sessions each month.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

SAFEGUARDING

2022 was an important year for Project Play regarding the development of safeguarding training and practices. The French-UK border is an incredibly complex space in terms of safeguarding, due to the nature of the risks faced by the children we work with and the limited state resources available to us - unfortunately, the French state does not provide safeguarding mechanisms for children on the move. As a result, the services and support that are available to them are limited and very challenging to access. Project Play works with other state and non-state actors to support this gap in safeguarding provision. We also work with a wider body of organisations to support all volunteers to better understand and implement best practice when working on the field with the community. **We continue to call on the French state to provide better access and support to children and families on the move.**

Health and Medical Concerns

As the year started, with COVID-19 still prevalent, protecting the communities we work with remained a central consideration, with sanitation and access to medication very limited in these informal settlements. For this reason, it was even more important for us to be following the most stringent measures. This included regular testing, the wearing of masks and the provision of sanitisation methods on session. Well done to our team who managed to balance the importance of providing our sessions alongside the heightened risk to our community. We'd also like to extend a huge thank you to our partners at First Aid Support Team (FAST) for delivering first aid training sessions relevant to children of all ages, helping to empower our team to safely, calmly and confidently respond to first aid incidents. Strengthening our relationship with FAST was also invaluable as it helped us to better signpost questions, concerns and incidents to their experienced team.

Extreme Weather

In 2022, the winter saw many large storms, devastating when your shelter is a tent; on multiple occasions, families with small children were forced to sleep outdoors in dangerous conditions. As a team, we campaigned for local government infrastructure to provide emergency accommodation and worked with other associations to ensure families, children and adults had access to safe and suitable shelter where possible. The summer months brought other extremes in weather, with temperatures exceeding 40C. For children without access to consistent water supplies, shade or appropriate clothing to stay cool, this was a serious health concern. Liaising with our partners at Refugee Community Kitchen enabled us to bring drinking water on each of our sessions, and we again worked collaboratively with other associations to ensure the communities we work with had adequate support during this period of extreme heat.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

Training and Team Development

We as a team continue to improve our safeguarding offering. It is vital to us that we have follow safer recruitment practice and train our team well. Our safeguarding coordinators dedicated considerable time and energy to ensure that this is an area that we continue to adapt and develop to best suit the needs of our volunteers and the dynamic, unstable context in which we work.

This year, we have expanded our training offering. When new volunteers start, they receive detailed training on how to safeguard the children we work with and what signs we need to be aware of. Our coordinators have also conducted research into how to work with trauma, how to mitigate toxic stress and how to support both children and parents on the move. This enables our training to remain current, and sharing this research with the wider team promotes ownership and facilitates deeper understanding.

This has also enabled our team, led by the safeguarding coordinator, to conduct rigorous and detailed risk assessments. The context we work in is unstable and unpredictable, and this is a vital facet of our safeguarding work - enabling us to ensure we are always working in the best interests of the children we work with.



OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

We had so much fun in 2022! When planning sessions, we are led by what will engage the children so they can switch off from their surroundings and relax. With children not accessing other forms of education or safe spaces to play, how we can best support their development is another core consideration. From emotional awareness and regulation, to teaching them about health and self-care, to fine motor skills - we strive to make sessions impactful. An objective is always hidden away in all the fun! Have a look at some of our favourite sessions of 2022.

Space Week - Embarking on a cosmic adventure, our space-themed activities ignited imaginations and fostered creative exploration. Participants engaged in the mesmerising process of crafting intergalactic slime, capturing the essence of otherworldly textures. Alien-themed creations took shape, with vibrant colors and imaginative designs bringing extraterrestrial friends to life. The highlight soared to new heights with rocket-making endeavours, as participants constructed miniature vessels destined for the stars. These activities not only sparked scientific curiosity but also cultivated teamwork and innovation.



Animal Week - Our animal-themed activities transformed learning into a vibrant menagerie of creativity and expression. Exploring diverse sensory materials, participants crafted unique monsters, delving into a tactile world of textures and colors. The theater became a stage for puppetry, as handmade characters conveyed stories rich with emotion, unraveling the tapestry of our feelings. Navigating a monstrous obstacle course injected physical activity with imaginative challenges. From creature creations to interactive storytelling, each activity not only celebrated the animal kingdom but also nurtured emotional intelligence and teamwork.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

Theatre Week - we were lucky enough to welcome Changing Stories (if you don't know them, check them out!). They are a group of professional performers and artists using the power of play and imagination to uplift children in refugee camps, slums and asylum shelters within Europe. Their colourful suits are enough to put a smile on any face and the wider community appreciated their energy and joy! During their time with us, they treated us to a side splitting creative show. They also ran some creative workshops which offered the children an opportunity to develop their confidence and explore their emotions through drama.



Music Week - In a week of musical exploration, our sessions became a symphony of creativity. Rainbow-colored ukuleles, a gleaming glockenspiel, and a full-size electric keyboard sparked the children's musical journey. Water sound play immersed the children in a sensory world of pots, pans, and bubbles, engaging both younger and older participants. Jingly threading, designed for mid-week adaptability, honed fine motor skills with colorful pipe cleaners and bells. A giant xylophone, handcrafted by our team, painted by eager hands, adorned our gazebo. The week crescendoed with *Musique Sans Frontières*, sharing the magic of live trombone and violin!

Careers Week - This week we explored careers! It was amazing hearing the children's aspirations. We explored lots of careers including being a chef, an artist, an architect and a scientist! We crafted play dough delicacies like sushi, hot dogs, and pizza and collaboratively concocting lemonade. An architectural adventure unfolded as spaghetti and sweets transformed into towers, prompting critical reasoning and creative construction. Scientific curiosity took center stage in colorful slime-making, revealing the liquid-solid wonders of cornflour, water, and food colouring.



OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

ADVOCACY

Overview

At Project Play, our advocacy work seeks to effect change in local and national policies and practices. Every child should be able to enjoy their full spectrum of rights. Both France and the UK have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the rights enshrined within it - for all children, irrespective of their migration status.

The French state does not provide the communities we work with access to safe and stable shelter or hygiene and sanitation facilities. Many of the children we work with have inadequate clothing for the weather conditions, and the French state does not provide any food distribution in the camp. On top of this, regular eviction operations expose children and their families to mental and physical violence, including the use of tear gas. The UK is complicit in this; announcing that they will send €72.2m of taxpayer money to France to "securitise" the border in 2022/23.



The above photo was taken during an eviction of the Grande-Synthe living site in May 2022.

Grassroots organisations attempt to fill these gaps, but it is fundamentally the duty of the state to ensure that every child has access to the materials, support and protection they need to enjoy each of their rights under the CRC.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

Our Approach

Our approach to advocacy centres on the principles of non-discrimination, accountability and participation - ensuring that the voices and perspectives of the children we work with are at the centre of our work. In 2022, our advocacy focused on three key issues for children living on the UK-France border:

1 Access to safe spaces to play and learn.

Every child has the right to play (Article 31 CRC), and to an education (Article 28 CRC).

We facilitate safe spaces for children to play, learn and be themselves - but we shouldn't have to. Play is a fundamental and vital aspect of childhood, crucial for healthy development. The children we work with have no access to school, or safe spaces to play. This year, the areas we use for our sessions, and which children use for their own play, were often destroyed during eviction operations.

2 An immediate end to violent eviction operations.

Every child has the right to be free from all forms of violence - states have the responsibility to protect children from violence, not to be the source of it. (Article 19 CRC). Through eviction operations, the French state exposes children to mental and physical violence.

3 Access to safe, stable and unconditional shelter in key locations in northern France.

Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27 CRC). This year, the seasons have brought extremes of weather - from storms, snow and freezing temperatures to record heats. Throughout, the children we work with have had little access to appropriate shelter or protection from the elements - weather appropriate clothing, shade or water. This is a threat to physical and mental health.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

Our Work in 2022

Networks and Partnerships

Inter-association collaboration is an integral component of our advocacy work. Our ground team coordinator is an active member of local networks, including the Commission Plaidoyer and the Grande-Synthe and Calais inter-association groups. As part of these networks, we work to defend the rights of people in northern France affected by displacement and forced migration, and to ensure representation for the specific needs of the children and young people we work with.

Our advocacy team grew in autumn 2022, with a UK advocacy coordinator working remotely to support the ground team advocacy coordinator, increasing our ability to monitor and respond to both UK and French developments, and participate in cross-border collaboration. Links have been revived and created, and will be strengthened throughout 2023. Additionally, we've played an active role in the merger of Calais Appeal and Calais Common Initiative, and Communications and Advocacy will play an important role in the newly formed Calais Appeal. We were excited to collaborate with Calais Appeal for the launch of our Winter campaign, 'No Childhood Should Look Like This', which aimed to spotlight the failures of the French and UK Governments to uphold their obligations under the CRC.

Data Collection

The added capacity of the UK coordinator has enabled us to improve our data collection and reporting capabilities. We conducted a review of our data collection practices in October, working with the current ground team to gain feedback of the practical challenges of data collection in the spaces we work with, and liaising with experts within the sector. This enabled us to strengthen the accuracy and efficacy of our debriefs, raw data handling and data processing.

As the only independent organisation working with children on the border, the data we collect is a vital part of our advocacy toolkit - enabling us to contribute to the work of organisations with greater impact. In December, we provided a detailed testimony to Solidarité Internationale about the lack of access to water and sanitation for children on the border. This was used to inform the production of a report synthesising multi-organisational data and the perspectives of people on the move, submitted as part of France's UPR process.



GOALS FOR 2023

2022 was a fantastic year in many ways! We have been supported by an incredible team, on and off the ground. Improving our play provision is always in the forefront of our mind, however, we also need to strive to improve and strengthen our service. In our AGM, we set three goals for 2023.

1.

Build capacity to ensure the sustainability of the organisation

As a small grassroots NGO that grew holistically, our focus turns increasingly to our long-term future. We need to add capacity - grow our team, create a sustainable fundraising strategy and reflect on our policy and procedure. Working in a challenging space, in which burn out is not uncommon, we need to ensure longevity through responsible guardianship and teamwork.

2.

Grow our advocacy position and scope.

Project Play has unique insight into the experience of children at the border, and a strong position from which to fight against the rights abuses experienced daily by children that we work with. As an organisation, we need to use our voice. Mindful of our internal capacity and reach, we need to improve our data collection and forge relationships with larger organisations and networks who can use this to support change. Simultaneously, we need to ensure our communications allow our network to understand and act against the abuses of the border.

3.

Improve the diversity and inclusivity of our team.

Our community of organisations faces the same systemic challenges as the rest of the world. Over the years, we have had fantastic teams who have prioritised educating themselves to counter the discriminatory biases and tendencies entrenched in humanitarian work. We as an organisation want to prioritise this work further to make the warehouse and field more inclusive whilst continuing to commit to and improve our anti-racist and anti-white saviour position. This will involve education, training and collaboration.



SPECIAL THANKS



Every end-of-year Project Play reaches feels like a miracle to us! A tiny, grassroots organisation, born out of love - and a belief in every child's right to an education. We didn't think we would make it through 6 months, let alone 4 years! The border continues to become more complex, more challenging and more hostile. This means that our dedicated team have to work even harder; and devastatingly the children who we serve are forced to endure every more untenable conditions and rights abuses.

There is a small glimmer of hope amidst the darkness of the context in which we work, and we couldn't be more thankful to anyone and everyone that has worked with us, supported us, helped us and stood with us in solidarity. **THANK YOU to all of our coordinators** - we are so lucky to attract such hardworking, kind, talented individuals who give so so so much to us. We wouldn't exist without you and you shape us for the better. Thank you for your patience and teaching us so much. **THANK YOU to each and every one of our volunteers** - you make us what we are, turning up with energy and passion. You share your time, talents and smiles. **THANK YOU to all of the individuals and organisations** that we have the honour of working alongside at the warehouse and in our networks. Your ingenuity and determination allow us all to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

To those off the ground - **Amber and her team at ForRefugees**, thank you for your tireless support and contribution to this ignored and politicised space. You stand by humanity and give us a sense of community in a fractured space. To **Michael and his team at OPAL**, thank you for your consistent support and guidance. To all of our **remote volunteers**, thank you for your time, energy and commitment.

We would like to say a huge thank you to **everyone who donated, fundraised or shared** our posts for us - it's not an exaggeration to say that **we wouldn't be able to keep going without you**. A particular thanks to everyone who organised a fundraising event for us. Additionally, another thank you to our umbrella organisation, **ForRefugees**, who graciously support us with our finances and are always available to lend a helping hand, we are indebted to you.

And of course, we would like to thank all the children who shared their time with us, who **lit up our days with their imagination, creativity and enthusiasm for learning**.

SPECIAL THANKS

LE PLANNING FAMILIAL NORD-PAS-DE-CALAIS



Woodyard

Channel Info Project



CHANGING STORIES

PLAY AGAINST BORDERS.

www.project-play.org



Project Play is a French registered
charity, Charity No: W594012083

We operate in the UK under the umbrella
of Donate4Refugees, Charity No: 1168435

