



**Roots**  
W626007063

# **ROOTS ANNUAL REPORT**

# 2025

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# THE STORY OF GRANDE SYNTHÉ

The first camp was in Basroch, an area fairly close to Loon Plage. It housed families in tents and wooden structures but was eventually closed. With the support of Damien Carême, then Mayor of Grande-Synthe, the camp was relocated to La Linière. At its height, La Linière accommodated refugees in small hut-style shelters and included a volunteer-led school, kitchens, and distribution areas. Sadly, a fire in April 2017 led to the evacuation and permanent closure of the site. Since then, people have been living in nearby forests, trying to survive.



The camp was once home primarily to families from Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Syria. In recent years, as global conditions have worsened, the population has become far more diverse. Numbers fluctuate throughout the year, ranging from around 300 to as many as 1,500 people, depending on the season and weather. Everyone hopes to reach the UK, each for their own reasons. In the summer of 2025, for example, fewer people remained due to long periods of calm seas, which made crossings easier. Currently, around 500 people are present and receive daily support. During harsh winter conditions, local halls may open to provide additional shelter, but capacity is limited to approximately 160 people, leaving many without a safe place to stay.

# THE STORY OF GRANDE SYNTHE

Small camp evictions are relentlessly common, happening as often as every other day, and sometimes even daily. Police arrive to dismantle tents, confiscate or destroy people's few belongings, and clear the area for hours at a time. In most cases, people are allowed to return later the same day, only to rebuild what was torn down—a cruel and exhausting cycle.

These evictions are a direct product of the so-called “hostile environment” policies enforced by governments on both sides of the Channel. They are designed to keep people unsettled, to wear them down physically and mentally, and to prevent any sense of stability, safety, or home from taking root. They achieve nothing meaningful.

Instead, they waste time, public money, and human energy, while inflicting constant trauma on people who have already lost so much. In 2025 there were ????? evictions.

A few years ago, Roots was a much smaller organisation. Our work focused primarily on recycling discarded batteries into charging packs, which were then distributed by partner organisations to people who needed them most. Alongside this, we helped to care for the camp as a living space: cleaning water points, clearing litter, and carrying out basic repairs to broken facilities. Even then, our work was shaped by a strong environmental conscience. Climate action is not optional, and it is not someone else's responsibility—it belongs to all of us. In places like this, where people are forced to live without infrastructure or choice, the way waste is created, managed, and abandoned matters deeply.

Looking ahead to 2026, we hope to redirect more of our time and energy toward improving how waste is handled on site—finding better ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle what we encounter. It is a small but necessary step toward dignity, sustainability, and care in a place where all three are too often denied.



# COMMUNITY HUB

In 2025 we operated **182 hub days:**

**920.06** hours of charge

**873.96** hours of WiFi

**184.43** hours of heating

Charging and Wi-Fi provision are not luxuries—they are essential. Through our Community Hub, we provide charging and internet access so people can stay connected. Access to phone charging, power banks, and mobile data is vital in a context where everything else is uncertain.

For many, a phone is the only remaining link to family and friends left behind. It is how parents speak to their children, how people reassure loved ones they are still alive, and how hope is sustained across borders. It is also a lifeline in a very practical sense. Phones provide access to information about services on the ground, safety updates, legal advice, and emergency contacts.

Without power or connectivity, people are cut off—not only from information, but from autonomy. The ability to charge a phone and access the internet allows people to make decisions for themselves, protect their own safety, and retain a basic sense of control over their lives. In conditions designed to strip people of agency, this autonomy is not optional. It is a fundamental necessity.



# COMMUNITY HUB

In 2024, we introduced something new: a television to screen downloaded football matches. The response was immediate and overwhelming. What began as a small experiment quickly became a source of joy, normality, and shared experience. Seeing how much it mattered, we upgraded to a smart TV and, on Christmas Day, screened films for both children and adults—offering a rare moment of comfort and celebration in an otherwise difficult time.



By adding more gazebos, we ensured these activities never came at the expense of essential services like charging. We also brought chairs to create a more comfortable, welcoming space—simple changes that made a real difference to how people could rest and gather.



In 2025, we purchased a second TV so that during the summer months we could dedicate one gazebo to children's cartoons and another to live sports. Alongside this, we provide a games station, tables, and chairs, creating space for both young and old to step away from the constant stress of daily survival. For a few hours, people can play, laugh, and connect—reclaiming moments of childhood, community, and humanity that displacement so often takes away.



# SHOWERS

In 2025 we provided **9015** showers:

**7223** were men  
**1241** were women  
**551** were children

We operate our hot shower project up to four days a week. Using recycled IBCs (1,000-litre water containers), we transform waste materials into fully functioning shower units. At any one time, up to nine showers are installed at one site and two at another. At the larger site, we run six showers up to four times a week, setting up gazebos to create a sheltered, safe space.

The larger site is equipped with a secure cage housing two portable gas boilers, allowing us to convert cold-water showers—available 24/7—into hot showers during our sessions. The showers are separated with curtains to ensure privacy, and each person is given 15 minutes. We provide chairs and artificial grass mats so people have a clean, dignified space to change.



All showers are topped up daily with universal shampoo and shower gel, dispensed from refillable plastic bottles. When the project is running, we also distribute a wider range of toiletries, including deodorant, hair products, and makeup for women. These are small but powerful acts: a chance to be clean, to feel human, and to feel seen—to be offered dignity and choice in circumstances where both are too often denied.

# SHOWERS

In 2025, we successfully built and installed three additional showers, which now remain on site. Looking ahead to 2026, our aim is to update and, where possible, improve the shower designs so that even more units can be safely installed and used.

If we are able to secure not only funding but also committed volunteers, we hope to expand our capacity further by running women's and children's shower sessions at the same time as men's sessions. This would allow us to offer more facilities, reduce waiting times, and ensure that everyone who needs access to hot showers can do so with dignity, privacy, and care.



**\*\*This project can only run in non-freezing temperatures and calm weather. Unfortunately the new designated site for the showers is very exposed. Consequently we can incur significant damage during the winter. We aim to run the hot shower project for up to 9 months of the year - depending on funding, weather, vehicles and volunteer numbers.**

# WATER PROJECT

## WATER POINTS

Our water project was developed at the end of 2021 in direct response to a large-scale eviction that forced the informal camp in Dunkirk to relocate to a site with no access to running water.

Overnight, people were left without one of the most basic necessities for survival. Accessing water meant walking across busy main roads, and for many, the nearest source was more than an hour away. In these conditions, providing water ourselves was not optional—it was essential.

This quickly became one of our core projects and the most vital service we offered. As populations shifted and the areas people were forced to live in changed, we adapted the way we managed water provision. In 2023, the state installed a water point, which was expanded in 2024. Despite distribution points being moved three or four times, we have consistently worked with the CUD (Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque) to ensure water access was maintained.

Today, we oversee these water points directly. We have added additional taps, installed bins to manage litter, and attached refillable bottles to each trough and tap section, which we replenish daily with liquid soap, shampoo, and other hygiene products.



**Alongside five other organisations, we brought legal action against the state in late 2025 to seek improved provision of basic human rights. At the time of writing, we are awaiting the outcome of a partial appeal, but we are pleased to report that we were successful on many key points, including the provision of on-site toilets, access to showers, and an additional skip and improved waste management services.**

# HYGIENE AND NFI

After the 2021 eviction, Roots distributed up to 18,000 litres of water per day in the summer months. Once the CUD installed water points that we oversee it meant we could start to refocus on providing items that are needed daily. As we are on site every day and were already providing basic items at the water points - we extended this into a daily NFI distribution. In 2025 we saw a huge increase starting in April of families. We were then being asked daily if we had any nappies. So we started providing nappy packs - wet wipes in a ziplock bag alongside 4 nappies to help in an emergency. This quickly grew, instead of being a few packs of bigger sizes we needed to provide packs of every size. We were spending a lot of money, and luckily some of the groups that provide donations started to focus on nappies and wetwipes. At the height of summer we were distributing 6 packs of each size every day - 42 nappy packs a day, 294 packs a week - we were constantly running out.



One of the troughs with taps we clean now



How water points were in 2023/2024

NFI distributions are daily and some of the most requested items for people are Razors, Tissues, Ear Cotton Buds, Hand Cream, Lip Salve, Deodorant, Toothbrush and toothpaste and items to cut/ care for nails.

Once the CUD provided the water points it enabled troughs and taps to be installed and gave easier access to water to people in the living areas. Water is available 24/7 . We have placed plastic bottles with shampoo, handwash, shower gel and laundry detergent



# WASTE MANAGEMENT & SITE MAINTENANCE

In addition to waste management, we carry out regular site maintenance to ensure areas remain as safe and accessible as possible. Water points in particular generate significant mud, an issue that is greatly exacerbated during the winter months. To manage this, we routinely move and replace gravel and stone, remove excess mud, and clean surrounding areas where possible. Where resources allow, we lay concrete slabs or utilise plastic walkways and pallets to improve ground conditions, reduce mud spread, and maintain access routes. These maintenance activities are ongoing and essential to keeping the site functional, safe, and usable for all who rely on it.

We are present on site every day and actively manage waste as part of our daily operations. Bins are positioned at water points, and additional bins are provided whenever the hub or shower service is operating. Waste management has been an ongoing challenge due to the high number of people on site and, at times, limited access to sufficient waste facilities. When larger groups of volunteers are available, we aim to complete full litter picks of designated sections of the site to help manage accumulation. While we would like to recycle a greater proportion of waste, the volume generated and limited volunteer capacity has meant that consistent segregation and recycling has not always been achievable.



# COLLABORATIONS WITH ASSOS

**54 Distributions  
in 2025**

**31954 portions of  
hot food**

**339 boxes of  
towels washed for  
La Croix Rouge  
and RWC**

**52 distributions  
with Bethlehem -  
distributing cold  
food packs**

For over 3 years we have been distributing hot nutritious food made by RCK ( Refugee Community Kitchen in Calais) These meals are essential to the people we meet daily. Food insecurity is a real issue for people.

We are also proud to assist Bethlehem a food bank from Lille who come to site once a week - they prepare single and family food packs with milk and / or water.



**Alongside the washing we do for our own Shower project we have been assisting both La Croix Rouge and also the Refugee Womens Centre with their shower project. In 2025 they were operating twice a week from a local gymnasium but did not have the towels , flannels or washing facilities so we have been supplying them these items**

We collaborate with many other groups, not least HRO ( Human Rights Observers) - we regularly have training to ensure we know our rights with the police but also how to gather important information on situations we see arise. We also work alongside NBM (No Border Medics) and have assisted with lending a gazebo when they didn't have one, also training on first aid for our volunteers. Again we work alongside Care4Calais whereby we collect and store donations suitable for their charity (tents/ clothing/ sleeping bags etc) and in 2025 we have also had some of our volunteers assist with their distributions and deliveries and they have also helped us when we were low on numbers. These collaborations are vital to support refugees to the best of our abilities.



# COLLABORATIONS WITH GROUPS

Unions to include  
the FBU and the  
NEU

CAMCRAG and  
Calais Light

CATCH A SMILE

Catch a Smile is an organisation based in Luxembourg that, over the years, have supported many small grassroots organisations in France, Greece, and the Balkans. Their support has included both financial donations and the provision of essential items.

One of our vans was generously donated by Fabienne, the President of Catch a Smile. We deeply value their solidarity, understanding, and genuine commitment to supporting refugees in ways that uphold dignity and respect.

We are proud to report that in 2025 we welcomed numerous volunteer groups to Roots. CamCrag supported us every other month, spending weekends on site and bringing up to eight volunteers each time. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) joined us for a weekend in June 2025, and the National Education Union (NEU) increased the frequency of their visits and volunteers, again volunteering over full weekends. Calais Light officially closed at the end of 2025, but have been avid supporters of Roots over the years, organising and delivering toiletries, volunteering and providing financial donations.

These group visits bring many people who have not previously volunteered with Roots. The aim is to give volunteers a realistic understanding of the conditions people are living in, the journeys they have undertaken and the reasons behind them, as well as the importance of our work and the wider support network around it. Volunteers are encouraged to take this learning back to their communities, workplaces, and families, helping to challenge misinformation and misconceptions they may encounter.

*I first came to Northern France in 2016 to volunteer in the Jungle, motivated by the urgent and hostile conditions refugees were facing and a desire to build solidarity among educators in the UK. Since then, we have organised at the NEU, regular delegations of educators to provide practical humanitarian support. Sarah, Tom and the Roots team have consistently welcomed our groups and helped build a strong, long-standing partnership that makes a real difference. Our delegations have grown in size and frequency, supported by strong engagement from educators nationwide and ongoing union funding, allowing us to continue and expand our support for Roots.*

Robin Tear - one of the NEU delegation organisers

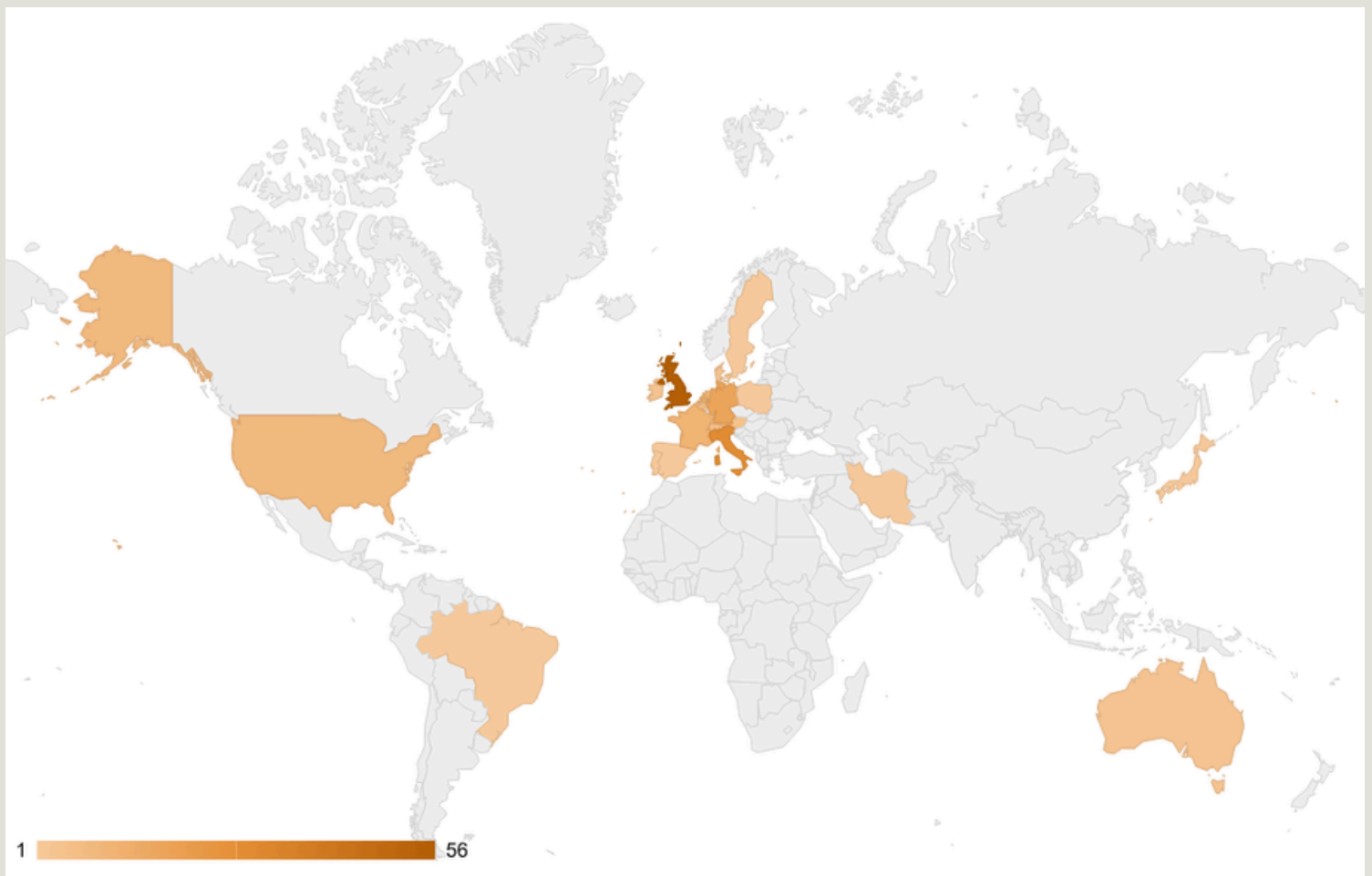


# VOLUNTEERS & DEMAGRAPHS

**175 total volunteers in 2025**

**Top 5 countries: UK, Italy, Germany, Netherlands and France**

To be a volunteer with Roots you just need to have the time and energy. You will meet new likeminded people and have some fun !!! Whilst it is always great to have long term volunteers we recognise the need for short term too - by coming for a weekend and seeing what we do - over 80% make plans to come back for longer. It can be daunting to come to a foreign country, live and work with strangers, but we have all been new and you can be assured of a warm welcome.



**We rely entirely on volunteers to keep Roots running and we are deeply grateful for the energy that every volunteer brings with them and to the community which develops with each and every person. Thanks to their commitment, we are able to grow and improve our services for the people we support.**

# COURT CASE

On Tuesday 18 November, Roots joined five partner\* organisations in filing an emergency référé-liberté petition before the Lille Administrative Court. This step was taken because the situation on the ground had become untenable. Every day, we witnessed people forced to sleep outdoors in freezing conditions, without access to water, sanitation, or medical care, while facing repeated police displacement. These conditions were not accidental, but the result of sustained State inaction.

For months, we attempted to resolve the situation through dialogue – raising alerts, documenting violations, and proposing practical solutions alongside partner organisations. Despite these efforts, the situation continued to deteriorate and fundamental rights were routinely violated. When dialogue failed, taking legal action became a responsibility. This petition was not about confrontation, but about protection – ensuring dignity, safety, and the effective application of human rights.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> December we were given the Courts decision

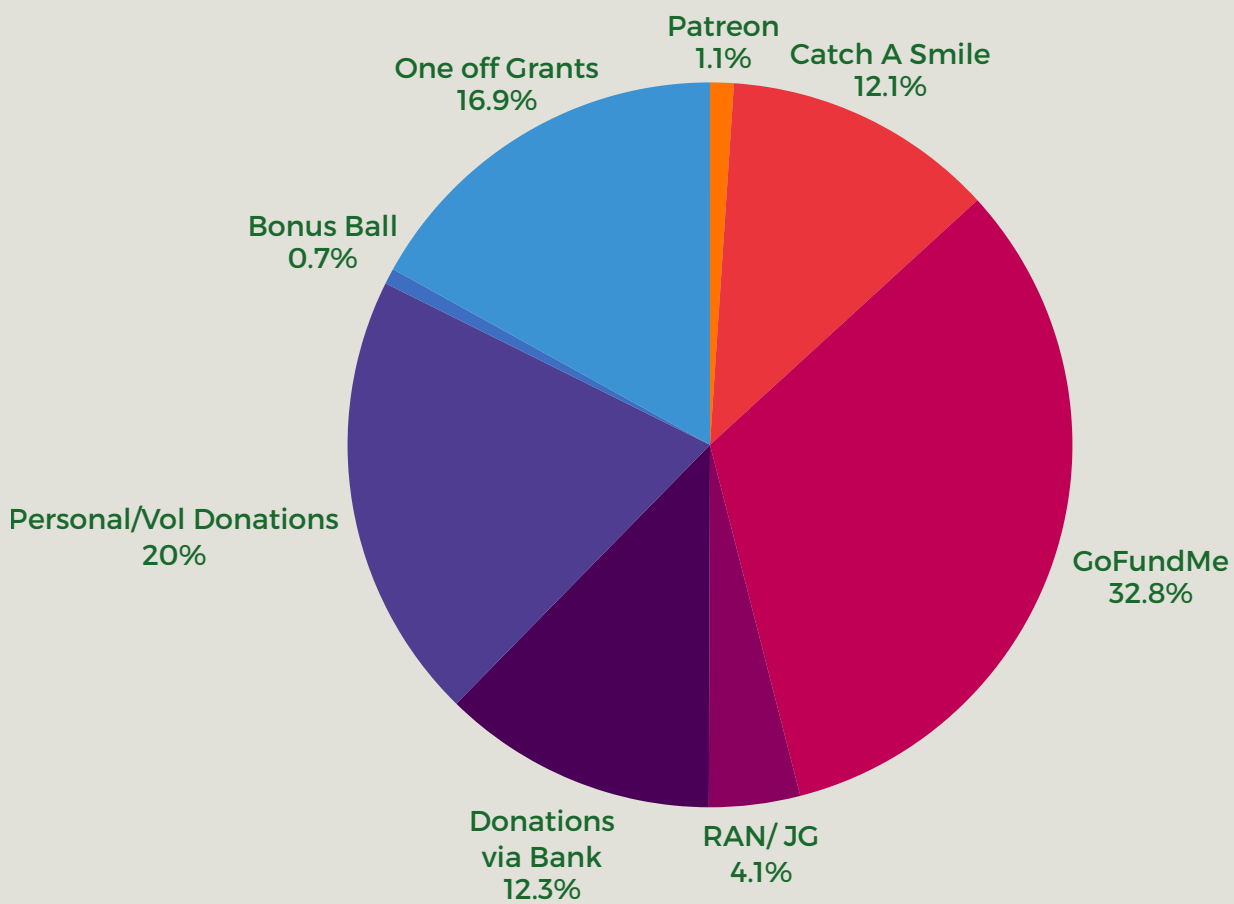
Several measures demanded by all of us partially were implemented:

- 60 toilets installed on site, including accessible facilities
  - Lighting added to improve safety by the toilets
  - An additional waste skip provided
- Groundworks completed, creating more space for organisations to operate
- Shower access coordinated by Afeji, with transport to a local gym five days a week
- Regular distribution of 10-litre water containers to ensure access to drinking water

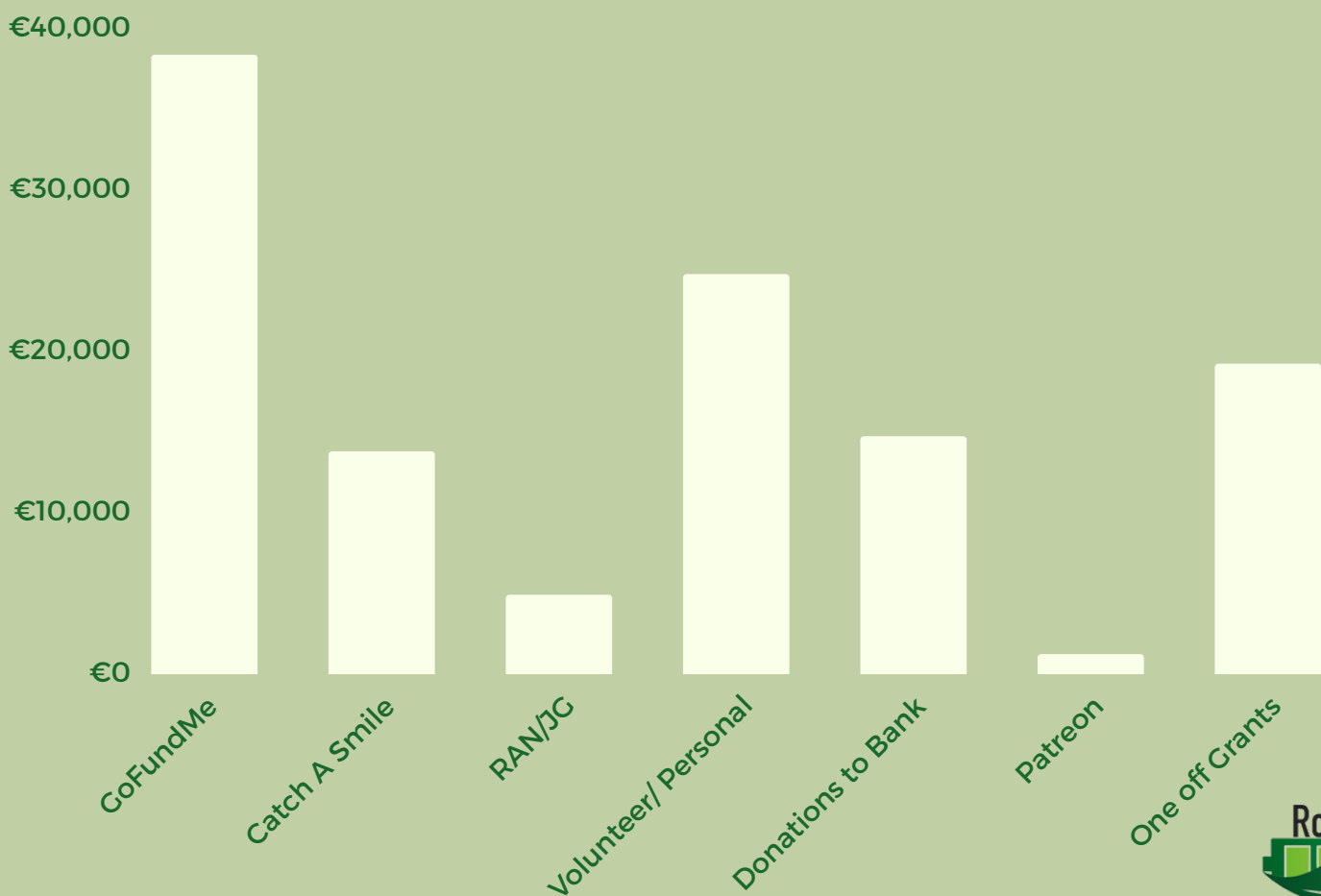
While these measures remain insufficient, they demonstrate that legal accountability can lead to tangible improvements and reinforce the importance of continued advocacy - we did appeal to the courts what we were not permitted - to date we are awaiting the results of that appeal.

**\*The partner organisations are Medecins du Monde, Utopia 56, Refugee Womens Centre, Salam and Human Rights Observers**





## 2025 Sources of Funding



# Expenditure

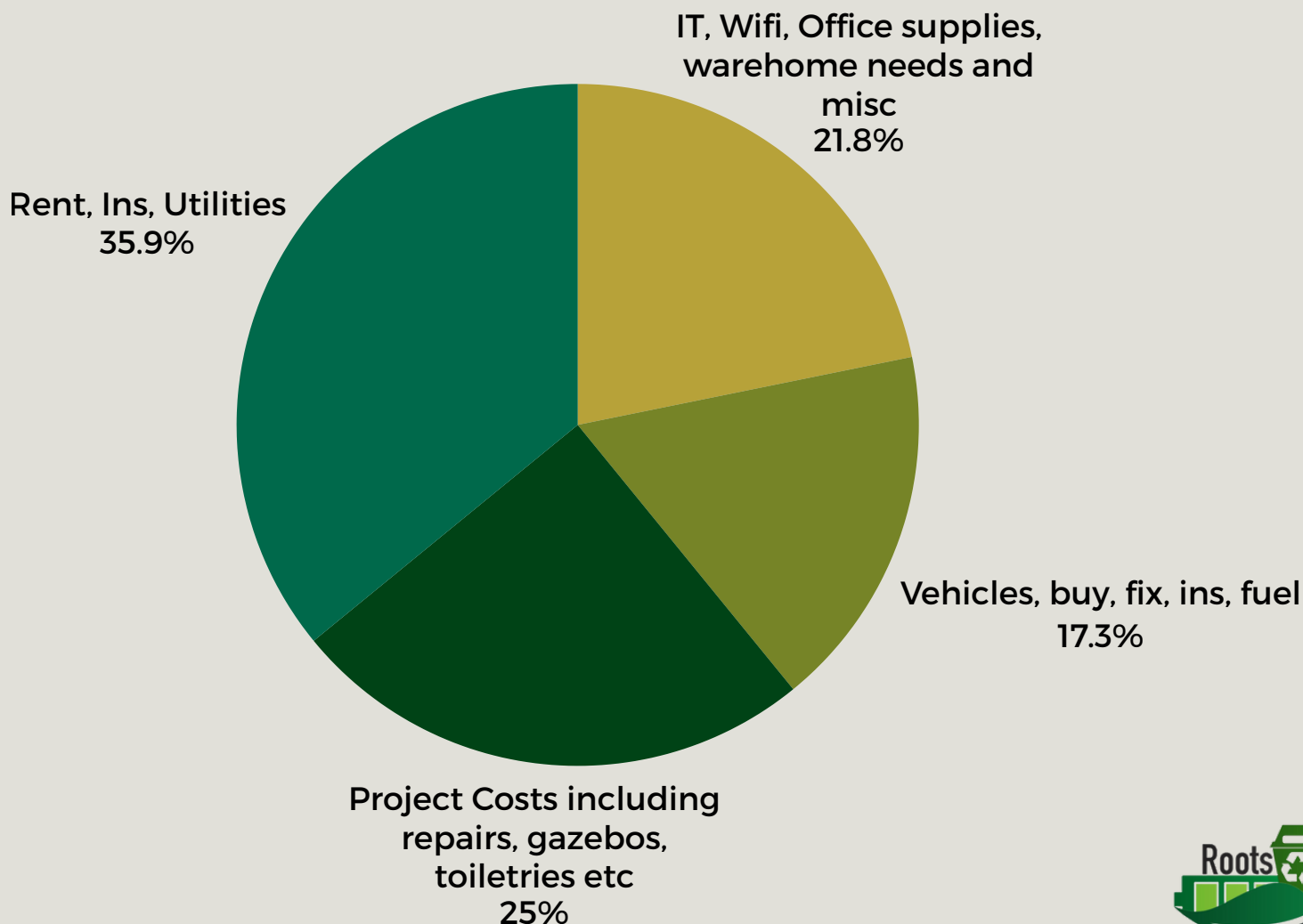
Our main expenses as always are the Rent and utilities. For Roots to run we must have the warehouse, not only to store the toiletries and house the WASH services, but also a workshop so we can repair showers and tables and build new when funds allow.

The IT and wifi / office supplies are made up of many different elements - including the fees we have from our bank, visa application costs when needed for coordinators, and electrical items we have needed throughout the year.

Project costs covers a multitude of expenses, not least the gas we buy for the heater ( winter ) the boilers ( shower project ) and until we replaced our generator in November 2025 the gas to run the generators.

We are constantly repairing and where possible upgrading the showers, buying pipes to create better drainage, and equipment to enable these services to run. Also toiletries - 2025 saw us triplicating daily the amount of nappy packs we needed to provide of all sizes at our daily NFI distriuvtions and as we were not able to secure doantions of regualr items we have had to purchase them .

<b>Rent, Ins, Utilities</b>	<b>34,028.22</b>
<b>IT, Wifi, Office Supplies, warehome needs</b>	<b>20,528.02</b>
<b>Project Costs - Toiletries, Gazebos, Tools, Tv, Speakers etc</b>	<b>23,658.50</b>
<b>Vehicles - buy, fix, Insure, fuel</b>	<b>16404.40</b>



# CHANGES IN 2025

We were extremely fortunate to be donated via a volunteer and his family, a Bluetti Electric Charging Station - enabling us to stop using a generator, much better for the environment, noise levels and cost. Initiatives like this are how we grow and how we can support both refugees and the environment. Once funding allows we can buy more batteries to ensure optimum charging.



We have been finding alternative ways to provide charge / charging points to enable more people to benefit - here is one of the boxes that were made in 2025 - we aim to be able to make more of these boxes in 2026 alongside more charging tables - we cannot expand the tables until we have secured more batteries.

**JANGALA** - came out to visit us - we have one of the most used wifi boxes in Europe.

As such we have been chosen to be one of the few organisations to trial a new system to deliver wifi, it will have the options of solar panels to help with being environmentally friendly as well as a lifeline to so many people on site.



# PLANS FOR 2026

Grants - we have a small dedicated group of volunteers to help us try and find grants for solar panels and more batteries for the Community Hub

Make more tables for the hub, update some of the sockets for fast chargers - in accordance with getting grants for the solar panels and more batteries.

We will be expanding the shower project to run a womens session alongside a mens session - increasing the available hot showers from 6 to 9 and allowing for some cold showers to be able to run all day for those who were not able to get a ticket on that day for a hot shower.

Roots will be at the NEU Conference in Brighton at the end of March, we will have a stall and information on what we do and how we do it

Buy a new Van with the money donated / fundraised for by the NEU - National Education Union. and continue to grow / expand on our collaborations with Unions

To look into waste management / recycling to see where we can grow / improve on our waste management / environmental etc. We hope to be able to reach out to local recycling projects and collaborate. The idea of this will be to recycle more of the waste we collect on site and then repurpose it. As there are now 2 skips in the area we hope - volunteer numbers allowing, to be able to improve the living space and distribution area for all.

To continue to push back at the rhetoric of the right wing press and followers, to show that everyone is a human being and everyone has the right to safety etc - and whilst they are forced to live in conditions not suitable for humans we will do all we can to raise awareness and to support them



