Choose Love
Our impact
2021

Photo credits: Byron Smith, Eleonas Camp (Greece)
Welcome message from CEO

Here in the UK, we end this year as we began, in lockdown. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for many years to come. For now, it has exacerbated the increasing needs that communities are facing, including but not limited to extreme isolation, destitution, lack of services, hostile environments and terrible living conditions. Across the regions where Choose Love works, there are thousands of children who have no access to formal education and COVID outbreaks have resulted in medical services becoming overstretched. Whilst going through a year of stabilisation internally as an organisation, meeting these growing needs has been our greatest priority.

In 2021, we granted to more than 200 partner organisations, significantly expanding our work along the US-Mexico border and increasing funding for legal services across all the regions where we operate. Choose Love reached over 450,000 displaced people across 22 countries in the last year alone, and our work enabled 190,000 people to access essential legal support. Yet behind these numbers are individual stories of resilience and strength, and we never lose sight of the communities at the core of what we do. From food banks in the north east of England to classrooms for out-of-school children in Lebanon, we continue to go where the needs are greatest and where we see incredible grassroots and civil society organisations stepping up to fill gaps.

In the last year, the withdrawal of US and other forces from Afghanistan led to a climate of fear and chaos across the country. In August 2021, as the Taliban seized Kabul, we were approached by friends and colleagues from Afghanistan who asked us to help platform the voices and needs of the Afghan people, and to raise funds to help practically. We launched two crowdfunding campaigns, which raised almost £300,000 ($400,000) in their first week, rising to over £800,000 ($1 million) by the end of the year. We also facilitated 57,000 people writing to their MPs in the UK to ask them to extend the evacuation window, and we helped get Afghan leaders on every major broadcasting station in the UK to push their message.

At the same time, we sought out and funded key Afghan-led organisations operating in-country, as well as in the UK, US and other refugee-receiving countries. Choose Love’s model, combining fast and flexible funding and campaigning using our platforms to reach a large and engaged public audience, is crucially important in moments like this. The movement we have created is simple – people helping people – and I am so fortunate to see these acts of love and care every single day.

2021 was a critical year as we stress-tested our approach and demonstrated that we remain nimble, creative and resourceful in times of crisis. It is with my deepest gratitude to all of our brilliant partners, donors and supporters that we are ending 2021 a stronger organisation than ever before, steadfastly aligned to our vision to create a world that chooses love and justice, every day, for everyone.

With love,
Josie

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Our vision - A world that chooses love and justice, every day, for everyone.

Our mission - To do whatever it takes to identify, close and prevent gaps in services and protections for refugees and displaced people.

Since our inception in 2015, Choose Love has provided vital humanitarian aid to over 1.8 million displaced people across 25 countries. Choose Love’s network covers key migration routes from the Middle East through to Europe, the US-Mexico border and Brazil. We initiate and nourish networks of critical first responders on the ground. Our role is to fill gaps in these networks by raising funds for grassroots groups supporting people on the move – prioritising organisations led by displaced communities themselves.
Our impact in numbers

**450,000 people supported** in 22 countries

- **202 partner organisations**
  - 450,000 people supported
  - 110,000 people accessing food support
  - 161,000 people accessing warm clothes and non-food items
  - 59,000 people accessing shelter assistance
  - 190,000 people accessing legal advice
  - 430,000 hot meals
  - 312,000 food packs
  - 97,000 medical consultations
  - 6,400 mental health support
  - 240,000 nappies
  - 6,100 mother & baby care packs
  - 5,000 language classes
  - 4,000 people housed in holistic housing projects
  - 2,000 children supported back into education
  - 2,300 people rescued at sea
  - 312,000 food packs
  - 14,000 people accessing 1-to-1 casework & legal support
  - 110,000 people accessing food support
  - 190,000 people accessing legal advice
  - 6,400 mental health support
  - 5,000 language classes
  - 4,000 people housed in holistic housing projects
  - 2,000 children supported back into education
  - 2,300 people rescued at sea

*Sample of programme results reported by Choose Love partners between 1 January and 31 December 2021. Efforts are made to avoid double-counting of service users across reporting timeframes (where we receive multiple reports from one partner), and across partner organisations (where multiple partners support the same population). Due to gaps in reporting, and the fact that a significant part of our grant-making funds partners’ core-costs (like site rental fees, vehicle and transport costs, staff salaries, and volunteer stipends), these results likely underestimate the full extent of our work.

This is particularly true in regard to several major aid warehouses that we fund, which coordinate vast volumes of humanitarian aid every year. This aid is delivered to other NGOs, who then distribute it to the populations they support – and so we do not typically count these end-recipients in our reach. Our approach in all cases is to have open and honest conversations with our partners about what their programmes achieve, what Choose Love’s contribution is to this, and how we can best follow their lead when showcasing their work to the world. Page 32 has more information on how we approach impact measurement, monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
This year

2021


January - Hundreds of people seeking asylum, many of whom are survivors of torture, trafficking and modern slavery are forced to live in cramped, prison-like conditions in the Napier and Penally barracks, UK.

February - Escalation of conflict in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia leads to hundreds of thousands of people being displaced and some 2.3 million people in need.

June - The number of people displaced globally surpasses 84 million for the first time.

7th July - The UK Nationality & Borders Bill - proposing offshore detention and criminalising asylum-seekers arriving by boat - enters Parliament.

July - Lebanon’s political and economic crisis worsens, leading to devastating conditions for millions.


August - Fires rage across much of Europe as an IPCC report on climate change - described as a ‘code red for humanity’ - shows global temperatures at their highest for 125,000 years.

September - Horrific images show U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback using whips to stop Haitian refugees as they attempt to cross the Rio Grande.

October - A migration ‘crisis’ is engineered at the Polish-Belarusian border by European states using refugees as a political tool.

15th August - Following the withdrawal of US troops, the Taliban seize control of Afghanistan’s capital, Kabul, leading hundreds of thousands to flee.

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September - An EU-funded ‘Multi-Purpose Reception & Identification Centre’ opens on the Greek island of Samos - the first of its kind, widely condemned by humanitarian actors.

September - Horrific images show U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback using whips to stop Haitian refugees as they attempt to cross the Rio Grande.

24th November - 27 people lose their lives trying to cross from France to the UK, as the deadliest day on record takes place in the Channel. 4 more bodies were never recovered.

Photo credits: Byron Smith, Bosnia and Herzegovina
On 15th August 2021, the lives of some 42 million people changed almost overnight. Following the withdrawal of US and other international troops after 20 years in Afghanistan, the Taliban seized control of the national seat of government in Kabul. Over the following weeks, the reality for Afghans turned upside down. Girls were no longer able to go to school safely and many women – from judges, to journalists, to academics, to artists – were prohibited from work and forced into hiding. Since then, the economy in Afghanistan has collapsed. Major international aid was pulled out in the wake of the Taliban’s takeover, leaving millions of Afghan people unable to meet their basic needs. Throughout the winter of 2021, an estimated 19 million people did not have enough food, and were living on the brink of starvation.

For those trying to flee Afghanistan, the pathways to evacuation were often extremely dangerous, difficult and expensive. When people were able to leave and resettle in other countries, their journeys have often been perilous and long. Many Afghans living in Europe, the US and elsewhere are still in limbo and without access to employment, education or housing.

Choose Love responded by launching a crowdfunding campaign in August 2021. With the generosity of our supporters, this raised almost £800,000 ($1 million) by the end of the year. This money has gone to 23 incredible partners, responding in four key ways:

1) Emergency support for individuals at risk who remain in Afghanistan; 2) Support for Afghan refugees in the UK prior to the crisis; 3) Support for people who fled Afghanistan in the wake of the take-over; and 4) Long-term support, inc. psychological support for refugees, and building the capacities of Afghan-led response organisations.

In Afghanistan, we funded:

- Multi-purpose cash assistance for families in poverty.
- Food baskets, fuel and other emergency provisions.
- Temporary medical clinics in newly formed IDP camps.

In the UK, we funded:

- Baby supplies and prenatal care for Afghan mothers.
- Clothing and hygiene items for Afghan refugees in hotels.
- Casework support for unaccompanied Afghan children navigating the UK asylum system.
- Language classes and inclusion programmes.

In the US, we funded:

- Organisations working on ongoing evacuations.
- Afghan activists driving asylum policy reform and change.
- Family reunification for people housed in military bases on their journey to resettlement.

Elsewhere (inc. Kosovo, Ecuador and Brazil), we funded:

- Transit and reception centres for evacuees.
- Clothing, blankets, bedding and hygiene items.
- Trauma-informed care and mental health support.
- Accommodation, language and inclusion programmes.

Partner spotlight: Association of Afghan Healthcare Professionals

One of our brilliant partners in this response is the Association of Afghan Healthcare Professionals UK (AAHP-UK), a network of Afghans living in the UK. Choose Love supported AAHP-UK in partnership with AIMA - the Afghanistan Islamic Medical Association - to provide emergency food packages to displaced families across two provinces of Afghanistan.

Free-to-access medical clinics for internally displaced people in Panjshir and Kandahar were also set up, serving as a space for clinical assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

These clinics provided treatment for people with chronic illnesses, malnutrition and disabilities, as well as pregnant women, babies and children. In just a few months, by the end of 2021, AAHP-UK and AIMA had seen more than 3,720 patients at their medical clinics, and provided 1,350 people with nutritional emergency food support.
This year was challenging for the thousands of people who made difficult journeys to Greece in search of safety. The Greek government implemented wide-ranging cuts to cash and housing programmes for displaced people living outside of government structures in Athens, leading to mass homelessness and hunger across the country. Choose Love’s long-standing partners stepped in to fill many of the most critical gaps that were left. They established and expanded street outreach teams, shelters and food projects to ensure people continued to have access to basic necessities.

The government has focused its efforts on building new multi-purpose reception centres across the Greek islands to replace the current structures. These centres are remote, with few NGOs permitted to access them and unable to provide support to their populations. The first centre was opened on Samos this year, hailed as a pioneer in EU asylum policy, but creating miserable isolation, uncertainty and psychological trauma. By restricting access to them for grassroots NGOs, the government is contributing to the ever shrinking space for civil society. As the situation for refugees in Greece falls further out of the global spotlight, our partners tirelessly continue to bring essential services and care to thousands of people.

Partner spotlight: FENIX

In 2021, access to legal support in Greece took on a new level of importance. The Greek government declared that all asylum seekers from a number of countries, including Syria and Afghanistan, could be sent back to Turkey because it was deemed a “safe third country”. This meant people were having claims rejected within just days of their arrival to Greece, after an asylum interview lasting a few minutes and without having spoken to a lawyer. Our legal partners responded, providing a crucial lifeline to ensure people have access to lawyers, preparation and accompaniment to their asylum interviews, and appealing cases that are unfairly rejected.

FENIX Humanitarian Legal Aid is a long term partner of Choose Love that provides high quality legal aid, protection, and referral services to asylum seekers on Lesvos. Its amazing team is composed of legal experts, lawyers, protection officers, translators, psychologists, researchers, and technology and communications specialists. Its translators are highly talented, multilingual cultural mediators who are also asylum seekers on Lesvos. FENIX takes a holistic approach to legal aid, focusing on the dignity and individuality of every person it supports. This involves helping asylum seekers with their urgent medical needs, offering multiple asylum interview preparation meetings, and providing people with counselling to help them begin to address the wide-ranging effects of trauma on their mental health.

In 2021, with the support of our partners...

- 190,000 people accessed legal advice in appropriate languages and formats.
- 14,000 people, including 4,000 unaccompanied children, received 1-to-1 casework and legal support.
- 7,000 people were reunited with family members.
Since 2012, the UK government has sought to implement a self-proclaimed ‘hostile environment’: a series of punitive measures that embed immigration enforcement into every aspect of daily life. The policy requires potential employers, landlords, NHS workers, schoolteachers, and other public servants to check people’s immigration status and share this data with the UK Home Office. Not only has the hostile environment made navigating the UK asylum system an exhausting and frequently dehumanising process for tens of thousands of people, but it has driven highly vulnerable individuals and families into homelessness and destitution.

In 2021, the stakes reached new highs. In March, the government announced its ‘New Plan for Immigration’, which, in December, became a grim reality as the Nationality and Borders Bill passed through the House of Commons. The bill outlines that any refugee or asylum seeker who arrives in the UK by a route considered ‘unsafe’ or ‘illegal’, could face up to 4 years in prison, including potentially being detained offshore in countries as far away as Rwanda. This law disregards the near total absence of ‘safe and legal’ routes from most countries. It would also criminalise any person that seeks to cross to the UK by boat, and proposes to allow the UK Border Force to enact pushbacks, which are still considered illegal under international law. Through our work in the Aegean and Mediterranean, Choose Love has seen just how dangerous these pushbacks can be.

Over the last year, in response to these policy shifts, Choose Love has campaigned to challenge the bill and to raise awareness around the experiences and irreparable effects it will have on people seeking asylum in the UK. In tandem, we’ve been supporting 38 incredible grassroots organisations, who have been meeting gaps in services left by the UK government. The stark reality of the poverty gap - heightened by the pandemic, and combined with a growing mental health crisis that’s unfolding for thousands of people in the UK asylum system - is being met by compassionate and tailored programmes delivered by our partners in 16 locations around the UK. These partners have been providing everything from food to NFI support, safe spaces for women and children, psycho-social and counselling services, casework and legal assistance, family reunification, and much, much more. Across all of this, we have focused our grant-making to support the needs of acutely vulnerable groups including unaccompanied children, pregnant women, single mothers, and members of LGBTQ+ communities.

Partner spotlight: Project MAMA
Since 2019, we’ve been working with the wonderful Bristol-based organisation Project MAMA and their remarkable Mother Companions project. MAMA’s Mother Companions are a team of more than 20 dedicated volunteers with backgrounds in midwifery, as doulas, and other birth-work. They provide one-to-one and peer support to pregnant women who are refugees, seeking asylum or have irregular immigration status in the UK, throughout their pregnancy, birth and early motherhood. After the lifting of COVID-19 lockdowns, Project MAMA reopened their MAMAhub in 2021, a drop-in community space for pregnant and new mothers with babies under 2 years old. The hub is a place where refugee mothers can meet and share experiences with one another in person and build new communities in Bristol.

Following the opening of three new Home Office ‘initial accommodation’ centres in the city, the number of people seeking asylum in the area has doubled and Project MAMA saw a huge increase in referrals to its services. Many of the women it supports experience complex vulnerabilities, and Choose Love funding has helped to ensure that Project MAMA can meet this increased demand for their services safely, alongside supporting their advocacy and safeguarding work to petition the Home Office for more suitable accommodation for mothers. In 2021, Project MAMA supported 22 mothers and more than 40 children and newborn babies.
US–Mexico

Every year, tens of thousands of unaccompanied children arrive at the US-Mexico border, igniting debate on how governments should react. 2021 has been a year like no other. The highest number of ‘migrants’ ever recorded reached Mexico, with over 130,000 people applying for asylum, the third highest number in the world.

Our partners witnessed horrific abuses at the border this year, particularly towards Haitian refugees and Indigenous people. Many people experience violence and pushbacks from officials, alongside detention and deportation without due process. The legacy of Donald Trump’s discriminatory policies remain, including Title 42 expulsions, and the Migrant Protection Protocols – requiring that people seeking asylum in the US remain in Mexico until their US immigration court date. The stark realities of these policies can be seen in plain sight on the Mexican side of the border where people are left with next to no access to basic services.

In 2021, Choose Love partnered with 23 organisations working along both sides of the border and advocated to challenge nationwide asylum policies across the US.

Partner spotlight: Team Brownsville

Team Brownsville has been serving asylum seekers arriving at the Brownsville metro bus station in Texas every day since 2018. Its amazing team of volunteers meet and greet people arriving at the border from Matamoros - distributing backpacks, blankets, food, clothes, toys, hygiene kits and more. They also provide specialist help for families identified as particularly vulnerable. This may include transportation to a shelter or airport, getting a hotel room for a few nights, purchasing special equipment like strollers and baby car seats and providing meals while families wait to travel. This welcome makes such a huge difference to people who are scared and confused, arriving in the USA for the first time. Throughout 2021, the team has seen and assisted over 200 people every single day, crossing into the US. Choose Love has funded the team’s much-needed work throughout the year to ensure they can continue to bring care and support to people arriving in the US, in search of a safer and more secure life.

Non-food assistance

| 240,000 | nappies/diapers |
| 14,000  | warm winter coats |
| 58,000  | hygiene kits |
| 160,000 | people accessed essential non-food items, like warm clothing, shoes, backpacks, mobile phones and phone credit. |
The movement of people across the Balkans increased rapidly in 2021 compared to the previous year. Along the Serbian-Hungarian border and other frontiers of eastern Europe, violent pushbacks were documented by our partners. Many people that take these routes endure freezing conditions, often with no food, shelter or protection other than that offered to them by a small but dedicated network of grassroots NGOs. In September, further and even worse accounts of human rights abuses took place as thousands of people arrived at the Polish-Belarusian border - human lives degraded and used as pawns in a political border ‘crisis’ engineered by European governments.

Across this complex and often challenging route, Choose Love’s partners strive to ensure that people have access to vital food, clean water, and emergency supplies to meet their basic needs. Alongside this, we fund organisations that provide essential legal support and conduct ongoing monitoring of human rights violations and pushbacks by authorities, and bring evidence of these to national and European courts – bearing witness to these injustices.

Partner spotlight: Collective Aid

For people travelling through the Balkans, a lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services is one of the most pressing issues and gaps. As people move through underserved areas, avoiding authorities for fear of violence and detention, they have little to no access to essential hygiene services and items. Our incredible partner Collective Aid has been filling these gaps in both Bosnia and Serbia, providing dignified WASH services with care and compassion.

Collective Aid operates a WASH Centre in Belgrade, Serbia. This space provides hot showers, laundry facilities, hygiene items, medical assistance, clean drinking water, and hot tea and snacks for people on the move. Across Bosnia and Serbia, the team also distributed more than 15,000 hygiene kits in 2021 – including essentials like toothbrushes, toothpastes, soaps, shower gels, and PPE – and provided more than 10,000 hot showers and 2,500 laundry loads, for thousands of people on the move.

Most people accessing their support in Serbia only stay for a short period of time. Often, the most important service is just to help people rest for a moment, and to feel welcomed and safe for a brief time, before they continue their journey.

“I really appreciate you. It’s been a long time since I did not wash my clothes.”
March this year marked the grim milestone of ten years since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war - ten years since millions of people rose up in peaceful protest against the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad, and dared to dream of a different life.

In the intervening decade, the world has watched - and increasingly stood by - as an estimated half a million people have lost their lives, and some 14 million more have fled their homes to escape this violent and brutal conflict.

The north-western province of Idlib, along the Syrian-Turkish border, is today the last opposition-held region in Syria. Over the past five years, the Syrian regime, backed by Russian forces, has carried out a systematic campaign of bombing that has targeted the province’s schools, hospitals and other centres of civilian life. Over the past two years this campaign of terror has been compounded by an unprecedented economic crisis, driven by international sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Syrian Pound lost close to 80% of its value over the course of 2021, causing the price of basic goods to skyrocket, and plunging 9 out of every 10 people in the country into poverty.

In the midst of this bleak period in Syria’s history, Choose Love has supported a number of incredible organisations providing life-saving support to people in need. One of these organisations is The White Helmets - a grassroots first responder made up of more than 2,800 volunteers who hail from all walks of life: from bakers to tailors, pharmacists to engineers. Together, these people have united in response to the aerial bombardment of their neighbourhoods and the withdrawal of essential services such as firefighting and healthcare.

To date, they have saved more than 125,000 lives in the wake of airstrikes and ground attacks from the Syrian regime. Alongside these search and rescue operations, The White Helmets have delivered critical safety awareness training for civilians, provided healthcare services to over 485,000 women and children, and run over 260,000 service operations to rehabilitate critical infrastructure damaged by the conflict.

Choose Love is proud to have supported the White Helmets since 2016. In the last year, we have provided them with funding for essential safety equipment for their frontline responders.

We wish The White Helmets did not have to do any of the work that they do - but while they must, it is an honour to stand with them.
Lebanon

Over the last two years, Lebanon has been navigating a series of interwoven crises. In the absence of a functioning government following the Port of Beirut blast in August 2020, the Lebanese Lira lost 95% of its value, leading to hyperinflation across the country. Political failings have contributed to collapsing public services and been compounded by an unprecedented fuel crisis and food shortages.

Together, these factors have led to nationwide blackouts and widespread hunger, plunging an estimated 2.2 million Lebanese people, 1.2 million Syrians, and 200,000 Palestinian refugees in the country into poverty. Millions of people – both displaced and non-displaced – have been forced to make difficult choices to survive each day, including skipping meals, foregoing urgent medical treatment, and sending children to work instead of education. As the country that hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, Lebanon stands at a crucial moment in its history.

A new approach to grant-making: Funding refugee leadership in Lebanon

Sadly, humanitarian funding to Lebanon, as with many Middle Eastern countries, has dwindled drastically over the last few years – despite people in the country being in increasing need of support. In response to this, in 2021 Choose Love convened with a group of 5 international donor organisations to launch the Funders for Refugee Leadership in Lebanon (FRLIL) initiative. The initiative’s aims are to:

1. Prioritise funding to refugee-led organisations with local operations in Lebanon;
2. Streamline funding and minimise administrative pressure on these partners;
3. Optimise impact for communities.

At the end of 2021, after holding an open call for funding, we worked with an advisory committee of experts from the region and identified 15 refugee-led organisations in Lebanon who will receive grants next year as part of the initiative.

Partner spotlight: SAWA for Aid and Development

The Beirut blast of 4th August 2020 killed 218 people, left 7,000 injured, and a further 300,000 people without homes. In the wake of this calamity, one of our partners, SAWA for Aid and Development, launched the ‘Revive Beirut’ project. The project’s aims were twofold. First, SAWA’s teams visited some of the hardest hit refugee camps in and around Beirut, and distributed emergency food, cash, and hygiene items to households that were worst affected by the blast. Second, the project set out to restore and rehabilitate 98 homes that were damaged or destroyed by the blast, and in doing so, generate livelihoods for people out of work. SAWA did this by hiring and upskilling incredible female carpenters – like Amal, pictured here – to both challenge stereotypes around women in work, and build essential furniture and housing structures like door frames for damaged homes.

We’ll be continuing our work with SAWA in 2022 to support their livelihoods and school programmes around Lebanon.

“When I started working in the wood workshop, no one supported me. My community didn’t accept this... But when I worked with the men there (on the Revive Beirut project), I felt like I was equal to them, a part of them. To every girl I say, follow your dreams. Do what you want, and influence people around you.”
Support to LGBTQ+

No one should have to flee their home because of who they love or who they are. But around the world, millions of LGBTQ+ people live in fear of discrimination, persecution and even death, simply for being who they are. To this day, LGBTQ+ people can be prosecuted in 69 UN member states and, in 11, can face the death penalty.

For many LGBTQ+ refugees, the arrival in so-called ‘safe countries’ does not represent the end of violence. According to UKLGIG and Stonewall, LGBTQ+ asylum seekers held in immigration centres across the UK have experienced abuse both from other asylum seekers and from staff members who “fail to protect them from abuse, often lack basic understanding of LGBTQ+ issues, and even display discriminatory attitudes” towards LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

In the past year, we have partnered with seven incredible organisations that specialise in supporting LGBTQ+ refugees – including Say It Loud Club, African Rainbow Family, and Border Butterflies. Their teams inspire us and ensure that LGBTQ+ people are able to find the safety, security and freedoms to be who they really are.

Partner spotlight: Say It Loud Club

Say It Loud Club is a close community of LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in the UK that supports its members through one-to-one mentoring, workshops, social events, peer support, and referral to specialist organisations for legal, financial, health and housing services. One of its key goals is to provide consistent and compassionate care to its members. It focuses on supporting people who are coming out and accepting their sexuality and/or gender identity, progressing through the asylum system, facing practical needs like homelessness and hunger, and integrating in the UK.

“Going through asylum and having to explain my sexuality to a stranger was the hardest thing I have ever faced. I had never lived openly in Uganda because I was afraid, so I grew up concealing my sexuality.”
Choose Earth

Indigenous communities make up just 5% of the world’s population but protect over 80% of its biodiversity. Across the seven biomes of Brazil, Indigenous people face unique threats of being displaced from their homes, as large swathes of the Amazon rainforest and other natural ecosystems where they live are increasingly lost to deforestation. In 2021, Bolsonaro’s government introduced sweeping reforms to Indigenous land policies, paving the way to private and industrial exploitation of the rainforests and the destruction of Indigenous homelands.

In response to this crisis, on Earth Day 2021, we partnered with Earthrise Studio, The Roddick Foundation and nine nationally recognised Indigenous leaders across Brazil, to launch Choose Earth. Choose Earth’s mission is to provide resources and platforms to a network of frontline Indigenous defenders – the true experts on environmental conservation – who are putting their lives at risk on a daily basis to protect the future of our planet.

At the UN Climate Change Conference ‘COP26’ in November, Choose Earth called on world leaders to listen to and include Indigenous communities in their meetings. We believe that Indigenous people simply cannot be left out of discussions around climate change as they are ultimately the ones with the knowledge to address it. A highlight from COP was that two amazing Indigenous leaders, Célia and Sônia, were able to attend and share their message with the world.

Impacts this year

In 2021, Choose Earth disbursed:

- £109,296 in cash grants
- 64 Indigenous leaders
- 35 Indigenous communities
- Satellite internet to connect communities
- Traditional medicinal gardens
- Boats to evade violent attacks
- Reconstructing traditional prayer houses
- Technology for territorial surveillance and protection
- Legal fees for land demarcation
- Animals and seeds to improve food sovereignty
- Building houses to reclaim ancestral territory
- Rent for indigenous students studying law and anthropology
- Health supplies to combat COVID-19
- Replanting gardens
- Gatherings to organise against extractive industries
- Rent for indigenous students studying law and anthropology
- Rebuilding traditional prayer houses
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- Health supplies to combat COVID-19
- Replanting gardens

24

In 2021, Choose Earth disbursed:

- £109,296 in cash grants
- 64 Indigenous leaders
- 35 Indigenous communities
- Satellite internet to connect communities
- Traditional medicinal gardens
- Boats to evade violent attacks
- Reconstructing traditional prayer houses
- Technology for territorial surveillance and protection
- Legal fees for land demarcation
- Animals and seeds to improve food sovereignty
- Building houses to reclaim ancestral territory
- Rent for indigenous students studying law and anthropology
- Health supplies to combat COVID-19
- Replanting gardens
- Gatherings to organise against extractive industries
- Rent for indigenous students studying law and anthropology
- Rebuilding traditional prayer houses
- Technology for territorial surveillance and protection
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Advocacy

At Choose Love, our impact goes well beyond the human-facing services delivered by our partners and made possible by our grant-making. We also use the power of social and traditional media, with platforms for direct advocacy, to harness the unique strength of our brand, and deliver awareness-raising campaigns that reach millions of people every year.

On top of this, we fund strategic litigation cases that seek to change the laws, policies and practices around forced migration. We also provide capacity-building training, like strategic communication workshops, for the incredible refugee leaders who run our partner organisations. We do all of this in order to shift the public narratives around refugee issues, and to amplify the voices of people with first-hand experience of forced migration.

In 2021, our advocacy and awareness-raising covered a broad range of topics – from shining a light on forgotten crises, to supporting LGBTQ+ rights and other change-making movements. A highlight was facilitating 57,000 people to write to their MPs in the UK asking to extend the evacuation window for people fleeing Afghanistan. We apply pressure to those in power to bring about lasting change.

Case Study: Little Amal

A little girl on a big journey. In July 2021, Little Amal, a 12-foot puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian child, set off on an 8,000km walk from the Turkish-Syrian border to the UK in search of her mother. Created and guided by our incredibly talented friends at The Walk Productions and Good Chance Theatre, Little Amal crossed 11 countries and was met by more than a million people on the streets, and tens of millions more online.

Her name means “hope” in Arabic - and over the last year she has become a symbol of hope and human rights, especially the rights of refugee children. She represents just one of the millions of displaced children around the world who have had to flee their home because of war, poverty and persecution, and had their childhoods stripped from them. The message that she carries for them and cries out to the world is simple: “Do not forget us”. To help these children, The Walk and Choose Love launched The Amal Fund in 2021, which supports young displaced people into education and helps them achieve their potential wherever they are rebuilding their lives.
The Choose Love store

In 2017, we created a world first – a store like no other – where you can buy real items and life-saving interventions for refugees around the globe. Four years on, the Choose Love store has gone from strength to strength and has raised more than £10 million ($12 million) for refugees and displaced people worldwide.

In our store, you can ‘buy’ a wide variety of items including: hot food, firewood and warm clothes for people in refugee camps who face freezing winter temperatures; legal support for unaccompanied children; adult education to help someone back on their feet; life-saving medical equipment; search and rescue boats; and much, much more. These items are bought in-store or online, with the funds going exactly where they are needed most.

Every year we are blown away by the beautiful ways in which our community shows solidarity and love. We are so grateful to everyone for standing with refugees and for showing that in the darkest of times, the power of love and togetherness shines through. Your support means the world to us.

22,064
# of times people shopped in our stores over the 2021 festive period
48,014
# of vital items and services that were purchased

£2,509,670 / $3,391,446
total amount raised by Choose Love stores in 2021
Partnerships

In 2021...

Our iconic ‘Choose Love’ tees - inspired by Katharine Hamnett - continued to be worn the world over.

In May, we were delighted when our lifelong friend, Imad, opened his first permanent restaurant in London. £1 from every bill at the delicious Imad’s Syrian Kitchen supports Choose Love projects around the world.

Cherno, our mighty COO, ran 100km during Ramadan while fasting, to raise funds for food programmes and partners around the world.

Our collaboration with the amazing Print Club London continued into its third year - curating a collection of unique art pieces produced by wonderful artists, each making their mark on the meaning of ‘Choose Love’.

We were over the moon to be charity partners on the incredible films Adnan and Limbo.

Our awesome cycling buddies over at Thighs of Steel spelled out “Refugees Welcome” across the south coast of England while raising funds for Choose Love.

We collaborated with Earl of East and Uncommon London to launch Scents of Belonging - a limited edition candle range inspired by the testimonies of three incredible refugees living in Britain today, retelling their stories and beautifully capturing the essence of ‘home’.

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Understanding our impact

Our mission at Choose Love is to do whatever it takes to identify, prevent, and close gaps in services and protections for refugees and displaced people. We raise funds and run awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns in order to support organisations that provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance, address basic human needs, and promote long-term solutions for people uprooted from their homes.

The challenges to impact measurement

There are several challenges, however, to accurately capturing and describing the impacts of what we do:

1. First, our work spans many different regions, countries, and sectors. We therefore need to measure a considerable number of results and so need to use a range of different methods. For example, how we evaluate an advocacy campaign is very different to how we evaluate a food distribution programme.

2. Secondly, as a grant-maker, we rely on the impacts that our partners tell us about. This can be challenging as grantees don’t all measure and report impacts in the same way, and that, as far as possible, we endeavour to be light-touch and minimalist in the requirements we ask of our partners. This is in recognition of the grassroots and volunteer-led operations of many of the incredible organisations we work with, and the challenging contexts in which they work.

3. Thirdly is the issue of attributing partners’ results to our funding. Showcasing our partners’ impacts as our own is relatively straightforward when we fund direct operational costs – for example, paying for winter coats – but it is much more difficult when we fund core costs like warehouse fees, vehicle costs, and lawyers’ salaries. This is important as core-costs are a large part of what Choose Love funds, as this is often where the biggest gaps lie.

4. Fourth are the many challenges involved in accurately estimating the numbers of people supported by our work. In almost all locations where we work, there are few routine and systematic attempts to collect refugee and asylum-seeker population statistics. While official bodies like immigration ministries might collect and publish some estimates, these are highly politicised, often inaccurate, and frequently exclude key populations we support – typically, the undocumented, people experiencing homelessness, and people who don’t want to be included in official statistics.

As a funder and a change-maker, we want to understand what impacts we are helping to create. Understanding both the types of changes that our work is supporting, and the scale of those changes, is crucial – and so is understanding how and why change happens, and how we can play our role better in helping facilitate the positive changes we wish to see.

Our approach

In light of these obstacles, our approach to impact measurement at Choose Love is to be:

- **Led by our partners** - we do our best to support our partners to collect information on their work that is most relevant to them. We aim to have open, honest conversations with our partners about the impacts of their work, Choose Love’s contribution to these, and to follow their lead when we present this to our donors and the public.

- **Human-to-human** – while striving to be data-driven, we endeavour to remain first and foremost, human-to-human. This means, primarily, that we uphold our core values in our interactions with others – our partners, the people they support, and the public. It also means that we keep central to our work the belief that ‘facts and figures’ are no substitute for human stories – which is why much of our impact is story-telling based and seeks to empower displaced people by amplifying their voices.

- **Flexible, pragmatic and focused** – we allow our grant reporting to adapt to partners’ capacities – never imposing blanket requirements for impact data to come in this way or that – and we ensure that all data collected and analysed has a clear purpose and is immediately relevant to improve our work and the support we provide to displaced people.

- **Open to change** - we know that measuring impact is difficult and rarely perfect, and so we remain open to constantly evolving over time, as our contexts and priorities change.

We hope that in following these principles, we are able to understand and reflect as fairly and accurately as possible the true value-added of Choose Love’s work.
Financial summary

Global income and expenditure in 2021

- Total income: £11,364,559 ($15,627,760)
  - 6% vs. 2020
- Total expenditure: £12,583,017 ($17,296,572)
  - 27% vs. 2020

**Projects in Syria are supported through our UK/US and EU registered partners.**

**'Other' regions include: Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Central Mediterranean, Croatia, Ecuador, Italy, Kenya, Kosovo, Kurdistan, Malta, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusts &amp; Foundations</td>
<td>£5,518,564</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowdfunding</td>
<td>£2,220,253</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose Love Shop</td>
<td>£1,901,316</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift Aid</td>
<td>£665,094</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Donors</td>
<td>£226,579</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporates</td>
<td>£341,781</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>£224,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAT</td>
<td>£152,874</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merchandise</td>
<td>£117,829</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£11,364,559</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core costs</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prism the Gift Fund</td>
<td>£270,350</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£12,583,017</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>% of total</th>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>US-Mexican border</td>
<td>£801,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>£524,453</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syria*</td>
<td>£355,998</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>£135,148</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>£265,979</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>£962,115</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£11,364,559</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>£6,702,077</td>
<td>(£9,181,965)</td>
<td>£11,364,559</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>£10,912,219</td>
<td>(£13,011,384)</td>
<td>£21,923,603</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

34 35
Our partners

The volunteers and staff members of our incredible partner organizations make what we do possible. Their expertise, passion and dedication inspire us every day.

Chamomile Housing Project
Borderline
Better Days Greece
Baytna Hub - Elix
Baobab Women’s Project C.I.C.
Avocats Sans Frontières
Attika Human Support
Asterias – Starfish Foundation
ASSIST (Asylum Seekers Support of Youth in Greece)
A Drop in the Ocean
Greece
SINGA France
Safe Passage
Refugee Youth Service
Refugee Rights Europe
Refugee Info Bus
Project Play (Donate4Refugees)
L’Auberge Des Migrants
Human Rights Observers (HRO)
Dunkirk Refugee Women Centre
Collective Aid
Calais Food Collective
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Restless Beings
Bangladesh
ReFOCUS Media Labs
Peace of Mind Afghanistan Inc.
Association of Afghan Healthcare
passion and dedication inspire us every day.

Your flexibility and speed is what makes you stand out from the rest in my opinion.

We went through an organisational split this year and feel very fortuitous that your organization has continued to support us. Your understanding of what is needed on the ground is always extremely accurate and every interaction we have with you 

Keep on going - it’s hard times and we all need your modelling of what can be done with care and trust.

We need urgent support to uphold the spill and the Choose Love team were incredibly supportive and strong in allowing us to work our way in a new area. It was conducted with a real care and trust.

"Choose Love is one of the best organizations we have worked with. We are in a real place that we arrived with you during the past years.

"Choose Love is one of the last partners we understood, they listen and they are extremely supportive.”

I am consistently impressed with the flexibility, understandings and show partners, and feel very fortuitous that your organization has continued to support us. Your understanding of what is needed on the ground is always extremely accurate and every interaction we have with you 

"Choose Love is one of the best organizations that we have ever dealt with. We are so glad that we worked with you during the past years.”

"Your flexibility and speed is what makes you stand out from the rest in my opinion.

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