

JULY 2019

REFUGEE WOMEN'S CENTRE

*SUPPORTING REFUGEE WOMEN IN
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN CALAIS &
GRANDE SYNTHE*

LOCATION

NORTHERN FRANCE

TIMELINE

2016 - Present

TARGET AUDIENCE

Refugee women

TYPE OF ACTION

Crisis Response, Advocacy,
Awareness-raising, Empowerment,
Education, Humanitarian Aid

KEYWORDS

Sexual violence, Human crisis
response, Refugee women

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

The **Refugee Women's Centre (RWC)** is a dynamic and fast-growing organisation led by a small team of volunteers. The organisation **supports displaced women and family units in settlements in Grande Synthe, Calais and across Northern France**. This consists primarily of:

- **Access to accommodation**
- Provision of **basic material needs** including hygiene and sanitary products for women and children
- **Psychosocial support** through the facilitation of therapeutic and resilience-building activities
- Access to **legal advice** and representation
- One-to-one direct support to women experiencing domestic or gender-based violence or trafficking

The Centre's values are dignity, cooperation, generosity, curiosity and empowerment.



CASE DESCRIPTION



BACKGROUND

Part of the Refugee Women's Centre's work focuses on supporting survivors of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and trafficking. The organization provides **legal information and therapeutic support**. This is particularly challenging in a setting in which access to stable shelter is limited and people's irregular legal status means they do not have the effective protection of police, courts or many other support services.

In this context, Refugee Women's Centre operates as a mobile service providing a safe space for women, in order to deliver individual-based support.

REFUGEE WOMEN'S CENTRE

The ongoing project is to create pop-up safe spaces for refugee women and families in informal outdoor settlements in northern France, who are faced with destitution, a lack of state support and active hostility on the part of authorities. This is particularly difficult for women going through domestic violence who do not benefit from effective support from the police or social services and who are often unable to separate from their partner whilst in transit. For women travelling alone, the strong presence of smuggler networks creates a risk of sexual exploitation and/or trafficking.

Without proper state care many women fall into these situations. The Centre tries to **identify women at risk and provide specific safety planning and support to those experiencing exploitation**. The main focus is on providing emotional support and **access to specialised services such as private refuges, health clinics for undocumented persons, and legal advice**. For many women, an empathetic and supportive ear is needed, as well as some intimate space and privacy. Services such as language classes and information in their own language are the key to empowerment.

Furthermore, the Centre was able to:

- **Expand the professional network**, in order to share expertise and work cooperatively on capacity building
- Advocate for a **better provision of shelter, sanitation and medical care**



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Refugee Women's Centre has guaranteed an access to shelter and medical care to refugee women and has **strengthened ties with sexual violence experts** to help in providing one-to-one support to survivors.

On a political level, the organization has been pushing for structural change in the response to displaced people in Northern France, from both the French and British sides. This has included taking a leading part in human rights observations and **producing human rights reports**, to challenge state responses in the courts.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

The organization's professional partners include associations in France, the UK and further afield across Europe.

The work of the Refugee Women's Centre is supported entirely by private donations and fundraising initiatives.





CONTACT

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[Refugee Women's Centre](#)

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