

Annual Report

2024

FAST - First aid support Team



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

As we reflect on 2024, we are faced with a sobering reality: this year has been the deadliest ever on the Calais-UK border. More lives were lost, more families were torn apart, and more hope was extinguished due to policies that prioritize deterrence over dignity. The humanitarian crisis in northern France continues to deepen, and as governments shift further to the right, refugees and those supporting them are being met with increasing hostility.

Despite this, we have also seen something remarkable: people are standing up. The cruelty of governments has not gone unnoticed, and instead of turning away, more individuals than ever have chosen to take action. Faced with policies that strip away humanity, people have responded with solidarity. We have seen a rise in volunteers, an increase in donations, and an outpouring of support from individuals who refuse to accept injustice as the norm. More and more people recognize that when governments fail, it is up to communities to care for one another.

In the face of adversity, FAST has remained steadfast in our mission. We have continued to provide urgent medical care, distribute hygiene supplies, and advocate for the rights of displaced people. We have stood alongside those forced to flee their homes, refusing to let injustice and indifference define their fate. Our volunteers, donors, and partners have once again proven that compassion is stronger than cruelty.

Financially, this has been one of the most difficult years for FAST. With humanitarian funding stretched thin due to global crises, we have faced significant challenges in sustaining our work. Grants that once seemed secure disappeared, and rising costs for medical supplies and fuel put additional strain on our resources. Yet, thanks to the unwavering support of our community, we found ways to keep going. Whether through grassroots fundraising efforts, individual donations, or the tireless dedication of our volunteers, FAST has adapted and persevered.

The collaboration between frontline groups has never been more critical, and we are proud to be part of a network that refuses to turn its back on those in need.

As we look ahead to 2025, we know the road will not be easy. The political climate continues to harden, funding remains uncertain, and the need for our services is greater than ever. But we also know this: together, we can continue to make a difference. Every act of kindness, every volunteer shift, every donation—no matter how small—builds a future where dignity and humanity prevail.

We dedicate this report to those who lost their lives seeking safety. Their stories must not be forgotten, and their struggle must not be in vain.

In solidarity,

The FAST Board



FAST (First Aid Support Team)

The Board

FAST is led by a dedicated and entirely volunteer-based board. Each board member gives their time without financial compensation. The board is responsible for defining the long-term vision, making strategic decisions, supporting our volunteers in Northern France, and ensuring the financial sustainability of the organization.

This year, we welcomed a change within our team. **Sabine van Hoften** stepped down as Treasurer, passing the role on to **Marjon Middeljans**. We extend our gratitude to Sabine for her contributions. At the same time, we warmly welcome Marjon.

Our board members continue to work closely with field coordinators, volunteers, and partner organizations to ensure that FAST remains effective and responsive to the ever-changing humanitarian landscape. Despite the increasing difficulties posed by political and financial constraints, the board remains committed to standing in solidarity with those who need it most.

Board Members 2024:

- **Nynke van Dijck**
- **Mark Baker**
- **Rosie Watts**
- **Jackie Wood**
- **Alice Beal**
- **Sabine van Hoften** (former Treasurer)
- **Marjon Middeljans** (Treasurer)

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Since 2008 the Dutch Tax Administration can designate an institution to be a “Public Benefit Organisation” (Dutch: *Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling*, ANBI). At least 90% of the efforts of an ANBI has to be focused on the general good.

In January 2019 the Dutch Tax Office recognized that FAST is a Public Benefit Organisation or Charitable Organisation (Dutch: ANBI).



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Incoming	
Hofstee Foundation	€ 7.500,00
Donations individuals	€ 11.682,56
Haella Foundation	€ 17.500,00
Human Aid Now Foundation	€ 619,13
Total incoming donations	€ 37.301,69
Costs	
Medical supplies	€ 9.949,62
NFI distribution	€ 5.598,10
Other supplies	€ 230,67
Volunteer administration system	€ 288,00
Insurance FAST car	€ 213,08
Fuel FAST car	€ 2.509,62
New FAST car + repairs	€ 5498,15
Taxes FAST car	€ 705,00
Fundraising and PR	€ 887,38
Administration costs (bank, shipping, etc)	€ 624,96
Living & travel expenses volunteers	€ 1.241,08
Total costs	€ 27.745,66

Despite financial challenges, we managed to cover essential expenses while ensuring that most funds were allocated directly to medical aid and humanitarian support.

TREATMENTS

In 2024, FAST continued its commitment to deliver essential medical care to displaced individuals in Northern France, particularly in the Calais region. Our teams of dedicated volunteer healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and paramedics, operated a mobile clinic to reach those most in need.

The humanitarian situation in Calais deteriorated significantly in 2024, with increasing numbers of displaced people facing brutal living conditions. By early 2024, an estimated 1,000 displaced people were living in the region, subjected to repeated evictions by authorities, often as frequently as every 48 hours. The ongoing displacement and lack of access to stable shelter created an environment where injuries, infections, and chronic illnesses worsened, increasing the demand for medical support.

This year also saw a record number of deaths in the Channel, with at least 89 people losing their lives in their attempts to cross to the UK. Our thoughts are with people who lost family, friends and loved ones at the border, and with those who are still waiting in fear for news. These deaths were not accidents—they were caused by cruel policies that treat borders as more important than human lives.

Many of those we treated had experienced severe injuries from failed crossings, fuel burns, exhaustion, dehydration, and exposure-related conditions. The constant evictions and movement restrictions further limited access to even the most basic healthcare, making FAST's mobile medical service more needed.

Throughout the year, FAST provided a wide range of medical services to address the diverse health needs of the displaced community:

- **Primary Care:** Our team treated cases of respiratory infections, gastrointestinal illnesses, and skin conditions, all of which were exacerbated or caused by the unsanitary living conditions in the camps.

FAST (First Aid Support Team)

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- **Injury Management:** Many individuals suffered from wounds and fractures sustained while attempting to cross the border, from accidents or police violence. We provided wound care, referrals to other clinics and infection prevention.
 - **Mental Health Support:** FAST worked with mental health professionals and other NGOs to provide referrals where possible.

The cold and rainy weather during the winter months made the conditions for displaced people more difficult. Some people suffered from hypothermia, frostbite, and respiratory illnesses due to sleeping outdoors with inadequate protection. FAST distributed:

- **Hand Warmers and thermal blankets** to help prevent hypothermia.
- **Hand sanitizers** to improve hygiene in conditions where clean water was scarce.
- **Cold and flu treatments**

FAST understands that providing medical care goes beyond treatment—it also means addressing basic needs in a way that respects the dignity and cultural preferences of the people we support.

Instead of generic hygiene kits, we aimed to provide **culturally appropriate hygiene products** that people actually want to use, recognise and feel comfortable with. This included:

- **Miswaks** – traditional teeth-cleaning sticks used in many Middle Eastern and African cultures, which are often preferred over conventional plastic toothbrushes.
- **Alcohol-free and fragrance-free hygiene products** to ensure accessibility for everyone, particularly those with religious beliefs or skin sensitivities.
- **Menstrual hygiene kits** tailored to the needs of people who menstruate in transit.

Additionally, we fulfilled thousands of **hygiene-related requests** throughout the year, ensuring access to:

- **Soap, tissues, and wet wipes** for basic cleanliness in a setting where water is often unavailable.
- **Water** is available during all our clinics. Poor WASH facilities, limited access to water and the confiscation of water points mean displaced people do not have access to adequate supplies of water. Dehydration is a common issue during our clinics.
- **Skin creams** to prevent infections in untreated injuries.
- **Multivitamins and nutrition support** to help counteract deficiencies due to poor access to food and cooking supplies.

Beyond direct medical care, FAST spends a lot of energy on collaboration and capacity building:

- **First Aid Training:** We provided hands-on training for fellow volunteers and NGOs, focusing on wound care, (pediatric) resuscitation, and other emergency response.
- **Partnerships with NGOs:** We worked closely with organizations such as Care4Calais to harmonize response efforts and share resources.
- **Healthcare collaboration:** We continue to work closely with the Red Cross and MSF who provide healthcare services on the ground in Calais too. We have worked on sharing information, streamlining service provision and liaising with other organisations to ensure our patients get the right support.

By equipping other organizations with basic first aid knowledge, FAST amplified its impact far beyond what our small team could accomplish alone.

Statistical Overview

FAST operated for a total of 243 distribution days over the past year, providing essential medical support to those in need. On average, each distribution day was staffed by 3.27 volunteers, ensuring continuous access to care.

Patient Statistics

- Total Patients Seen: 33,369
- Average Patients Per Day: 137.32
- Total Patients Treated: 16,203
- Total Requests Processed: 16,115
- Total Referrals Made: 1,051

The most common medical conditions encountered during distributions included:

- Respiratory Issues (Cough, Cold, Flu): 7,031 cases
- Headaches: 1,665 cases
- Allergy, Dermatology, and Fungal Infections: 1,737 cases
- Feet-related Conditions: 664 cases
- Gastrointestinal Issues: 660 cases
- Wound Care: 1,929 cases
- Locomotor Issues: 1,184 cases
- Trauma-related Cases: 156 cases
- Dental Pain: 734 cases
- Mental Health Concerns: 65 cases
- Other Conditions: 378 cases

A total of 1,051 referrals were made to external medical services. The breakdown of referrals is as follows:

- La Pass: 548
- Dentist: 383
- Emergency Services: 18
- Psychology Services: 30
- RWC: 65
- Other: 7

It is important to note that due to high workload and operational constraints, we were not always able to record data consistently. As a result, we expect that the actual numbers are higher than those reported here.



FAST (First Aid Support Team)

VOLUNTEERS

FAST's work would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of our incredible volunteers. Every day, they give their time, skills, and energy to provide urgent medical care, distribute essential supplies, and offer kindness and solidarity to displaced people in Northern France.

Our Volunteer Team in 2024

This year, we were proud to welcome **60** volunteers, including **4** new field coordinators who took on leadership roles in Calais. Our short-term volunteers are committed to a minimum of one week of their time supporting medical aid efforts, while our long term field coordinators ensure continuity, logistics, and training for new volunteers.

Our volunteers come from diverse backgrounds, they are doctors, nurses, physios, and paramedics from all across the world. Additionally, we welcomed final-year medical and nursing students, providing them with the opportunity to gain supervised hands-on experience in humanitarian fieldwork.

We also strengthened our alumni network, with former field coordinators continuing to support FAST remotely—offering guidance, training, and expertise to new volunteers stepping into their roles.

Remote Volunteers

In addition to field volunteers, this year we have a team of 4 remote volunteers who support FAST's operations behind the scenes. These volunteers assisted with:

Advocacy: We recruited two new remote advocacy volunteers with backgrounds in healthcare and logistics. Together with the board, they organised our first photo exhibition hosted in an art gallery in London. It showcased a selection of professional photos taken during our clinics, telling the story of our volunteers and the limited access to healthcare displaced people experience.

It was a success and we are pleased to now have the photos on display in a Liverpool NHS Trust Hospital for a 3 month loan. A location chosen in response and defiance to the horrific race and anti-migrant riots seen in the city during the summer. We hope to continue this advocacy work, focusing on bringing stories and the reality to people who may not have otherwise heard about the humanitarian crisis in Calais.

The Advocacy team also works on fundraising, social media posts and replying to requests from media and researchers. It is important to share the work FAST does in a mindful and responsible way. Our remote volunteers are dedicated to protecting the dignity of our patients whilst raising awareness of our work.

Recruitment

A new volunteer recruitment officer joined the recruitment team this year. The recruitment team is made up of two experienced health care professionals with extensive experience of recruiting healthcare professionals to teams. All potential volunteers apply to join FAST via the Better Impact recruitment portal. The portal allows volunteers to access essential online training in preparation of their volunteering role. The recruitment process takes all volunteers through a short interview, followed by verification via a reference. Volunteers are provided with the FAST handbook, and are signposted to travel and accommodation advice.

Over the past few years, FAST has partnered with Indigo Volunteers who connect and collaborate with humanitarian organisations. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Indigo Volunteers for the talented health care professionals that they have signposted to volunteer with FAST.

Bank Coordinators

Recognising the hardships all NGOs are facing with funding and recruitment, we introduced a new strategy to ensure contingency and flexibility to our service. We have asked nine people who have been field coordinators previously and experienced FAST volunteers to make up our team of bank coordinators. They are experienced, knowledgeable and able to step in at the last minute to cover gaps. Not only does this help maintain regular clinics, it also enables us to give our field coordinators well deserved holiday and well-being days. Five of the bank coordinators supported the service in the field this year.



FAST (First Aid Support Team)

Volunteering with FAST is more than just providing medical aid—it is about standing in solidarity with displaced people, witnessing the injustices they face, and taking action to bring change. Our volunteers do not just offer medical assistance; they provide warmth, dignity, and respect in an environment where these things are often lacking.

As one volunteer described:

“At FAST, you realize very quickly that the work is not just about first aid. It’s about listening to people, being there when they are hurt, when they are exhausted, when they need someone to remind them that they matter.”

To every volunteer who gave their time to FAST in 2024: **thank you**. Your commitment has made a real difference in the lives of thousands of displaced people.

Whether in the field, behind a laptop, or through fundraising and advocacy, each of you has contributed to making FAST a stronger, more resilient, and a more compassionate organization.

Together, we will continue to provide care, stand against injustice, and work towards a world where no one is denied healthcare and dignity.



THANK YOU

FAST's work would not be possible without the unwavering support of countless individuals and organizations who believe in the right to healthcare, dignity, and solidarity for displaced people.

This year, we extend our deepest gratitude to the **Haella Foundation** and **Human Aid Now**. Their continued financial support has been instrumental in keeping our operations running, ensuring that we can provide urgent medical care, distribute essential supplies, and train volunteers to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Calais. We also really appreciate them sharing their network and supporters.

We also would like to thank the **Hofstee Foundation** for their great donation in 2024!

To all our donors—whether through one-time gifts, monthly contributions, or fundraising efforts—thank you. Every donation, no matter the size, has helped us buy medical supplies, keep our vehicle on the road, and respond to the urgent needs of those who have nowhere else to turn. Your generosity is what keeps FAST alive.

We also want to recognize the incredible work of other organizations operating in Calais and Northern France. In a year where funding has become scarcer, volunteer numbers have dropped, and governments have made humanitarian work increasingly difficult, these organizations have not given up.

Despite the growing hostility towards displaced people, grassroots organizations continue to step up, filling the gaps where states and institutions fail.

Beyond financial support, many individuals and businesses have stood beside us, offering their time, skills, and resources.

2024 did not start the way we had hoped. On January 28, FAST was involved in a serious car accident that left our vehicle completely totaled. While we are incredibly grateful that no one was injured, losing our car—our mobile clinic and essential transport for volunteers and supplies—was a major setback. But in moments like these, solidarity shines through. Thanks to the immense support from our partner foundations, the local auto garage, and individual donors, we were back on the road within just a few days. The generosity and quick action of our community made it possible for us to replace the vehicle and continue our work without major disruptions.



To those who assist with logistics—whether through transport, or supply management—thank you for ensuring that medical supplies, hygiene kits, and emergency provisions find their way to Calais.

To those who amplify our message—journalists, researchers, activists, and ordinary people who share our work, tell our stories, and educate others about the humanitarian crisis in Calais—your voice is powerful.

A special thank you to humanitarian aid worker and photographer Mattia who has volunteered his time and skills to take professional photographs of our work. These photos have enabled us to sensitively and accurately portray life in Calais. They also feature in our exhibitions and all the photos in this report are taken by him.

FAST is not just an organization—it is a movement built by people who refuse to accept injustice. From the volunteers on the ground to the donors behind the scenes, from those who provide shelter and support to those who simply listen and care, this work belongs to all of us.

Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for believing in a world where no one is denied medical care, dignity, or safety. Thank you for refusing to look away.

