

News

Bikes, the means of transport integrating refugees in London



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They repair second-hand bikes. Photo: The Bike Project.

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Jem Stein, CEO of The Bike Project and a refugee. Photo: The Bike Project.



Bikes as a means of integration. Photo: Wikimedia.

The Bike Project reuses second-hand bikes, repairs them and gives them to people who are fleeing their countries of origin. Every year, 13,500 asylum seekers arrive in the British capital. 27,500 bikes are abandoned during the same time period.

A community of **refugees**, mechanics and volunteers has had an idea: take donations of **second-hand bikes**, repair them in a workshop and afterwards deliver them to asylum seekers and refugees. This is [The Bike Project](#), a project which according to their own data, states that every year more than **13,500** people arrive in London who are fleeing their own countries for reasons such as war, dictatorship, ethnic discrimination or climate change. Similarly, there are **27,500** bikes that are abandoned during the same time period. This means that just one of these recycled bikes can help refugees to save £20 on bus fares and up to £1040 per year.

It has to be said that the reason this project is sustainable in the long term is that a small proportion of the bikes are sold through [The Bike Shop](#). This allows them to generate funds, which guarantee their continuity. In their first three years, up to 1,300 refugees received a bike, which contributed to a **collective saving of £1.352 million** on transport. "I feel good when I travel by bike. It means that my mind is active and for me, it's like therapy", confirms one of the beneficiaries of the project.

London is a city where public transport can be very expensive. Sarah Morpurgo, coordinator of the project, confirms that "the main problem that they must face here, especially in London, is isolation". Likewise, the British capital offers lots of opportunities such as lawyers who can help them in their **asylum request** procedures, organisations that can give them housing, access to education and a health system, etc. To manage the requests for bikes, they have a **waiting list** on their website. If the asylum seekers have received refugee status in the last five years, they can fill in the form and then when The Bike Project receives a new bike, they receive an email with a notification.

The notification is sent according to a selection order. Then, the beneficiary has to bring their identification to acquire it. In the women's cycling program, it's a 3 month training, and bikes are given to them permanently. To be able to collaborate, The Bike Project has provided a space where those people who want to can **donate** their bike, help to **repair** a bike in bad condition or **sponsor** a bike.

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