

NO

Imagine ~~more~~ SKILLS FACTORY

Newsletter No. 9 – July 2025

Dear selfm.aid - Community

The first half of the year has already flown by. For selfm.aid, it has been a time filled with intensity, success, and deep concern.

The SKILLS FACTORY is thriving, having moved beyond its start-up phase. What began as a vision has become a working prototype - showing how welcome, empowerment, and integration can become reality at Europe's borders.

Yet, our success is overshadowed by a growing financial crisis. Early this year, three of our key funding partners were forced to reduce or halt their support due to declining donations and the abrupt end of US aid. This has left us with a devastating shortfall of €60,000.

The shift in global politics has hit our sector hard. Trump's return and the global rightward drift have dangerously reframed donations as political acts. Humanitarian aid is being discredited, and the moral act of giving is under attack. As a result, many donors have pulled back. We are not the only ones affected – the entire humanitarian sector is facing an existential threat.

But we refuse to stand down. We are determined to adapt, mobilise new support, and keep our work going. If you can help, please spread the word, and consider donating. Every contribution matters.

Julia S. Minder
Co-founder and director of selfm.aid

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DO YOU SHARE OUR VISION AND WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

There are many options to support us...

[MEMBERSHIP](#)[DONATION](#)[VOLUNTEERING](#)[MORE...](#)[selfm.aid](https://www.selfm.aid) [@selfm.aid.ch](https://www.selfm.aid) www.selfm-aid.ch 

SAFE ZONE

FUNDED BY
SWITZERLAND
& EU

Context

update from Samos

WHEN GIVING BECOMES A THREAT

THE POLITICAL BACKLASH AGAINST HUMANITARIAN AID

In March it was confirmed that President Trump's administration had slashed over 80% of USAID programs, putting over 14 million lives at risk (BBC). This seismic cut has had global ripple effects.

Other governments have followed suit: Germany, for instance, recently withdrew support for sea rescue and overseas humanitarian aid ([Info Migrants](#)). Across the board, right-wing rhetoric is redefining aid and donations as politically suspicious or unpatriotic.

As a result, donations have collapsed. One of our core partners, [Leave No One Behind](#), wrote: "We are fighting for survival. The crises are growing, not shrinking. We urgently need support."

We feel the same. Many of our partners could not support us this year, or had to reduce funding dramatically. Our funding gap is real. Please support us and our partners – don't let the Trumps of this world win their war on humanity.



SKILLS FACTORY ON SCREEN

A DIFFERENT STORY OF MIGRATION MAKES HEADLINES

As the EU continues to promote closed camps as the solution to migration, selfm.aid has demonstrated another path. The SKILLS FACTORY stands as a working, humane alternative.

In early 2025, our work gained growing recognition, featured in Greek national media and internationally on:

- ERT-Flix - Greece ([watch here](#))
- SKAI-TV - Greece ([watch here](#))
- NDR - Mare TV - Germany ([watch here](#))

Click the links to watch the seasons.

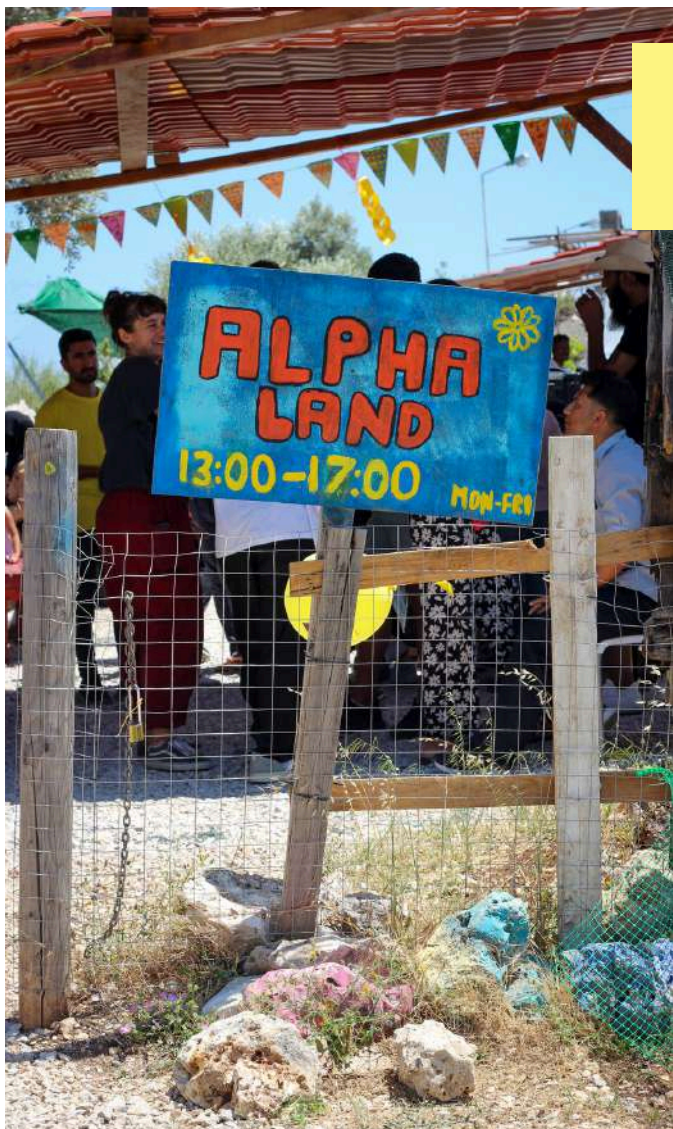
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WORLD REFUGEE DAY

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY // SUMMER FAIR
AT ALPHA LAND

“Refugee” is too often used to define people by what they’ve lost or fled from - but it’s not an identity, it’s an experience. At SKILLS FACTORY, we believe in seeing the individual: their strength, their skills, their future.

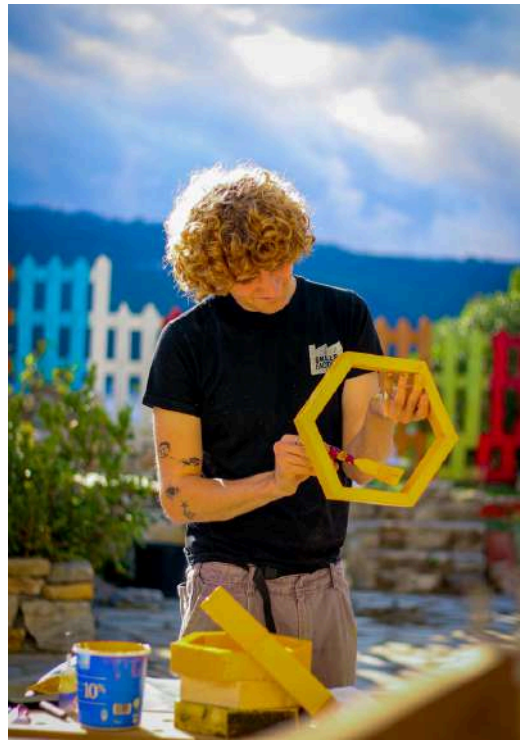
On World Refugee Day, SKILLS FACTORY proudly joined the Summer Community Fair hosted by Samos Volunteers at Alpha Land - a community space located just outside the closed camp (CCAC), offering dignity, connection and hope where it’s needed most.

The day was filled with joy, music, and shared moments of celebration. Community-led activities included dancing, creative workshops and the launch of a powerful new zine: Roots and Branches, showcasing art and writing by community members. At the heart of it all was a spirit of resilience and togetherness.

We were honored to stand beside our partners at Samos Volunteers to celebrate the values we all share: dignity, solidarity, and equality. In a world marked by displacement and uncertainty, days like World Refugee Day are vital reminders — that everyone deserves to be seen, heard and supported.



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SKILLS FACTORY

sustainable humanitarian aid on Samos

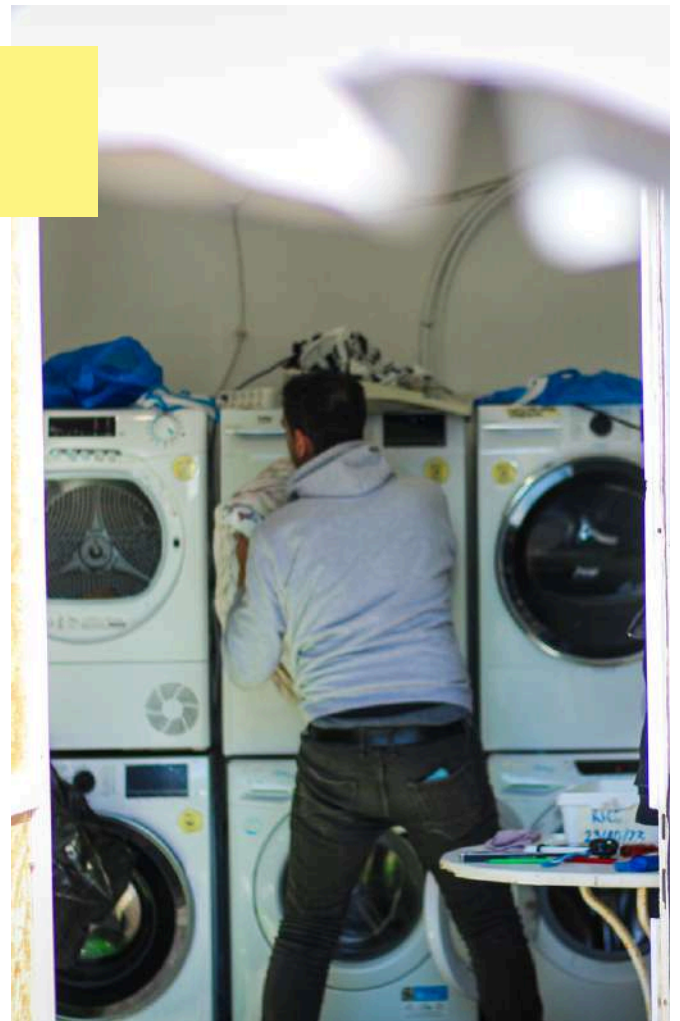
CHALLENGING TIMES IN THE CAMP

AND A STRONG COMMUNITY

Spring 2025 was marked by a high number of camp residents – according to the Aegean Boat Report, around 4,500 people were living in the CCAC in January.

This overcrowding was clearly felt in the SKILLS FACTORY: skin conditions such as scabies spread, increasing the need for WASH services. In February especially, the demand for barber appointments was extremely high.

The camp's restrictive structure – long waits to leave, for food distribution, and on the return – continues to strain the physical and mental well-being of our community volunteers. The resulting uncertainty and exhaustion are tangible. Yet despite these difficult conditions, the atmosphere in the SKILLS FACTORY remains remarkably constructive and full of solidarity. Our community keeps finding creative ways to face the challenges and shows just how powerful mutual support can be. In the midst of these difficult realities, the SKILLS FACTORY remains a place of stability, learning, and human connection.



4 YEARS SKILLS FACTORY

OUR ANNIVERSERY PARTY

On April 26, 2025, we celebrated a special anniversary: four years of the SKILLS FACTORY! What began as a vision in 2021 has grown into a recognized platform for empowerment, education, and community. Our birthday celebration reflected that journey in a powerful way.

The entire community took part: the kitchen team created an international “World Buffet,” the sewing workshop designed and printed t-shirts, and the media department presented a moving photo exhibition. There was also a contest and live smartphone repair on the spot. Music, dance, and connection created a joyful, energetic atmosphere.

The day showed just how much creativity, skill, and collaboration lives in our community. It was a celebration of diversity and togetherness - a moment to be proud of what we've built and to look forward with strength and hope.

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LIGHTS ON: FASHION SHOW

SKILLS FACTORY'S FIRST FASHION SHOW

On Saturday, July 12th, SKILLS FACTORY hosted the very first fashion show on Samos - shining a spotlight on the talent and creativity of our tailoring team, the heart of our community.

From everyday essentials to original statement pieces, our sewing department stepped into a new role - showing what's possible when skill, imagination, and purpose come together. It wasn't just a fashion show; it was a celebration of slow, meaningful fashion and a statement against fast fashion.

The event also featured a flea market, clothing swap, personalized t-shirt printing, and a clothes repair station.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed - and especially to Rafiq Hossam Albayya, who has led the department with passion and expertise for two years.



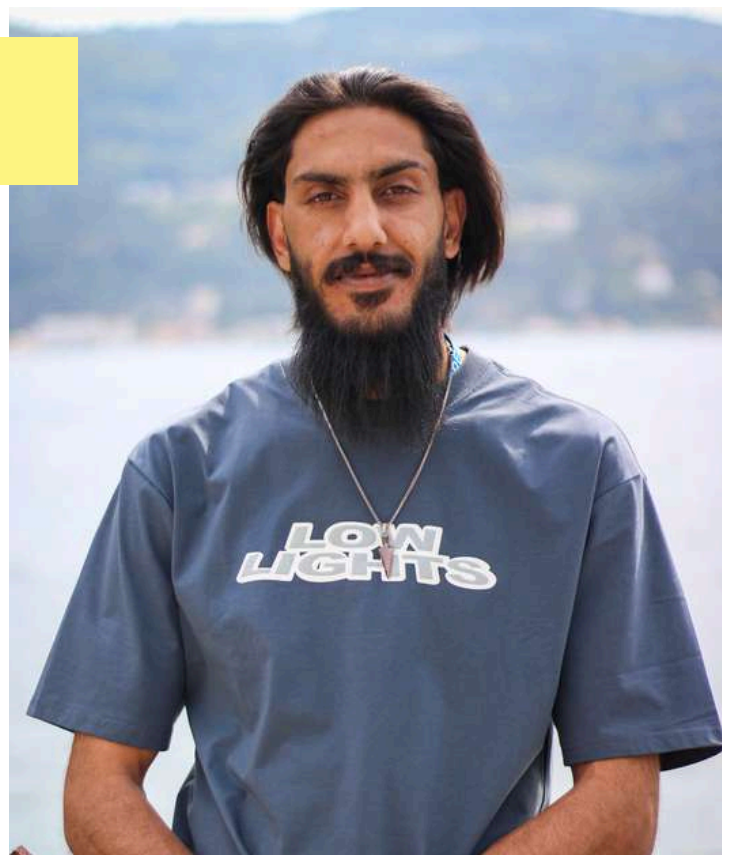
MEET QASEM

TEAM PORTRAIT

Hello, I'm Qasem Al Jasem. I originally learned barbering as a hobby - simply because I enjoyed it. Over time, I realised I could do more with it. Today, being a barber is my profession, and it provides me with a stable income.

At the SKILLS FACTORY, I get to pass on my skills. The people here have grown close to my heart - we support each other, work together, and create a family-like atmosphere. We are all like brothers and sisters.

The barber service is an important offering for the community. Many people in the camp have little access to personal care. A fresh haircut might seem like a small thing, but it really helps people.



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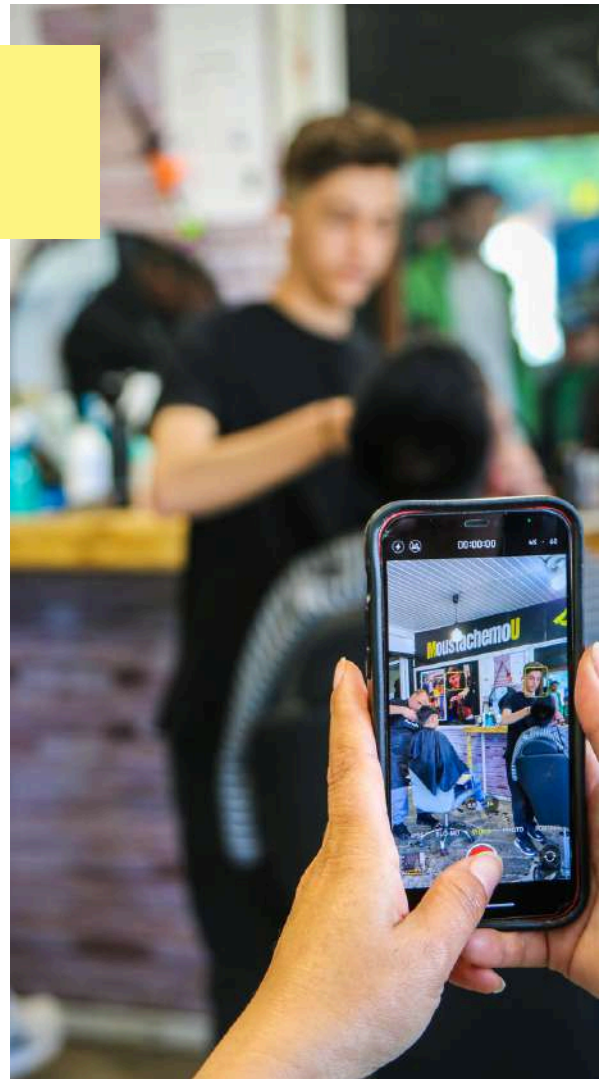
DEPARTMENT UPDATE: MEDIA

A YEAR OF STORYTELLING, SKILLS & COMMUNITY

The Media Department at SKILLS FACTORY continues to grow as a creative and collaborative space for learning, documentation, and expression.

Driven by committed community volunteers, the team has helped tell the stories of our work and everyday life, supporting broader community engagement. This spring, we focused on supporting SKILLS CONNECT by helping participants write and design CVs for local job applications - taking steps toward independence. We also launched our new bilingual Instagram series, "PING PONG with...", which teaches media skills through informal interviews.

The team covered key events like the Open Day, Fashion Show, and Community Summer Fair, using new equipment and skills to document moments of celebration and connection. Regular meetings and trainings have strengthened teamwork and boosted confidence. Our volunteers make the Media Department what it is - a space of learning, creativity, and shared experience. Through their lens, we don't just capture the work - we capture the joy, solidarity, and spirit of SKILLS FACTORY.



MEET EZEDIN

CO-MANAGER MEDIA DEPARTMENT

"My name is Ezedin Girum Petros, and I'm originally from Eritrea. I have a background in media and creative storytelling - especially cinematography and video editing. Before coming to Samos, I worked on various creative projects like short films, photography, and social media content. I love using visuals to tell stories that connect people.

At SKILLS FACTORY, I'm part of the Media Department, focusing on video production, editing, photography and social media. What I enjoy most is turning ideas into visual stories - whether it is a cinematic video or a single photo. It's meaningful because we help people express themselves and share their voices with the community.

My dream is to build a life through cinema. I want to travel, study filmmaking and work on international film sets. One day, I hope to premiere my own feature film at a festival - not for fame, but to touch hearts and start conversations that matter."

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MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

REBUILDS AND RESTORES

The Maintenance Department made a strong and much-anticipated comeback in 2025, flourishing throughout the year.

Thanks to the arrival of a skilled external volunteer in late 2024, we were able to reopen the department and carry out essential repairs and construction projects across the site. We welcomed several community volunteers – many with little to no prior experience – and fostered a dynamic environment of skills-sharing and hands-on learning. Together, we achieved key improvements, most notably:

- New washing lines for the WASH department, harnessing the sun to reduce electricity use and lower the risk of skin diseases in the CCAC.
- A new roof extension, made possible by project Elpida's generous donation of iron sheets. This shaded space has become a favorite lunch spot during the hot summer months.

These are just a few of the many projects made possible by the revitalisation of the department. Huge thanks to all the volunteers who contributed – let's see what the rest of 2025 brings!

SKILLS CONNECT

17 NEW JOBS – 17 NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In the first half of 2025, Skills Connect helped another 17 community members secure jobs on Samos - a strong achievement.

Many of these are seasonal positions, but they offer both financial stability and valuable work experience. When employers also provide housing, the overall quality of life for our community volunteers improves significantly.

Even more encouraging: many local businesses have praised our participants' motivation and skills. Skills Connect supports each application process individually and works closely with local partners. In doing so, we're not only creating jobs, but also building long-term connections between our community and the local economy.

Every successful placement strengthens not just one person, but the whole community - through self-confidence, motivation, and integration.



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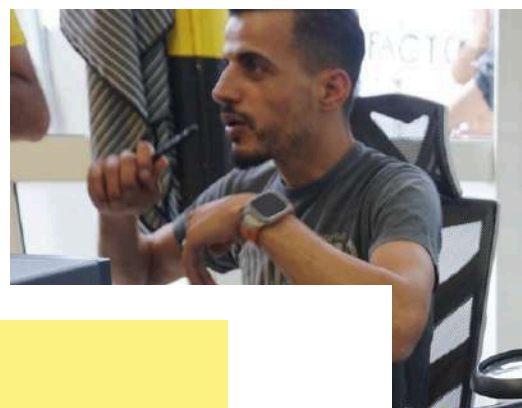
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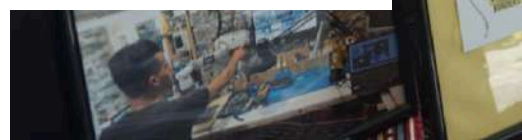
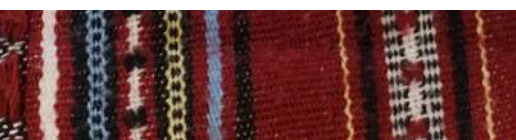
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PWB

Phones Without Borders



COLLECTION POINTS

GROWING SUPPORT IN GERMANY

In Germany, support for Phones Without Borders is growing steadily: we now have seven collection points across the country – a huge milestone!

Since May, Café Knallhart at the University of Hamburg has hosted one of our signature collection boxes, making it easy for students and visitors to donate their old phones directly on site. A second collection box has already arrived in Hamburg and will soon be installed at another location – final details are currently being sorted out.

We are thrilled to see this momentum and grateful for the solidarity.

Find more information about our collection points in Germany and in Switzerland here:

<https://selfm-aid.ch/en/projekte/pwb-phones-without-borders>



DISTRIBUTIONS ARE OPEN

PHONES FOR SAFETY AND CONNECTIVITY ON THE MOVE

After a brief pause, Phones Without Borders reopened this spring, delivering second-hand phones to grassroots organizations across Greece and beyond.

This was only possible thanks to amazing collections in Germany and Switzerland and to our dedicated partners: Project Elpida, Hans Mörter, Lohmar hilft e.V., Die Anstiftung, IWC Watches, Dynamo Zürich, Chemiserie Plus, Kulturzentrum Honigfabrik, Werkbox3, Studio R31/Reuteratur, Innwerk, Café Knallhart, and many others. Your solidarity powers our impact.

Phones are refurbished in our local workshop and distributed directly.

You have a phone to donate? Check collection points [here](#).

You are working on the borders and are in need of phones? Register your organisation [here](#).

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MEET HEBA

FROM GAZA TO SAMOS – A JOURNEY THROUGH ART

Heba Alkasem is an artist from Gaza, Palestine. Back home, she studied art and led her own creative projects - her talent and reputation were growing. But just as her career began to flourish, the situation in Gaza forced her to leave. "When I started becoming really successful, things around me fell apart. I had no choice but to leave."

Arriving on Samos, Heba quickly connected with the selfm.aid team and learned that Phones Without Borders had just moved into a new space - its walls still blank. Heba offered to paint a mural. "I wanted to leave my fingerprint," she said. And she did: her artwork transformed the space and brought fresh energy to the project.

But her impact didn't stop there. Heba volunteered wherever help was needed, quickly becoming a cherished member of the team. "It felt like family," she shared. Now, with her travel papers finalized, Heba is preparing for her next chapter. Her dream is to live in safety and devote herself fully to art. "Because art is the strongest message - it's more powerful than words. I want to spread it around the world and connect it with a message of humanity."

Thank you, Heba, for your art, your energy, and your presence.

FOR MY PLANET AWARD

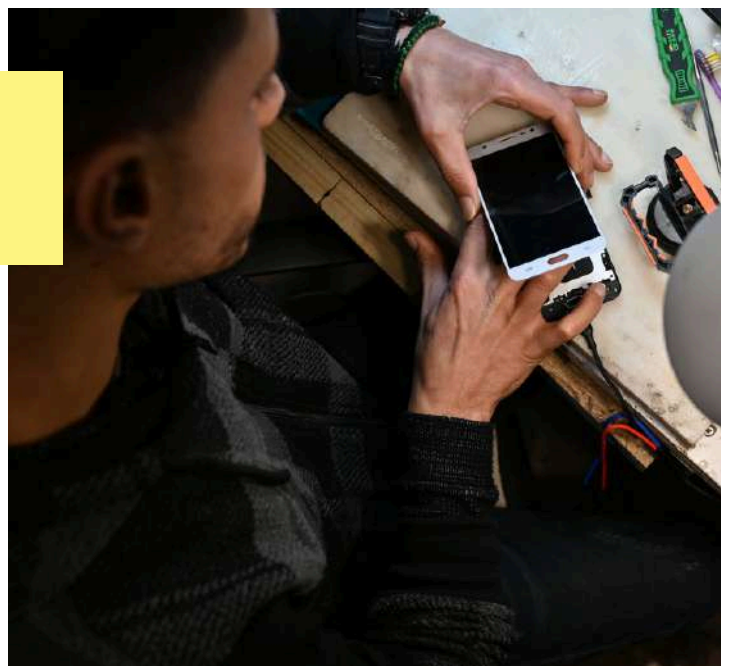
PHONES WITHOUT BORDERS
WINS 3RD PLACE

In April, Phones Without Borders received 3rd place in the EU's "Europeans for My Planet" award, recognizing projects that combine environmental action with social impact.

Our motto: Repairing Devices, Restoring Lives, and Rethinking Waste.

We are proud of this recognition and congratulate the inspiring winners.

Read more about the award [here](#).



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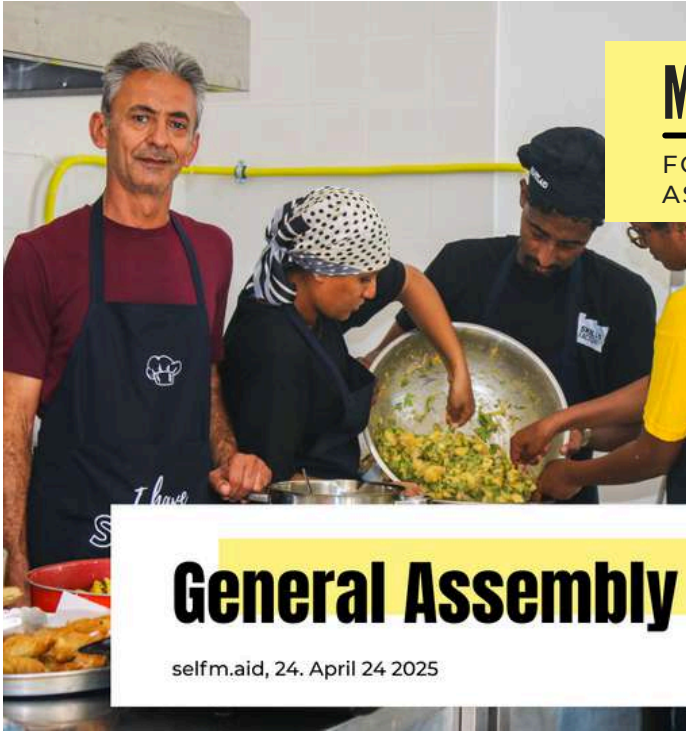
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- Increase Production and Estimation Distribution Channels
- Establish Smart Partnerships on the Mainland
- Evaluate Creation and Departments
- Consider Relevance of Changes or Additions (Reorganizing)
- Receive Notes and Implications
- Plan Vision and Missions for 2025 (with the Board)

Documentation in the Coordination Team
Documentation in the Board Team
External Volunteers
Kitchen, Sewing, Barber, Phone Repair, WASH
for main departments
of stakeholders
(2024)

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www.selfm.aid.id
info@selfm.aid.id

selfm.aid
Management & Board



MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY

FOR THE FIRST TIME OUR MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY HAS TAKEN PLACE ONLINE

On April 24, 2025, selfm.aid held its first-ever online General Assembly. It was a special moment: connecting with members and supporters across borders, reflecting on a challenging year, and looking ahead.

We thank everyone who participated. Together, we approved the 2024 annual report, confirmed the financial statements, and re-elected board members.

Congratulations to Alexander Bruun, Noor Kaisar, and Janine Kobi on their election!

View the annual report [here](#).

JOIN THE BOARD OF SELF.M.AID

OPEN POSITIONS

Our board plays a vital role in supporting the team on the ground by handling the essential background work that keeps our organization running.

We are currently looking for passionate and committed individuals to strengthen our leadership in the following areas:

- A board member with expertise in Finances / Swiss accounting
- A board member with experience in Mental Health Support
- An external Revisor to help ensure transparency and accountability

If you're interested in supporting our mission more regularly and want to be part of our journey, [see details and apply on our website].



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5-YEAR SELF.M.AID ANNIVERSARY

OUR ANNIVERSARY PARTY IS CANCELLED!

Unfortunately, we have to announce that our 5-year anniversary celebration has been cancelled.

Due to ongoing funding challenges, we are focusing all our energy and resources on securing the future of selfm.aid. While we are disappointed not to celebrate this milestone together, we hope to welcome you at a future occasion. Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

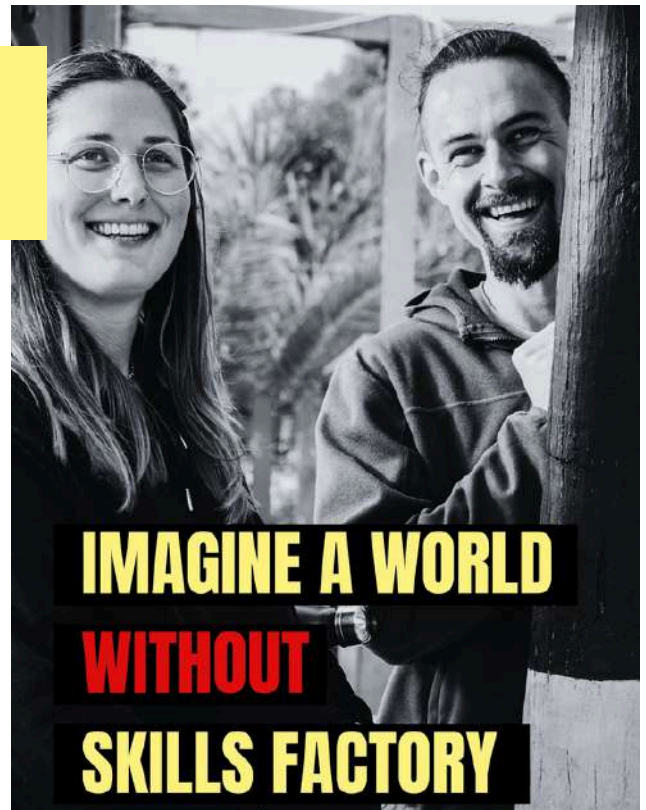
SUPPORT APPEAL

HELP US TO CONTINUE OUR WORK
DESPITE THE DIRE POLITICAL CLIMATE!

While Switzerland helps finance camps that systematically violate human rights (see our report on the Samos safe zone), we at selfm.aid are building a real, human alternative – a prototype of welcome and dignity.

But we can't do it without you. Our work relies entirely on private donations and grants – both of which are plummeting in the current political climate. We are facing the very real threat of shutting down.

Help us prove that humanity matters. Support the SKILLS FACTORY. Defend dignity. Fight back against the politics of exclusion.



DONATE NOW. SPREAD THE WORD. SHARE HOPE.



Donate now with
TWINT!



Scan the QR code with the
TWINT app



Confirm amount and
donation



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IBAN: CH42 0900 0000 1565 6039 7

BIC: POFICHBEXXX

CHF - ACCOUNT

IBAN: CH40 0900 0000 1565 6033 6

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