

SUPPORTING & RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY NEEDS ON LESVOS & ATHENS

October 2021 - December 2021



SITUATION OVERVIEW

Responding promptly to pandemic emergencies, Christmas donations and support for refugee students, were our three areas of action that marked the last quarter of the year.

In relation to Covid: By the end of the year, most local children and adolescents in Lesvos were vaccinated. The Ministry of Health announced that vaccinating refugees and immigrants of the Reception and Identification Centers of the islands and the Inland Accommodation Centers became a high priority. Although 70% of the residents are considered vaccinated, medical actors working in Mavrovouni camp are disillusioned with the Covid-response plan; often reporting a **low number of vaccinations and lack of PPE** for unvaccinated residents whilst a general skepticism prevails against Covid19 amongst the affected communities. EODY, and other site support actors are working together to promote Covid19 information, explain measures taken by the Greek state and counter the spreading of rumors in the camp. Approximately 40% of children have been vaccinated and those attending public school are obliged to take a rapid test prior to taking the bus. People with a negative decision are not able to access vaccinations or receive PAYPA while appealing or waiting for a second decision.

Around 70 school-age children living in the camp have been registered to **attend public education**. They were given **priority in vaccinations** and were able to attend several weeks of classes since November. Yet they represent only a small percentage of school-aged children who should be accessing public education (out of 700 according to a September census). Efforts to provide education inside the camp are coordinated by UNICEF with the creation of the so-called 'educational hub'. As of mid-December the space was not probably functioning with critical overlaps in service provision and evident lack of curriculum oversight for quality education. Furthermore, constant movement to the mainland further stoles educational progress although the numbers inside the camp continue to drop. **UASC** are still sheltered outside the camp and being transferred to urban shelters managed by Iliaktida or to the mainland. There is word that IOM will be closing the Safe Zone area they have been managing outside the camp and that the Safe Zone area will be relocated back inside the camp. At the moment UASC attend educational classes at Kalimera Athina. Of 150 (approx) UASC on the island, around 15% attend public education.

As Lesvos prepares to welcome Christmas, another large shipwreck takes the lives of dozens of people making perilous sea crossings to get to safety. At least 31 people died in three separate shipwrecks in the Aegean sea between December 21st and 24th. According to reports from reputable sources, **'EU member states including Greece continue to use illegal means to push back thousands of people.'** By May 2021, the Guardian had already reported that over 40,000 asylum seekers had been pushed back from Europe's borders during the pandemic, by illegal methods being linked to the death of more than 2,000 people 'in one of the biggest mass expulsions in decades.' In a more recent article, the Guardian reveals that **Greece is accused of the biggest pushback in years**. Intersos Hellas reports that 382 asylum seekers were kept on the vessel for four days although the nearest port was just a few miles away. This has led to allegations that the operation bore all the hallmarks of an illegal pushback before the Greek coastguard was forced to change tactics and engage in what is seen as the biggest search-and-rescue operation in the eastern Mediterranean for a decade, disembarking them on the island of Kos. By mid-year Amnesty International released the report **'Greece: Violence, lies and pushback'** documenting how the Greek authorities are conducting illegal pushbacks at land and sea. Lastly, UNHCR's reported being 'deeply distressed' over recent migrant deaths in the Aegean Sea at the end of December 2021.

THIRD PARTY SUPPORT

SPECIAL SECRETARIAT FOR THE PROTECTION OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Whilst conditions remain difficult for refugees and camp staff, the Minor's Office continues to work daily to support the best interest of UASC in Lesvos. Recently, the National Mechanism has been working more efficiently and relocations from the islands are proceeding quickly. To enhance our capacity to manage the administrative workload and to ensure an equipped, child-friendly office space, BD procured 62 stationery pieces, a whiteboard, a printer/scanner, 4 chairs, office supplies and posters.



MVI - MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

MVI continues to provide medical coverage to refugees without access to Greece's National Health System. Recently, we donated €3,500 to support MVI's purchase of an ultrasound machine and physiotherapy table, essential for programming in their new clinic in Athens

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT TO LOCAL FAMILIES ON LESVOS

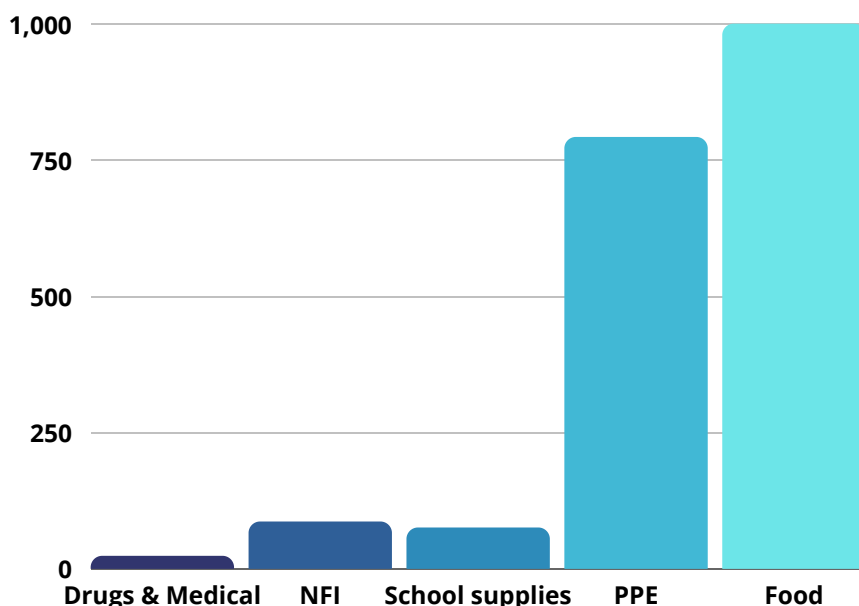
We have always been sensitive to the needs of single-headed families.

- "A big thank you is not enough!" These were the words of a mother whom we provided with a pair of anatomical shoes (worth €450) for her 25-year-old son who suffers from a very rare type of cancer.
- We also supported a mother in Lesvos with airplane tickets and PCR tests to accompany her young child for surgery in Athens after a road accident.

GEKKO KIDS STUDENTS / HEALTH & SAFETY

With the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, we continued to ensure that our students at GEKKO KIDS have adequate supplies of PPE, such as masks and sanitiser, so they can safely attend public school and supplementary classes delivered at Gekko. Having reviewed and updated our internal protocol, we provide all employees with PPE, Rapid and PCR tests whenever needed. Food and NFI donations were coordinated amongst local groups for the support of local and refugee families and students.

SUPPORTING MEDICAL & EDUCATION: DONATIONS (pcs)



1.253+ PPE
45+ Rapid tests

CHRISTMAS DONATIONS



ABUSED WOMENS' SHELTER

Better Days sent toys and scarves to the 8 children and 7 mothers hosted by the centre in Lesvos to support the efforts of both the residents and the workers and create a festive and hopeful environment for Christmas.

KANENAS MONOS

Better Days' support to 'Kanenas Monos', and the trust held between both parties, is evident in our longstanding collaboration with this local group which provides food supplies to 90+ families in the community. Before Christmas 2021, 1000 food items were delivered.

IOS

As part of an information campaign launched by the Lesbian Association of Autoimmune Diseases (200+members), IOS published 100 informative leaflets in cooperation with local doctors and patients who will be distributed to the local community to increase awareness about Autoimmune conditions. Better Days sponsored the cost of the leaflet and provided PPE for all patients.

KIPSELI

Christmas is a time when small acts of love can bring smiles. We visited Kipseli's Mixed Day Care Centre for persons with disabilities and distributed gifts from Santa's Wishlist to the 38 beneficiaries.



"On behalf of the Management and team of the Women's Shelter operated by the Municipality of Mytilene, we want to thank you very much for the Christmas gifts offered to the women and children of our center.

With your generous act, you put a big smile on these children's and women's faces - a smile which is needed during the festive period and always. Such actions - of sensitivity, solidarity, and humanity - fill us with joy. We are grateful for your support during these difficult times.

We wish you a Happy New Year with Health and Optimism!
December 2021"

BETTER DAYS: EDUCATIONAL OVERVIEW

- As of Nov 2021, we have supported 9 students attending Mytilene's Night School with fast-track Greek lessons amounting to 20 teaching hours per week for each student. Our students' goal is to complete Greek language studies to A1 level by Feb 2022 to meet their June exam requirements. The cooperation between the teaching staff and the Public School officials has been really positive.
- Alongside their Greek language study, our students also engage in test preparation and are supported to prepare for their subsequent school day. With different levels of comprehension, we follow a differentiated pedagogy with varied methodology and materials to suit the learning needs of every student and maximize their learning and, critically, their information absorption.
- 28 students were enrolled and received a total of 185 hours in media training with *Refocus Media Lab* in GEKKO KIDS. The end of the year was celebrated with an amazing exhibition created by the students who expressed themselves through their photographs and videography.

Our Impact in Numbers

- 82 HOURS OF GREEK LANGUAGE TEACHING
- 348 SCHOLARSHIP TUTORING HOURS FOR GEKKO STUDENTS
- 190 EUR FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- 3.435 EUR SPENT TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL ACTORS
- 40 BUS TICKETS
- XMAS PRESENTS FOR GEKKO STUDENTS



As every year, Gekko Kids students, teachers, community support volunteers (CSVs), and Better Days staff gathered to decorate the Christmas Tree and exchange gifts. We spent our evening reflecting on 2021 whilst also making wishes and setting goals for 2022.



We wish you a healthy and prosperous 2022

