

Annual Report

BETTER DAYS

January-December 2021



Better Days



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ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS

- **UASC:** Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children/ Unaccompanied Minor: foreign nationals or stateless individuals below the age of 18 who arrive on the Greek territory unaccompanied by a responsible adult.
- **PSS:** Psycho-social Support
- **DCI:** Defence for Children International
- **Family Reunification** is a procedure governed by the Dublin III regulation allowing members from the same family to be reunited in one host country, despite their country of entrance in the EU.
- **Dublin Office:** Offices that are in charge of applying the Dublin III Regulation regarding asylum seekers in Europe.
- **International Protection:** is the recognition by an EU State of a non-EU national or a stateless person as a refugee or as a person eligible for subsidiary protection
- **SGBV:** Sexual and Gender-Based Violence refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It includes physical, emotional or psychological and sexual violence, and denial of resources or access to services. Violence includes threats of violence and coercion. SGBV inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys and is a severe violation of several human rights.



OPENING STATEMENT

2021 saw us take a leap of faith and continue our work with homeless unaccompanied children in the streets of Athens. In January, we sent half of our team to Athens to assess the alarming information we were receiving from children and streetwork actors and confirm the need for an intervention. Having worked closely with over a thousand unaccompanied children on Lesbos over the past year, we felt confident that our presence in Athens could be integral in motivating change, increasing engagement and collaboration amongst actors, closing protection gaps and bringing children from the streets to a safe and protective environment under the care of the Greek state.

Our work in Athens began with the redesign of Themida (Greece) to fit the new context and the strengthening of our partnership with Defense for Children International, who complimented the program with legal expertise since it was first launched in Moria camp in 2019. With the invaluable guidance of Dan Teuma, our ER & Programming Director and Romane Bernet, our Legal Program Coordinator, we tailored a new and advanced version of Themida. The redesign of the program took into account the holistic approach to aid we sought when working with children at risk, but also externally the team built a strong network of actors who were now confident to identify, refer and assist lone children with the support of Themida's team. Amongst those supported by Themida (2019-2021) were 300 UASC, of whom over 60% were homeless at first contact and of which at least 6 were in direct risk of trafficking and ongoing abuse.

Internally this year also signaled unprecedented growth for Better Days, on the one hand acquiring the ISO1900:2015, completing our Financial Audits with great success, launching our very own Learning & Development curriculum, and bringing new amazing people to compliment our team while others moved on to new adventures. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bryce Cleborne-Berube and Irene Sevastelli for their devotion, hard work and profound knowledge they brought to our organization over the past 4 years. We will miss working with you and wish you all the luck in the world.

On Lesbos, the departure of core staff and our operational scale-down following the burning of Moria and the suspension of Gekko Kids during the pandemic, opened the possibilities for new projects and partnerships. Over the past year we have strengthened our relationship with the Lesbian civil society which has been struggling to fulfil their duty towards disadvantaged families and other vulnerable groups. Our Third Party Support Program boosted our existing work - performed through the Covid19 Medical Response Program and Better Days Education Emergency Fund in previous years - allowing us to reach a broader audience and support local health and public education centers across the island whilst caring for all affected communities living on Lesbos.

OPENING STATEMENT

In 2021, Gekko Kids (Gekko) was crowned as one of the best educational programs in Greece - shortlisted by the 5th Global Entrepres Awards Committee amongst 5000 candidates in 126 territories as one of the 100 Best Practices in the world on Sustainability (UN SDGs), Innovation and/or Good Governance. Yet our work on Lesvos became more challenging, on the one hand because of Covid19 and on the other hand because of the post-Moria context on the island. The shockingly low attendance of children in educational activities outside the camp and registration in public school in September 2021 were deeply concerning and revealed a systematic violation of the rights of the child which was perpetuated over the years. Thus, we took an active role in advocating for the Greek government to find an immediate, sustainable solution to the exclusion of migrant children from quality education and guarantee access to public schooling for all migrant children living in Greece.

We also adapted our previous educational programming at Gekko Kids to meet the needs of the refugee youth who were now struggling with a changing context and a harsher reality, characterized by controlled movement and restricted access to services outside the new camp. With that in mind, we launched two new 'covid-friendly' projects, Gekko Grants and Gekko Studentships. These programmes gave students the opportunity to request educational-specific aid to further their learning and attend photography, PSS and language classes onsite, online courses and public school. Despite the challenges faced, our team worked relentlessly to guarantee access to quality education to more than 100 students in 6 months, whilst the premises of Gekko Kids offered a child-friendly, safe, welcoming, and dignified space to respite from the harshness of the camp.

All in all we took an impossible situation and turned it into another productive and impactful year. The end of 2020 provided alarming findings about the humanitarian aid field in Greece. Over the years, we saw EU and European state policy and narrative shifts from 'duty' and 'humanitarianism' to that of 'securitization' and 'threat', often presenting refugees as a cultural risk or as a burden to the host community. This 'new era' of enclosed camps and increasing isolation is what Minister of Migration Notis Mitarachi argued was the answer to the migration problem: "We are extricating our islands from the migration problem and its consequences." Yet human rights groups, UN agencies and NGOs have condemned the realities of entrapment and deprivation these new camps create for thousands of refugees fleeing persecution and violence.

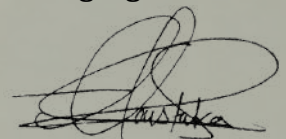
OPENING STATEMENT

In an interview last year a journalist asked me: Which side of history did you choose to be on? We have been given the privilege to choose love and humanity above careerism and to continue our critical work with a sense of disposability and humility. This would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our main donors Le Rosey and Choose Love as well as the continuous commitment of hundreds of private donors and recurring donations. Our Global Giving campaign accumulated over 130,000EUR in aid of refugee children at risk in Greece. We cannot but feel profoundly grateful for this support.

Truly, our work in Athens opened up a new chapter for Better Days. We felt reassured about the decisions we made post-fire and empowered to see that we could be the link that brings together so many civil society actors to maximize impact for the best interest of unaccompanied refugee children in Athens. We are proud that we were able to contribute to building a more comprehensive response mechanism in yet another part of Greece. For this, I owe a special acknowledgement to Daniel Larios, our Outreach Coordinator who left no stone unturned to create a network and built fruitful relationships.

It breaks your heart to see children suffer in this way, alone and frightened having to make impossible decisions to survive or learn. All these actors together is what made change possible this year. But we have a long way to go. We are committed to continue working towards the creation of a world in which refugee children and displaced communities are treated with dignity, and are guaranteed access to their fundamental human rights including their right to a fair assessment of their asylum claim by the competent authorities. This is the least we can expect from Greece and other European countries, the guardians of human rights and democracy. Only then can we really argue humanity and European ethos has prevailed in one of its darkest moments.

Elena Moustaka
Better Days - Managing Director



THEMIDA GREECE

CONTEXT OVERVIEW



ATHENS & MAINLAND GREECE

Themida, a joint program of Better Days Greece and DCI-Greece, was launched in December 2019 in Lesvos and opened in Athens in 2021 as ‘Themida Greece’. This program is delivering holistic child protection and legal aid services to UASC at risk.

2021 was marked by several controversial measures and legislations implemented by the Greek authorities. These actions (none-exhaustively listed below) have impacted the possibilities for asylum seekers to access the asylum process in Greece¹, led to a deterioration in reception conditions, and reduced their opportunity to integrate into their host communities:

- Human Rights defenders have made numerous allegations of illegal pushbacks of asylum seekers which have been denied by the Greek authorities until this day.²
- In June 2021, a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) declared Turkey a safe third country for asylum seekers. This controversial move highly impacted the possibility of displaced populations seeking asylum in Greece including unaccompanied children.
- The opening of “Closed Controlled Access Centers” on the East Aegean islands has led to the freedom of movement limitations for asylum seekers residing within them.
- During the summer of 2021, the cash assistance provided to refugees and asylum seekers was interrupted for several months. This created significant basic needs for the affected populations and hampered their ability to purchase simple, necessary supplies (i.e. water, food, clothing, hygiene supplies, etc).

Existing structural reception deficiencies on both the Greek islands and at the borders of Evros have a domino effect on the situation of refugee children in the mainland and other parts of the country. Many unaccompanied children are crossing through the borders of Evros without being registered by the Greek authorities. As a result, they make their way to Athens without knowing how to register or apply for international protection and without understanding how to access formal accommodation and other child protection services. Too many end up finding temporary refuge in parks or in shared, crowded apartments with strangers. Simultaneously, some children seem to travel illegally from the hotspot camps of Lesvos and Samos hoping to find help, safety and shelter in Athens.

THEMIDA GREECE

CONTEXT OVERVIEW



ATHENS & MAINLAND GREECE

According to official data, published by EKKA (National Center for Social Solidarity) on 15th December 2021, 2217 UASC are present in Greece. Of this number, 1892 UASC are placed in long-term accommodation (with 1587 accommodated in shelters and 305 in Supported Independent Living Apartments). Those remaining are residing in temporary housing such as Safe Zones usually located inside the camps. Regarding the recorded EKKA numbers, the official total of 2,217 UASC should be revised upwards as this number does not consider any unregistered or missing unaccompanied children who remain invisible to the Greek authorities; these children represented about 48% of Themida Greece beneficiaries in 2021.

To address the issue, in April 2021, the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) implemented a National Tracing and Protection Mechanism. This specific five-year national plan aims to identify UASC and deliver a comprehensive system of protection against any form of violence, as well as safeguard UASC's rights, increase the data collected for this demographic and provide safe and suitable accommodation. Despite this National Protection Strategy, the guardianship system for UASC in Greece is still not operational. Whilst some UASC do have access to the provision of temporary guardianship under the local Public Prosecutor, this gap leaves no space for the actual care and representation needed for UASC. This absence of appropriate guardianship directly impacts UASC's access to a fair legal process (asylum or family reunification). It also hinders their access to proper health care, education, and/or other fundamental rights. Furthermore, EKKA has provided no precise data regarding the number of UASC who remain in protective custody.

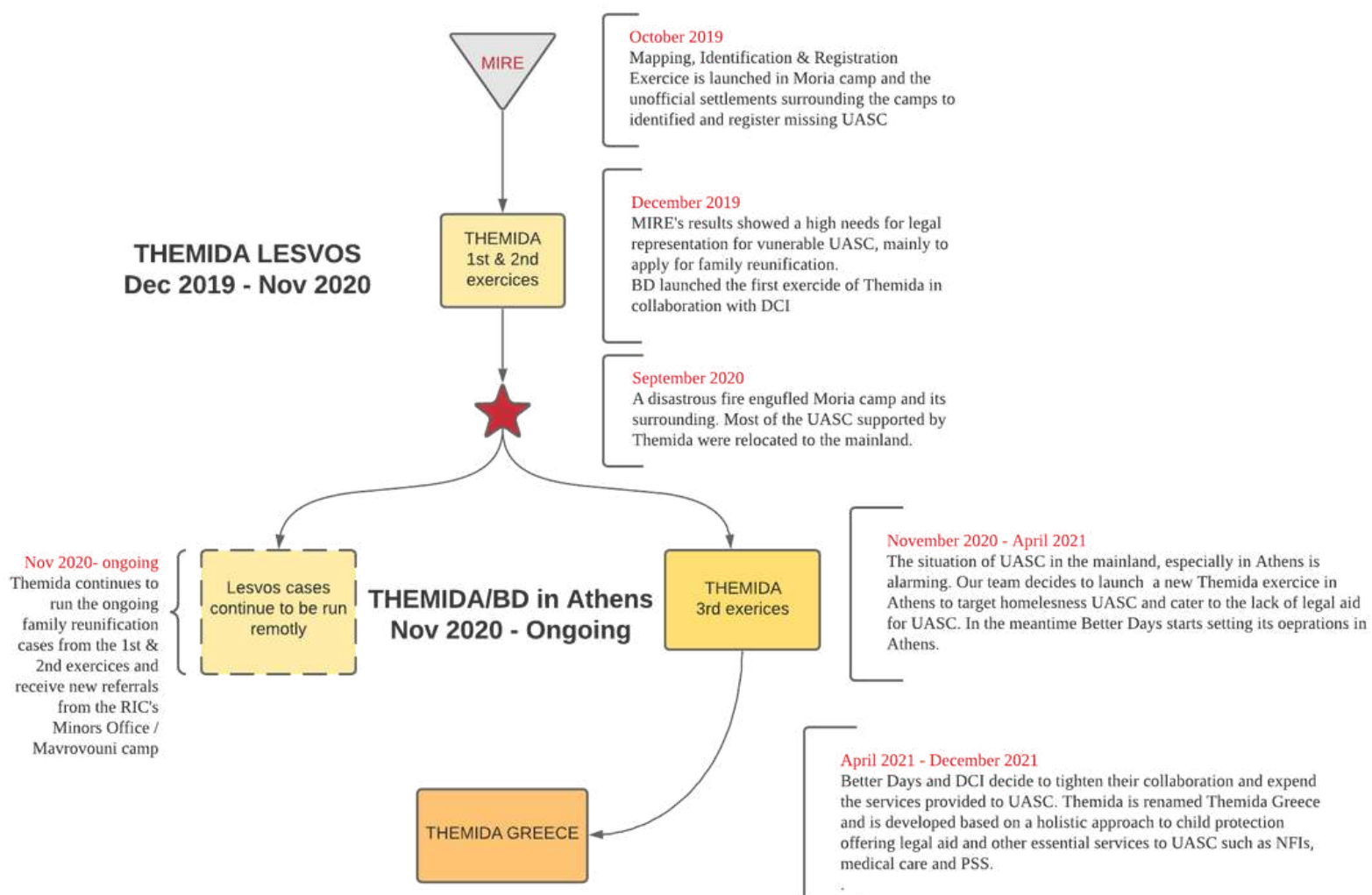
1. Greek Ministry of Migration & Asylum, Statistics, November 2021

2. Greek Ombudsman, Press release Pushback Frontex, 1.12.2021

THEMIDA

CHILD PROTECTION

TIMELINE DECEMBER 2019- DECEMBER 2021



MAIN PILLARS

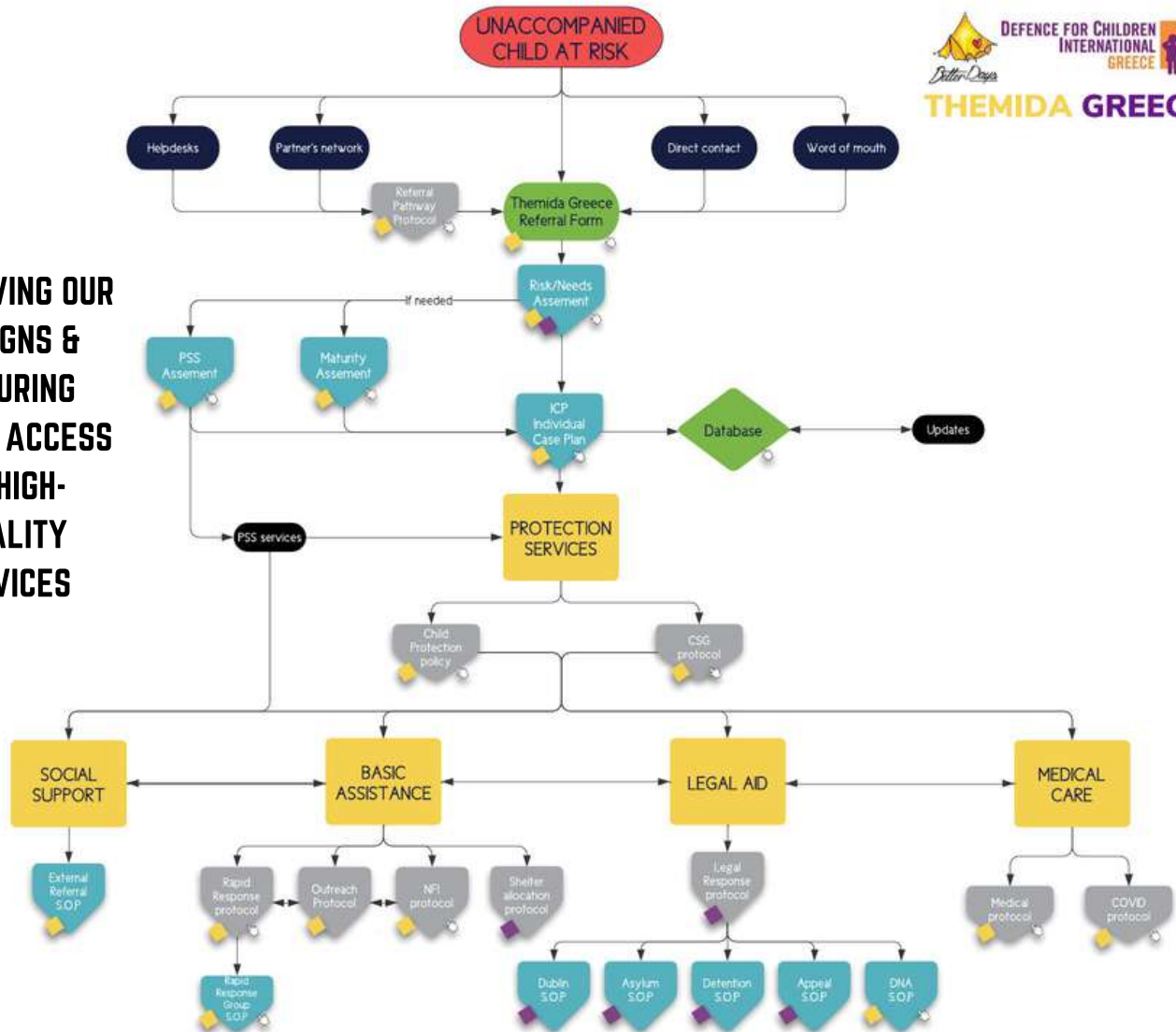
- **Legal aid** (i.e., child-friendly legal information, legal representation, access to DNA tests, access to safe long-term shelters),
- **Medical care** (facilitated access to medical care in private and public medical services)
- **Protection services** (access to a psychologist, initial PSS assessment, mainstream, specialised and non-specialised support pathways)
- **Social services** (support in transportation and escort services for vulnerable cases, translation services for Farsi, Somali, Bengali, French and Arabic)
- **Basic assistance** (rapid response for children in distress, NFIs, PPE and COVID-19 support)

THEMIDA GREECE

PROGRAMME ROADMAP



IMPROVING OUR
DESIGNS &
SECURING
EQUAL ACCESS
TO HIGH-
QUALITY
SERVICES



The Themida Greece Roadmap was carefully designed in the second quarter of 2021. The roadmap allows us to establish our programmatic standards and provide the same quality of service to all participants while improving communication amongst team members and Themida partners.

With the roadmap, we introduced two incremental components to case management. UASC that are identified or referred to our program are contacted within 48-72 hours for a **needs and risk assessment through our carefully designed form**. This form helps us understand the level of risk or emergency, and determine a timeframe for our intervention. If there are indicators of immediate risk, the UASC is contacted straight away and our rapid response protocol is put into place so as to move the child to a secure location.

Following the first needs and risk assessment, an **Individual Case Plan (ICP)** is drafted by our team to allow for optimum response to the child's individual needs. Daily check-ins for rapid response cases are necessary to ensure that children feel safe and supported until their final transfer to a formal shelter; these check-ins also enable us to cover the child's basic and legal needs. **Check-ins are bi-weekly**, usually performed by Better Days Legal Coordinator with the valuable support of cultural mediators. If state shelters are unable to provide the services required, we continue to support the UASC.

THEMIDA GREECE

SNAPSHOT

OVERVIEW DEC 2019 - DEC 2021

341

Accumulative number of cases supported by Themida

85*

Positive legal outcomes
*these includes asylum, family reunification, guardianship. The average time of completion for a reunification or asylum case is around 12 months

OTHER FIGURES (JAN - DEC 2021)

110

Medical appointments booked

273

Escorts performed

MAIN FIGURES SINCE JAN 2021

219

Number of cases referred to our program (Jan-Dec 2021)

194

Total of UASC supported

33

Number of successful legal outcomes (Jan-Dec 2021)

37

Number of new cases registered with the asylum services (Jan-Dec 2021)

75

Non food items bags delivered

49

Emergency meals distributed

63

UASC placed in a shelter

8

UASC released from detention

WHAT'S COMING NEXT?



CONTEXT AND FIELD ASSESSMENT

Beginning of 2022, Better Days will enter an assessment phase. In order to ensure that our programs offer the most needed services, Better Days' will perform a comprehensive field assessment and determine what are the critical gaps in services provision for UASC and youth in Greece.



THEMIDA GREECE OPERATIONS

During the assessment period, we will continue running operations as usual for the 56 cases that remain open and in need of support.

INTERESTING FACT

50%

Around 50% of UASC referred to our program throughout 2021 were unregistered and homeless.



THEMIDA GREECE

LEGAL & PSS SUPPORT

We strongly believe that legal support for UASC must be trauma aware, child-friendly and accompanied by psycho-social support for any participant who wishes to benefit from it.

Themida Greece legal service includes:

- Access to child-friendly legal information
- Asylum services registration for undocumented and homeless UASC
- Asylum interview preparation for UASC (admissibility and merit)
- Asylum decision appeals and subsequent submission of a follow-up asylum application
- Family Reunification applications and follow-up
- Guardianship request
- Age assessment request
- Access to DNA tests as supportive evidence for family reunification cases (10 DNA tests completed in 2021)

Despite every effort to contact and put pressure on the asylum services, registration of UASC remains extremely challenging. In some cases, the waiting period can be up to 8 months before receiving an appointment. Family reunification continues to be a difficult process to navigate for UASC. The heavy burden of proving their relationship with a family member relies on the family, while we observe consistent delays in the requested states' decisions.

The implementation of the Joint Ministerial Decision adopted in June 2021, has impacted the legal workload of individual asylum cases which drastically affected our legal aid team at DCI. Every UASC from Bangladesh, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan now needs to be prepared for a first admissibility interview which demonstrates that Turkey is not safe for them to be returned to. This interview needs to be supported by a detailed legal memo to increase the child's chances of success. Despite several admissibility interviews having been taken by our participants, 80% of them are still waiting for a decision on the admissibility of their case.

This work is vitally important because if an admissibility decision is positive, UASC will have the chance to once again present their reasons for leaving their native country and the opportunity to express again why they cannot return. This is a work-intensive procedure that adds tremendous stress to the UASC who have to undergo two very intense interviews.

10

DNA tests for
family
reunification
cases

26

UASC
provided with
Psycho-social
support

92

Counselling
individual
sessions
provided

6

Maturity
Assessments
of alleged
minors

THEMIDA GREECE

LEGAL & PSS SUPPORT

Themida Greece legal and PSS teams work closely together to support our participants by offering PSS sessions on an individual basis. Many, if not all, UASC who join our programme have endured at least one, if not several prolonged and repeated, traumatic experiences either in their country of origin, during their journey, and/or during their stay in Greece. These experiences are especially difficult and damaging due to the absence of a responsible adult able to provide them with a safe emotional environment and stability. Often confronted with extreme situations and subject to several stressors, UASC can face severe mental health deteriorations; in fact, there is considerable evidence that refugee children are at significant risk of developing unhealthy psychological patterns as a result of the risk they are exposed to.

Better Days Senior Child Protection Officer is a licensed Greek psychologist who provides mental health support to Themida's participants. This is through individual PSS counselling sessions and different therapy methods including expressive art or Gestalt techniques.

Since the launch of Themida Greece's PSS department in April 2021, we have provided PSS services to 26 participants and offered 92 individual counselling sessions.



TESTIMONIES

READ THE STORIES OF THEMIDA PARTICIPANTS

UNSAFE



Good morning, it's Bubaccar

"I received a call for an accommodation located an hour away from Athens. They said they will bring me there on Tuesday but I don't know these people and I am scared they will send me back. I would like to know what you can offer me regarding accommodation since you already supported me with the legal counseling et other things... I am scared to go somewhere else where I won't be safe. Please I really need you help"

You are typing...

Zafar arrived in Greece from Afghanistan in November 2019. A month later, he joined our program and applied for family reunification with his older brother in France.

Zafar's case was unlawfully rejected in August 2020 due to an allegedly missed call from the French Dublin to his older brother. We immediately sent a reexamination request to the French authorities, which remained completely ignored despite the pressure from our team supported by a French lawyer.

After more than two years, Zafar decided to take matters into his own hands and left Greece illegally.

The unresponsiveness of the Dublin services has disastrous consequences for children who lose trust in the official procedures and chose to resort in using illegal smuggling networks.

Bubaccar joined our Programme at the end of the year 2021. When he first reached out to us he was unregistered, homeless and in a critical distress. Immediately, he was referred to the Senior Child Protection Officer. After several individual counseling sessions, Bubaccar manage to open up about his daily difficulties while the rest of our team worked tirelessly to find an appropriate shelter for him.

Displaced children often experience repeated traumatic experiences and encounter difficulties to have trust again in adults and official institutions. Better Days' PSS department supports them to overcome their fears and gain back trust and hope for the future.

UNLAWFUL



Hello! I am Ali, Zafar's brother.

We have not received any new from the French Dublin Office. My brother Zafar waited a lot but nothing happened. A couple of days ago, Zafar arrived to Italy from Greece. Thanks a lot from everyone who helped us so far. I am really grateful, you have helped us a lot.

You are typing...

GEKKO KIDS SCHOOL

EDUCATION



SITUATION OVERVIEW - 2020 TO 2021

Our Gekko Kids program was suspended in March 2020 following the outbreak of COVID-19 and the placement of restrictions on movement for the Moria camp residents. Despite the quick adjustment of all members of our team to the new reality of providing remote support and offering distance learning, on the fateful night of the 8th of September 2020, a fire decimated Moria camp and, within 48 hours, 90% of our students (UASC) were finally relocated to safe shelters in the mainland.

In the following few months, we worked with some of the children who were left behind and were now forced to live in a temporary camp of 'Mavrovouni', frequently described as Moria 2.0. Unfortunately, the new camp had stricter movement conditions for its residents and saw no improvement in the previous living conditions. Amongst our students, very few were successfully registered into public education but we supported those who did with unlimited access to the internet, telecommunications, and IT equipment to enable their access to formal education online. Faced with unspeakable living conditions and unable to move freely, their time at Gekko Kids became nothing more than a memory.

In 2021, the prolonged restrictions of movement for camp residents saw many organisations having to decrease or close their programs outside the camp. Those who remained operational had to adjust to Covid19 regulations which affected their programming severely. Nonetheless, in March 2021 a much smaller team partnered with The Azadi Project, REAL & Refocus and made arrangements for residents of the camp as well as children and adults living in the city of Mytilene to access our programs: Greek language, English language, Photography, Counselling and support with public schools (registration, homework, etc.) Additionally, we launched two new 'covid-friendly' projects, Gekko Grants and Gekko Studentships which gave students the opportunity to request educational-specific aid to further their learning such as IT equipment, living support to attend college, transportation to school, books and/or access to courses online and at local institutes.

GEKKO KIDS SCHOOL

EDUCATION



SITUATION OVERVIEW - 2020 TO 2021

While running Gekko Kids on reduced capacity (as described above), Better Days performed its customary summer assessment to identify existing or emerging gaps prior to the start of the new academic year in September 2021.

Our findings revealed that:

- 700 school-age children lived in Mavrovouni camp), of whom only 200 could enrol in Lesvos' public schools (optimum capacity). The remaining 500 were participating in educational activities inside the camp coordinated by UNICEF. Though it could be perceived that the fact that these children have access to education is a positive development, we lament the continuation of limited integration and other opportunities for refugee students into public education, quality education and the Lesbian society as a whole.
- Students living in the Mavrovouni camp but attending public schools were offered homework support on a daily basis within the camp.
- Many students, mostly aged 18+, living in shelters or rented accommodation in Mytilene, and attending public schools, were not receiving any educational support. Direct feedback from Lesvos' night school teachers and students, revealed that the language level within one classroom can vary so significantly that progress for those without education support seems impossible. Such students struggle to pass on to the next academic year and can become demotivated to attend or continue with their education. Many worked and required a particularly flexible approach because of their tight schedule.



GEKKO KIDS SCHOOL

A NEW APPROACH TO EDUCATION ON LESVOS

A year after Gekko's suspension, Better Days' Board of Directors decided to re-open Gekko and welcome non-formal education partners to co-host educational and recreational activities in our space.

The **Gekko Kids Studentship Program** was launched as a pilot program in March 2021. Most candidates were selected based on their academic performance and had to attend public education in their second or third year of Greek Lyceum with a **desire to sit the Hellenic National exams** in the years 2022 or 2023 respectively. To manage the cost of the pilot program most effectively, we decided against hiring teaching staff at this stage and, instead, identified local providers with expertise in preparation of Panhellenic exams and high success rate. **By the end of 2021, 783 hours of preparational teaching were provided through 4 studentships with the cost ranging from 500-1000EUR/month per student.**

During the year, internal **Covid19 guidelines** included the provision of free rapid testing for students and teachers twice per week, monitoring of vaccination certificates and a thorough cleaning routine between the lessons. In order to **comply with national measurements and stay safe**, Better Days made available all the necessary PPE at its facilities and kept the classroom sizes up to 10 students at most.

To adapt to the realities of providing education in a Covid-19 world, we developed a very different program to Gekko Kids (2017-2020). This did not affect the three pillars of our pedagogical philosophy: integration, socialisation and accreditation, which continue to inform our every decision. We built on best practices from Gekko Kids and maintained our approach to offering counselling. **Through private counselling sessions we can understand our students better and support them set realistic educational goals which we then help them achieve.** The individual development plan was offered to a smaller team of students, who however needed critical assistance to realise their potential at school.

783

Hours of
Studentship
preparational
teaching

10-1

Ratio
students x
teacher

700+

Onside
teaching
hours

100+

Students in
2021

GEKKO KIDS AWARD

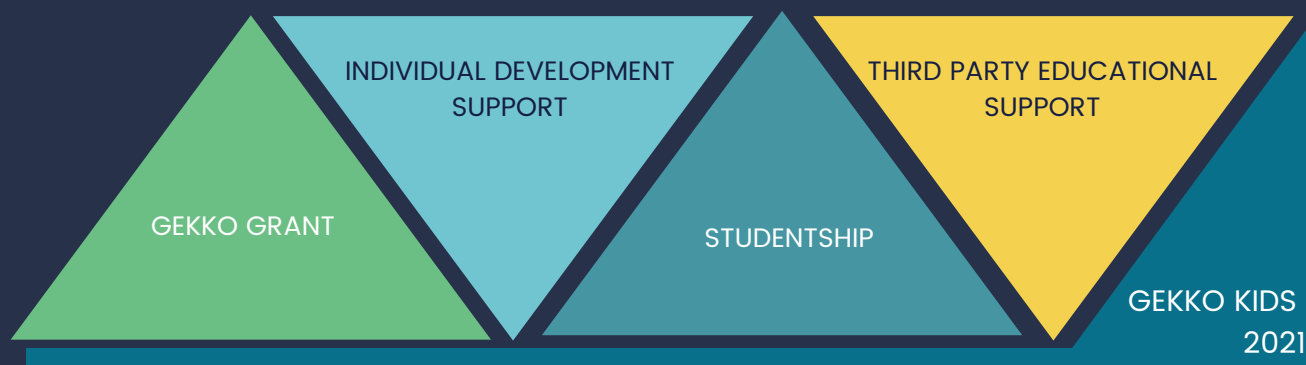
Gekko Kids (Gekko) is crowned as one of the best educational programs in Greece and was recently shortlisted by the 5th Global Entreprs Awards Committee - amongst 5000 candidates in 126 territories - as one of the 100 Best Practices in the world on Sustainability (UN SDGs), Innovation and/or Good Governance.

GEKKO KIDS SCHOOL

A NEW APPROACH TO EDUCATION ON LESVOS

- **Individual Development Plan:** this component was launched in September with one teacher per 10 students. All students attend Mytilene's night school and are in need of Greek language skills and daily tutoring which follows the public school curriculum: history, geography, language etc. The lessons take place at Gekko Kids. Some of them are planning to sit a parallel exam offered by the University of Aegean and acquire a level A or B Greek language certificate by June 2022. The individual development plans are created annually but allow our staff to work with the students intensively and on a one-on-one basis. It provides the students with time and space to learn at their own pace and in addition to the group sessions.
- **Gekko Grants:** are awarded to students who need a one-time educational support. It was created with the ultimate goal to ease the series of additional obstacles and challenges refugee students face while trying to access/progress with their education.
- **Third party Educational Support** gave Better Days the opportunity to maximise its impact and contribute further to seeing our vision come true: we believe that to create a world where all children have access to education, a life with dignity and safe environments, working closely with other actors can create a larger impact. In 2021 BD's Third Party Educational Support scheme provided educational support to hundreds of children and youth in Greece. We did so by supporting other educational actors to cover critical gaps: buy books, stationary, educational supplies, consumables, PPE and IT equipment, provide student kits for children, pay for cleaning services, and facility overheads and cover for the cost of volunteer teachers! Some of our partners include Project Elea in Athens, Kypseli Association and the International School of Peace working inside Mavrovouni camp on Lesbos and at One Happy Family Community Centre. Based on the reports provided by our associates these benefited at least 1098 students.

On Lesbos, Better Days offers a fully equipped learning space. Gekko Kids meets national health and safety standards, and is furnished to accommodate alternative teaching methodologies, the delivery of a multi-purpose curriculum and the needs of a complex student body. During 2021, Gekko Kids offered a child-friendly, safe, welcoming, and dignified space for more than 100 students to learn. COVID-19 health standards were followed strictly by students and partners. Together with our partners, we provide over 700 teaching hours onside and 783 hours offside via contracted local educational centres in Lesbos.



TESTIMONIES

READ THE QUOTES OF GEKKO PARTICIPANTS

N.B. Kourosh, 18 y.o, Iran

"I am really grateful to have met the people from Better Days. Since I have arrived on Lesbos, they have helped me in every single possible way. Last month they were able to give me a room in the city for living and studying and they were able to sign me up for many extracurricular classes and private lessons which will help me excel in public school exams. Words cannot explain how much indebted I feel to this organization and I hope that one day I can return the favour"

Hadi, 20 y.o, Afghanistan

"My university enrolment is a dream that came true"

Principle of the public school of Lesbos

He is an excellent child, a studious, pleasant character with a tremendous will to improve himself. We will include him in the mathematics department as of July. So far, he writes the highest scores. His negative point is his anxiety, that maybe he will disappoint the people who support him. He can achieve his goals ... He is the student that every teacher wants to have.



THIRD PARTY SUPPORT

SUPPORTING LESVOS & ATHENS COMMUNITIES

We entered 2021 with the determination to honour our commitment towards supporting children at risk -- **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well as local families most affected by the Covid19**. For this reason, the Third Party support program was improved to allow us to respond more efficiently to requests made to Better Days by individuals and civil society actors during the pandemic. The monetary or in-kind support provided to 15 actors and 10 individuals is categorised into three areas of response:

1. Covid-19 & Medical
2. Seasonal Donations
3. Educational support (as part of BD's educational program)

PPE usage has been a necessity during the whole year, especially when the restrictions required the use of PEE in both closed and outdoor spaces. Our focus was mainly on the protection of our program participants, health & safety of our spaces and compliance with Covid19 government regulation. We provided rapid tests and PPE to our staff, participants and implementing partners on both Lesvos & Athens.

INTERNALLY USED

237 **3867**

rapid tests

PPE pieces

DONATED

4107 **1341** **68**

PPE pieces

School
supplies

Assets & IT
equipment

Responding to requests by MDM Athens, supplied the MVI clinic in Athens and Zahario retirement centre in Lesvos. Our aim was to protect the communities from Covid19, Delta and Omega variants. The donated items included an ultrasound, physiotherapy equipment and supplies for elderly care.

Educational donations included school supplies, coursebooks, students' kits, furniture and IT equipment used to support community spaces in Athens and on Lesvos.

Traditionally every Easter and at Christmas we support local families to access groceries. The distribution takes place via local organisations like Kanenas Monos. This year's most enjoyable moment was playing Santa with the children of Kypseli association, the Abused Women's Shelter and our own Gekko students who all received a small token of love from our team.

TESTIMONIES

READ THE QUOTES OF OUR PARTICIPANTS

Medical Volunteers International Athens

"We would like to thank Better Days for the donation of the Ultrasound machine. This will allow us to be more accurate in diagnosing our patients in Athens. This equipment also gives us more autonomy in relation to medical treatments, allowing us to increase our capacity in the number of patients."

Director of Vostanio Hospital in Lesvos

"Your contribution to Mytilene's hospital speaks of your humanity and sense of solidarity towards the local community. It is through such acts of kindness and unity we can show the world that by standing together, we are stronger against this unprecedented threat of Covid19".

Deputy Mayor for Citizen Service of Lesvos

"Your repeated efforts to support vulnerable social groups during these difficult times prove your sincerity and commitment to this cause. We feel strengthened by your acts of solidarity towards the affected communities of Lesvos".



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Better Days community support program was born in the olive groves of Moria in 2015. Hundreds, if not thousands, of young people and refugee families have been supported so far. The aim is to improve a person's standards of living and cover their immediate needs in a dignified way. Over the years we continued to develop this programme in order to respond to individual needs whilst broadening the range of services and aid we can offer to each applicant.

In 2021, the following aid was provided through the CSP program:

- Access to emergency shelter & BD housing
- Living expenses allowance: NFI, food, telecommunications, transport
- Key equipment
- Medical aid
- Legal aid
- Flights
- Counselling

Since early this year the Better Days Volunteer House has been refurbished to comfortably accommodate +18 males who were living in the camps or had nowhere else to go. From January to December, 1 x family and 6 x beneficiaries received accommodation, three of whom are still living in the BD's house. These young men K, A and S have been awarded the Gekko Kids Studentship but receive additional living, legal and medical support during the CSP. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CSP beneficiaries receive weekly rapid tests and PPE.

€15,000+

Invested during 2021

250€

Monthly allowance

5

participants received CSP allowance

During 2021 a total of 5 participants received CSP allowance for providing our Themida & Educational teams with support in translation and interpretation. Other than allowance the participants received legal information and have access to PSS if requested..

The aim of the program is for the CSP participants to:

- Be part of a professional team and actively participating in the daily operations
- Build capacity in IT literacy (Emails, Excel, Google doc, Canva, basic use of internal databases)
- Improve English language skills
- Acquire professional skills (in medical, legal, psychosocial and humanitarian context and IT)
- Become confident with reporting (written or verbal) and M&E
- Gain knowledge of internal protocols and SOPs
- Achieve good understanding of child protection matters
- Access training

Up to €250 allowance is available for each CSP. This year, over €15,000 has been used to directly respond to requests from migrant families and young people trying to survive the horrors, inhumane living conditions and indignities of the refugee camps and Greece's broken system of aid, as part of the Community Support Program of Better Days.

TESTIMONIES

READ THE QUOTES OF OUR PARTICIPANTS

Joy, Bengali Interpreter

"It makes me so happy to be able to continue to support my community through Better Days. It is really important for me to help in any way I can. Together we can support more people in need. In difficult times it is really important to have something and someone that makes you feel important and useful."

Mohamed A, CSP participant

"Moria was a very dangerous place. I saw the first night someone was stabbed. It was a common thing happening every night. I needed help and Better Days got my information and helped me and my siblings. I lived in a house that they provided me and I will never forget Better Days. I hope my future will be great and I would like to become a businessman."



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would not be able to fulfill our work with the support of our donors:



**CHOOSE
LOVE**



Special acknowledgements to our trusted partners:

- Attika Human Support
- Medical International Volunteers
- Lighthouse Relief
- Forge for Humanity
- Refocus MediaLab



CLOSING STATEMENT

2021 was a year of effort and hard work that was necessary to be done globally in order to overcome the challenges that 2020 was carrying, affecting all aspects of the society, primarily economy, health and education. Better Days invested in the organisation's internal growth by improving the capacity and competence, networking, establishing new collaborations, and improving internal compliance and procedural guidance.

Our achievements of this year's growth:

- Established Better Days' Quality Manual and **received our first ISO 9001:2015 certification by TUV Austria**. 212+ hours were devoted to meetings, brainstorming and consultancy, with 8 team members participating and contributing to the procedure.
- Launched BD's Learning & Development program (L&D) to improve team members' skills by conducting mandatory, internal, external and individual training counting more than 1200 hours of session participation. Gsuite, Child protection, Safety and Security, MEAL, and PFA are some of the areas that we focused on during 2021.
- **Provided 11 actors with training on UASC's Risk Identification & Child Protection**
- **85 internal documents were reviewed, created and updated**. These included Themida Greece programming documentation, Third-Party support procedure, Asset Management, Covid19 internal protocol, and monitoring and assessment tools of all Better Days processes.
- **Redesigned a Covid19-friendly educational program at Gekko Kids based on International Standards for Quality**
- Explored and adopted new tools/platforms for communication, program coordination, data collection, analysis and development such as **Gantt Chart, Survey Monkey, Slack, and Lucidchart**.
- Developed and improved our filing system
- Managed to effectively coordinate and communicate between locations (Athens, Greece, Ireland) and transition to a remote working environment.



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