

BETTER DAYS

ANNUAL REPORT

A YEAR OF CHANGE



JANUARY-DECEMBER 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Opening Statement</u>	02
Our Work	
<u>Themida Greece</u>	04
<u>Athena Project</u>	08
<u>Gekko Kids</u>	11
<u>Third Party Support</u>	15
<u>Closing Statement</u>	18
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	19

Acronyms

ATSPEP: Autonomous Department of Coordination and Monitoring Refugee Education
CSP: Community Support Program
DCI: Defence for Children International
MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NFI: Non-Food Item
NPTM: National Protection and Tracing Mechanism
PPE: Personal Protective Equipment
PSS: Psychosocial Support
RIC: Reception and Identification Centre
SSPUAM: Special Secretary of Protection for Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Minors
UASC: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child(ren)





OPENING STATEMENT

The bells of war rang out shortly after we welcomed 2022. In the months following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, millions of refugees, the vast majority women, children, and people with vulnerabilities, flooded neighbouring countries in need of protection. Thankfully, the response of the Western world in solidarity with Ukraine and the EU's temporary protection directive - an emergency scheme used in exceptional circumstances of mass influx to provide immediate and collective protection to displaced people - were immediate and noteworthy.

The positive response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees placed EU policies of securitisation under serious scrutiny and fuelled a discussion about the two-tiered approach to migration and asylum,¹ which influenced the way people conceived of mixed migration in political and popular spaces.²

Meanwhile, unresolved conflict, famine, and poverty in Africa continued to drive up fatalities and displace millions. At the same time, climate change and natural disasters - such as the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria - left nothing but destruction in their path. To paraphrase Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, the humanitarian needs hit a record high and chronic underfunding put millions of people at additional life threatening risk. The global economic turmoil triggered by COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine aggravated an already dire situation as the demand for humanitarian assistance grew far bigger than the funds we were able to secure could meet.

The war in Ukraine caused a ripple effect across the world and across industries, including the immediate relocation of emergency funds to respond to the needs of millions of Ukrainian refugees crossing EU borders in search of safety. Allocating funding to some can mean defunding or underfunding others, among them some of the world's most protracted and neglected humanitarian missions including Afghanistan, Yemen, Haiti, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (to name a few). In Greece, organisations that relied on private funding and individual donations were no longer able to survive and had to close their doors.

¹ The New Humanitarian (2022, December 21). *2022 in review: Migration*. Retrieved September 7, 2023, from <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2022/12/21/migration-in-review>

² Medium: Better Days Greece (2022, December 21). *The Curse of Labelling*. Retrieved September 7, 2023, from <https://medium.com/@betterdaysngo/>

OPENING STATEMENT

CONTINUED

For Better Days, 2022 brought major changes. On the one hand, it marked the scaling down of Better Days on Lesbos after 7 years of tireless work and supporting an estimated 100,000 people. Taking into consideration the significant contextual changes locally and across the world, we decided to close Better Days' longest standing programs: Themida Greece and Gekko Kids, Lesbos. Amidst the challenges, these changes offered Better Days with an opportunity to work closely with the grassroots community of humanitarians responding in Ukraine, Poland, and in Greece. The Athena Project helped develop the expertise and know-how of the Ukrainian Diaspora's Info Point, which led efforts to support the over 17,000 Ukrainian refugees looking to resettle in Greece under temporary protection.

In conclusion, thank you for believing in our work and in our ability to remain grounded, humble, and impactful at times of turmoil and change. We could not have done this without the unwavering support of our donors, alumni, staff, and volunteers

With Gratitude,



Elena Moustakis
*Managing Director &
Co-Founder*





THEMIDA GREECE

LEGAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

DURATION

December 2019-June 2022

LOCATION

Lesvos and Athens

MAIN IMPACT FIGURES

December 2019-June 2022

- **337** individuals supported, **290** UASC or unrecognized UASC.
- **91** positive legal cases concluded, plus **2** age assessments.
- **88** people placed safely in shelters.
- **65** UASC referred to NPTM.
- **127.5** hours of mainstream and focused PSS support provided through 85 individual sessions.
- **28.5** hours of specialised MHPSS support delivered.

January-June 2022

- **56** active cases managed.
- **6** positive legal outcomes achieved.
- **5** people placed safely in shelters.
- **3** people registered in NPTM.
- **17** social support escorts provided (medical, appointments, meals, legal appointments, etc.).
- **14** cases handed over to DCI for legal aid follow up.

COST

January-June 2022

120.995,00 EUR



THEMIDA CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Themida was designed and launched in 2019 by Better Days on Lesbos to respond to the alarming conditions faced by hundreds of UASC who had arrived in Moria that year. Fast-forward to 2020, Themida was abruptly interrupted by the destruction of Moria camp which was burned to the ground in the early hours of 8 September.

Following an extensive needs assessment in Lesbos and Athens in early 2020, we confirmed a spike in homelessness among UASC arriving in Athens through Evros or other irregular land-crossings. To respond to the emerging needs, Better Days launched Themida in Athens. The program was renamed to Themida Greece to encompass Themida's transition from a local exercise to a nationwide program. The new name also honoured our partnership with Defence for Children International, Greek Unit (DCI), who by this point wholeheartedly dedicated most of their capacity to providing legal aid for Themida Greece.

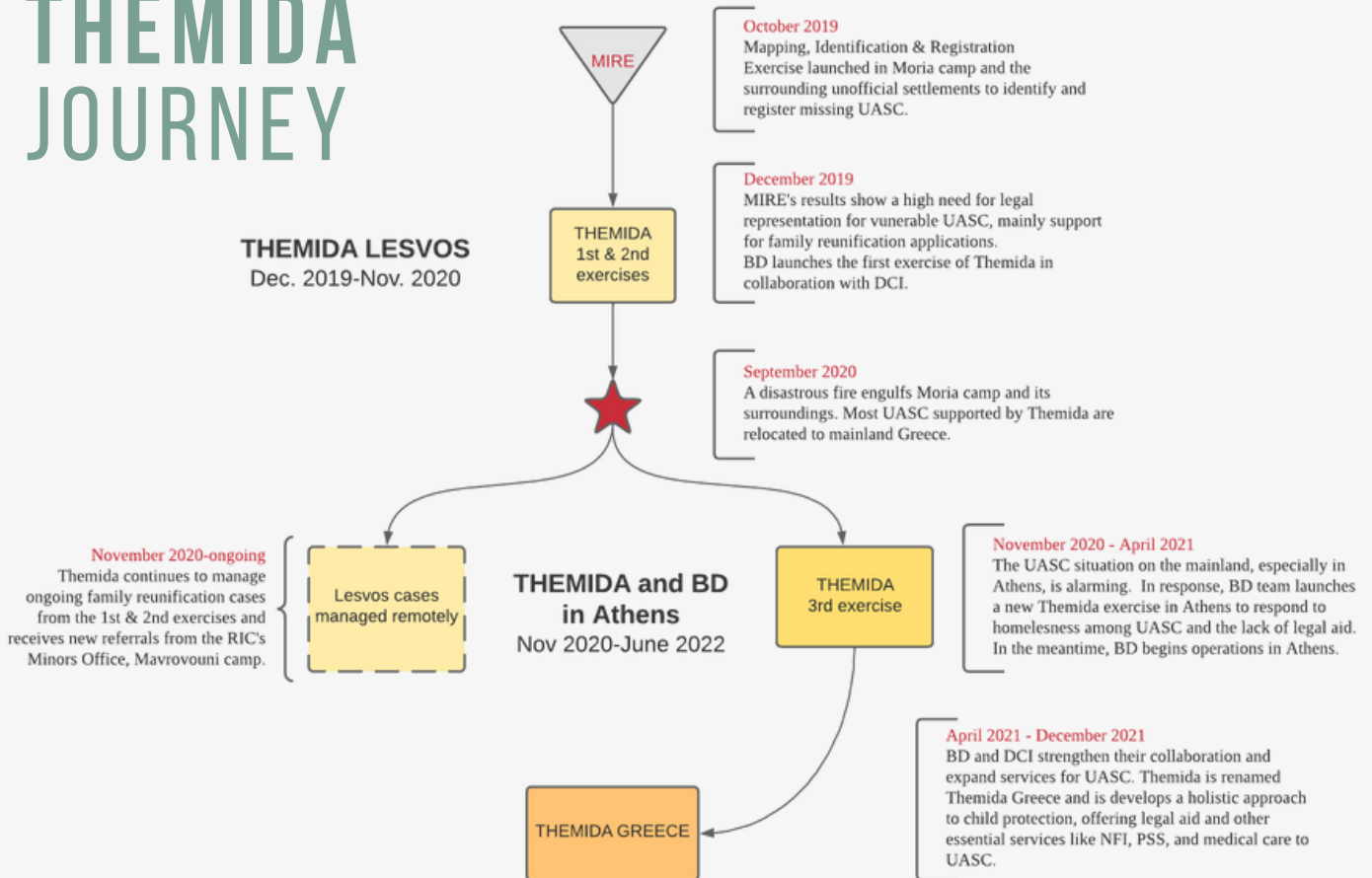
In April 2021, the NPTM was created under the auspices of the SSPUAM with the aim to identify and provide access to shelter, legal, and protection services for UASC.

According to AIDA and ECRE:³ *the National Mechanism is operated by the SSPUM, in collaboration with UNHCR (expert support) and NGOs Arsis, METAdrasi and the Network for Children's Rights (operational/field support). The Mechanism also includes a 24/7 telephone hotline for identifying and tracing children in need, which is available in six languages. The hotline provides guidance to children, citizens, local and public authorities on steps and actions to be taken from the point of identification of an unaccompanied child until his/her timely inclusion in emergency accommodation. The total number of referrals of unaccompanied children received by SSPUM in 2022 was 6,383, marking a 34% increase compared to the same period in 2021 (4,748). At the same time, the number of accommodation spaces specifically designated for unaccompanied minors was slightly increased, reaching a total of 2,511 places by the end 2022, as opposed to 2,478 by the end of 2021. [...] Based on updates by EKKA, by the year's end the majority of referrals regarded UAM from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria.*

In January 2022, Better Days launched a comprehensive needs assessment in Lesbos and Athens to determine emerging gaps in services for UASC and asylum-seeking youth. During the needs assessment, we no longer accepted new referrals but focused on the case management of 56+ cases. In March 2022, Better Days concluded that, due to the implementation of the NPTM and the decreasing number of UASC arrivals, Themida Greece would need to adapt its scope (i.e. take on cases not onboarded by the NPTM) and decrease its operations to maintain operational and financial efficiency. The organisation decided not to renew Themida Greece for the year 2022-2023, and Themida's conscious closure was scheduled for June 2022.

³ AIDA, ECRE (2023, June 8). *Special reception needs of vulnerable groups: Greece*. Retrieved September 7, 2023, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/special-reception-needs-vulnerable-groups/>

THEMIDA JOURNEY



MAIN PILLARS

Social Services

(Transportation and escort for vulnerable cases, translation for Farsi, Somali, Bengali, French, Arabic)

Legal Support

(Child-friendly legal information, legal aid, DNA testing, referrals to long-term shelters)

Psychosocial Services

(Initial assessment, Case management, and mainstream, specialised & general support)

Basic Assistance

(NFIs, PPE, COVID-19 support, etc.)

Medical Care

(Private and Public providers)

DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN
INTERNATIONAL
GREECE

THEMIDA SCOPE

Themida's scope was to provide legal aid and social support to UASC living in Greece. Hence, the Themida team was trained and obligated to assess the level of risk (Needs & Risk Assessment) and submit a plan for intervention (Individual Case Plan) for each individual case. The team was expected to act in the best interest of the children, particularly in distancing them from any immediate danger or threats to their wellbeing. Particularly amongst Themida's primary population, those most at risk were unhoused or unregistered UASC who were pronounced missing after remaining out of contact for several months. Since 2019, and until the establishment of the NPTM, Themida was the only program in Greece offering services to re-trace and re-register UASC who were otherwise invisible to authorities.

Protecting BD participants from neglect, exploitation, and violence is the fundamental motivation for our work. We believe that a children's wellbeing is multilayered and can only be fostered through holistic services personalised to meet their needs and delivered in a child-appropriate manner. Through a rights-based approach, Themida Greece emphasised children's physical, psychological, and emotional safety to allow participants to regain a sense of control, agency, safety, and hope.

The successful implementation of Themida Greece relied on establishing an extensive network of actors working in protection. Better Days outreach team nourished connections with the affected communities and built strong relationships with grassroots and institutional actors to identify and protect unaccompanied children. To that end, we developed a map of about 100 actors specialising in homelessness response, street work, and medical and legal aid, among others. Our team provided training for 20 humanitarian professionals representing 10 different NGOs and collaborated closely with approximately 29 organisations. In addition, we contributed to protection actors' coordination efforts by developing a comprehensive handover process and participating in coordination groups within the sector.

ABU'S STORY

We met Abu in the jungle of Moria in 2020. We supported Abu's application to be reunified with his uncle in the UK and, despite the family's amazing collaboration and submitting a DNA test proving the kinship, the case was rejected. We had to refer the cases to local lawyers in the UK who took it to court with the Home Office with little hope for success. After more than a year of legal battles, the case was finally heard. On 20 July 2022, Abu's asylum claim was accepted in the UK!





ATHENA PROJECT

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

DURATION

May-November 2022

LOCATION

Athens

MAIN IMPACT FIGURES

Direct Impact

- **19** hours of in-person training for organisational development provided.
- **14** hours of humanitarian-focused training provided.
- **6+** hours spent designing tailor-made documents (templates, database, roadmap) for use by the Info Point.

Indirect Impact

- **274** families supported through InfoPoint centre.
- **18+** events organized.
- **700** families supported with logistics and NFI through OPORA, the Humanitarian Aid Center.

COST

47.228,00 EUR



ATHENA CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the resulting full-scale war has caused the world's fastest-growing displacement crisis since World War II. In 2022, nearly one-third of Ukrainians were forced to flee their homes. By the end of the year, an estimated 5.9 million people were internally displaced, while nearly 5.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers from Ukraine were recorded across Europe.⁴ Greece granted temporary protection to 21,532 people in 2022, almost all of them Ukrainian nationals; this is of the reported 80,000 people who were potentially eligible for temporary protection and present in Greece at some point in 2022.⁵

Because the majority of people fleeing Ukraine were women and children, international and local organisations observed a need for action to combat the risks of trafficking, exploitation, and sexual violence. In countries affected by the new influx of arrivals, including Greece, everyday people have been forced to take on tasks and provide services usually implemented by trained aid and front-line professionals, including transporting families, sheltering refugees, and catering to basic needs.

We recognised an opportunity to safeguard the welfare and rights of those affected, caretakers and refugees alike, by sharing know-how and expertise, strengthening relationships with front-line responders, supporting learning and development, and creating awareness of basic principles and standards to avoid harming the most vulnerable and ensure the protection of those exposed to harm.

Athens has seen a strong response from the international and grassroots NGO network, most significantly mobilisation by the United Ukrainian Diaspora to support those fleeing war.

The InfoPoint, the main information centre of the United Ukrainian Diaspora in Greece, was formed by the following organisations:

- Ukrainian-Hellenic Thought, Association of the Ukrainian Diaspora in Greece;
- Trembita Center for Support and Development of Cultural Heritage;
- Berehynia Ukrainian Cultural-Educational Center.



⁴ UNHCR (2022). *Global Report 2022*. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/special-reception-needs-vulnerable-groups/>

⁵ AIDA (2022, December 31). *Country Report: Greece*. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/special-reception-needs-vulnerable-groups/>

ATHENA PROJECT OVERVIEW

The overall objective of the Athena project was to build the capacity and independence of the InfoPoint team by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and effective tools to complement their grassroots identity. The approach was participatory and dialogical.

InfoPoint was located in Athens and employed a small team of all-female staff. They offered in-person assistance at their offices or by phone, Facebook messenger, and email. Critical information was also disseminated via social media - particularly through their Facebook profile.

The pace of the implementation depended on InfoPoint's capacity to step back from day-to-day demands, reflect on their learning, and invest in the design of smart solutions to improve their operations. During our partnership, we emphasised empathy and responsiveness to the needs of the InfoPoint team, who were deeply impacted by the experiences of their compatriots and often faced excessive workloads. Our goal was to offer guidance and support in the following key areas:

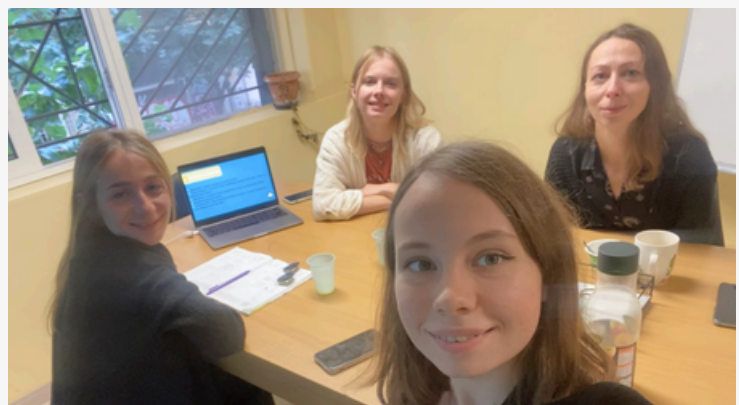
Project Development, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

Development of tools to ease workload and promote operational efficiency.

Training in core humanitarian concepts allowing team to capitalise on their own experiences.

From May to October 2022, we had 7 formal sessions and 19 hours of in-person training with the InfoPoint team. InfoPoint's Learning & Development curriculum was designed and later implemented by Better Days Senior Protection Officer, targeting key areas of Humanitarian Assistance (Burn-out, Humanitarian Aid, Child Safeguarding, Psychological First Aid, and Managing Conflict and Violence).

By the end of November, the InfoPoint centre had supported over 274 families. Moreover, they organised over 18 events for the Ukrainian refugee community in Athens and provided administrative assistance with managing donations, compiling reports, and analysing the impact of the Ukrainian Diaspora. The InfoPoint team has supported over 700 families with logistics and NFI distribution through OPORA, the Humanitarian Aid Center.



I would like to thank Better Days for the training provided. Everything was PERFECT!

InfoPoint team member



GEKKO KIDS

EDUCATION

DURATION

August 2017-June 2022

LOCATION

Lesvos

MAIN IMPACT FIGURES

August 2017-June 2022

- **1900+** registered students.
- **40** student nationalities.
- **41** different subjects taught (2019-2022 data).
- **156000+** hours taught (2019-2022 data).
- **100+** staff & volunteers.

January-June 2022

- **330** hours of teaching.
- **39** registered students.
- **359** Studentship tutoring hours.
- **24** hours of counseling.
- **9** individuals included in the CSP.

COST

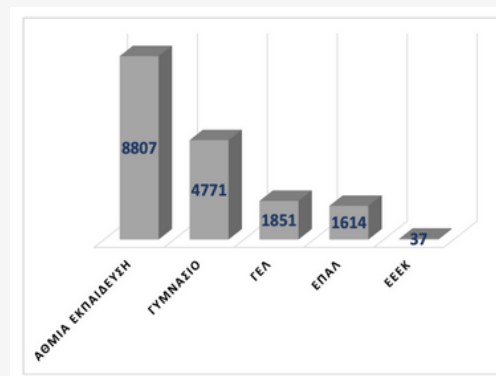
January-June 2022

45.784 EUR

GEKKO CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

The Ministry of Education made positive steps during the 2021-2022 school year and announced an upgraded education system to improve school integration for refugee students. Despite this progress, numerous shortcomings remain in public school enrolment, attendance, and transportation. At the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, Greek Refugee Education Coordinators reported that a significant number of children with their families were obligated to relocate due to the termination of the ESTIA accommodation programme. This forced students to leave their school and - where possible - enrol in new schools in other regions, disrupting their education and integration into the school community. Moreover, the new asylum application system introduced on 1 September 2022 impeded school enrolment and attendance as the electronic lodging of asylum claims did not provide asylum seekers with official proof of their application, rendering children and their families 'invisible' to the state until the registration of their asylum claims at one of the competent RICs.⁶

According to the Autonomous Department of Coordination and Monitoring Refugee Education (ATSPEP) of the Ministry of Education,⁷ 17,134 refugee students were enrolled in public schools during the 2022-2023 academic year in Greece. The registration numbers drop as the school level advances, with primary education hosting 8,807 students (6-12 y.o.), secondary - Gymnasio 4,771 students (13-15 y.o.), secondary - High School 3,501 (16-18 y.o.). No data are available for advanced education.



In response, 32 Educational Coordinators from the Ministry of Education expressed their concerns by publishing a public letter in April 2022 regarding the provision of equal, inclusive, and quality education to all refugee children.

The Coordinators write:⁸

At a time when the issue of Ukraine rightly monopolises the spotlight, we observe a new, selectively humanitarian public discourse being articulated that actually intensifies existing discrimination and produces new exclusions. In Greece, after almost seven years of receiving a large number of asylum seekers, we were saddened to hear the Minister of Immigration and Asylum (M.A.), Mr. Noti Mitarakis, publicly separate the refugees into "regulars" and "irregulars". Thus, while the division between the "regular" refugee (who deserves our undivided support) and the "irregular" one is implicitly entrenched, existing asylum-seeker accommodation structures begin to be shielded with safeguards found only in maximum security prisons for criminal convictions, with concrete walls, with turnstile gates, with robotic cameras, drones, etc. So we wonder what the future will be for them...

⁶ AIDA, ECRE (2023, June 8). *Access to Education: Greece*. Retrieved October 3, 2023, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/special-reception-needs-vulnerable-groups/>

⁷ ATSPEP (2023). *All the Kids at School*. Internal report.

⁸ Alfavita (2022, April 5). *Regarding the rapid developments...* Retrieved October 3, 2023, from https://www.alfavita.gr/ekpaideysi/375149_anoihti-epistoli-syntoniston-ekpaideysisi-prosfygon



GEKKO PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Since the launch of Gekko Kids in 2017, Better Days has continuously supported refugee students' access to formal education. Attending Greek school can be a daunting task for asylum-seeking and refugee youth, particularly because of the language barrier.

Although our capacity in 2022 remained small and focused on a very specific segment of the displaced community, the end of the 2021-22 academic year marked the end of another successful journey. During this reporting period, we focused on teaching adult students attending EPAL vocational school and public night school and committed to supporting them in passing the Greek school year-end exams. Each student received an individual plan taking into consideration their individual learning needs and examination schedule including Greek, Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, and English at different levels. By the end of the academic year, students had demonstrated growing competence in the use of the Greek language and grammar, which was highly praised by their teachers in public school. By mitigating the language barrier, students were not only able to participate more actively in class but also gain employment in the local market.

Our collaboration with Refocus Media Lab providing photography lessons and projects for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students came to an end following a wonderful year of collaboration sharing the Gekko Kids space in Mytilene centre.

Better Days' Community Support Program (CSP), which aims to support young adult refugees to advance their education and acquire life skills, continued in 2022. In total we supported 9 students who were struggling to complete their studies due to daily hardships. With our support they received monthly allowance to cover living expenses, while others were supported with tutoring fees to prepare for national exams or were housed by the organisation. Additionally, students aiming to advance their skills and gain experience were trained as translators supporting Themida and were inducted into an inclusive learning and working environment.

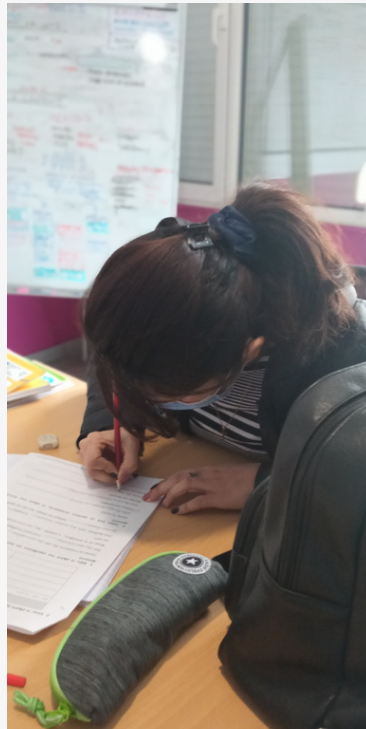
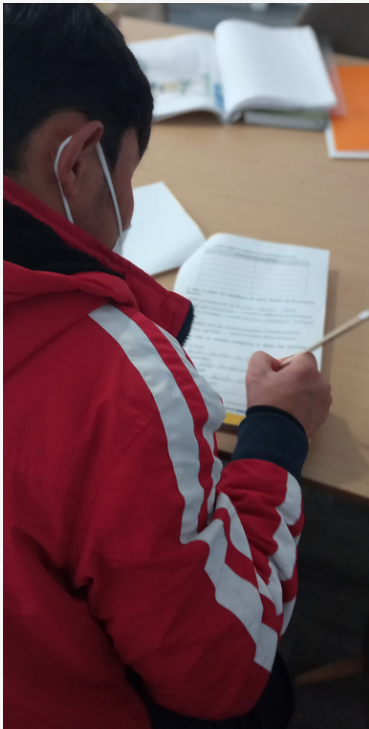
AN ACHIEVEMENT TO CELEBRATE

One of our Gekko students caught the attention of the Greek public after acing his Panhellenic Exams in June 2022. Kouroush became a Gekko student in 2019 and demonstrated serious motivation to excel. He was awarded a Better Days studentship in March 2021, allowing him to participate in an intensive preparatory course for students sitting Greek exams. Kouroush competed in national entry exams for advanced education and received one of the highest marks in the country.

As of September 2022, Kouroush has enrolled in the National University of Athens (Polytechnio) in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineers.

In about the same time he was awarded another studentship from Better Days to partially cover his living and educational expenses while attending university.

GEKKO STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



“

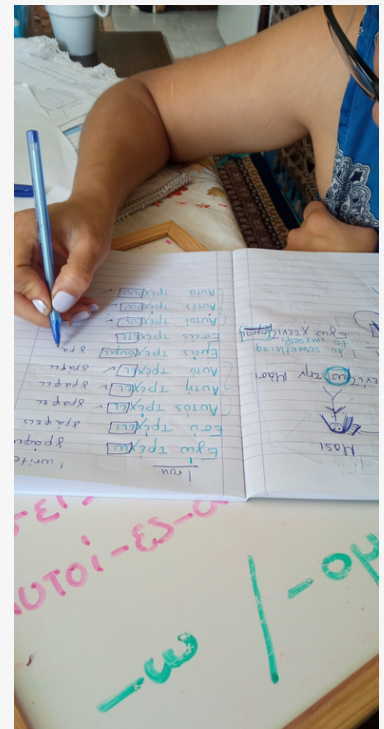
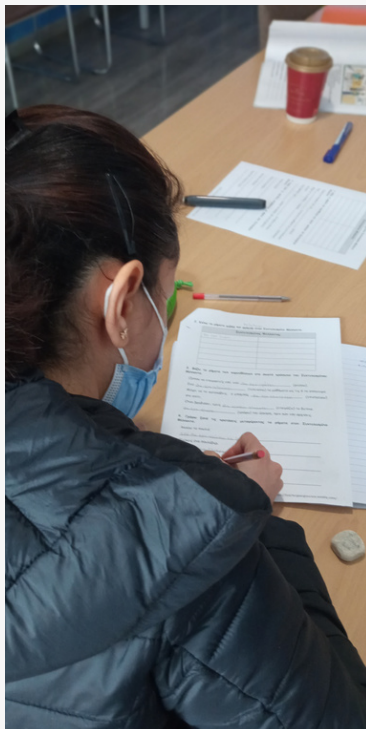
We did it!!! Without Better Days, I couldn't be here today. I don't know how to thank you for the support you have given me all of these years.

Kouros, 19 years old,
Gekko student & scholar
2019-2022

“

Gekko was MY school. I have so many beautiful memories from my time there. You helped and saved so many children that without Gekko they would be nothing. Thank you.

Hamza, 20 years old,
Gekko alumnus





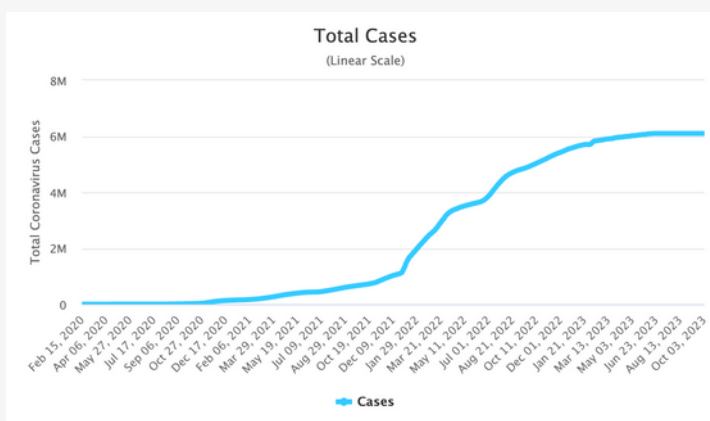
THIRD PARTY SUPPORT

COVID-19 AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

DURATION	March 2020-ongoing
LOCATION	Greece
MAIN IMPACT FIGURES	<p>January-December 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 actors supported. • 10 individuals (local and refugee families, Gekko students, etc.) supported. • 6927 total items and assets donated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1043 pieces of PPE, hygiene, and medical equipment. ◦ 4200 water bottles. ◦ 1684 pieces of Assets, School supplies and material, and IT equipment.
COST	<p>January-December 2022</p> <p>5.265,00 EUR</p>

THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Throughout 2022, we saw a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in Greece that eventually exceeded 5 million cases in total. Although the first emergency outbreak had been managed, the needs remained continuous as the virus became part of our everyday lives. Its effects on mental health and the economy were profound, especially for disadvantaged people. Movement restrictions, placement in quarantine, and delays in legal procedures were just some of the consequences of COVID-19 for people affected by displacement living in Greece.



According to AIDA and ECRE:¹⁰

New arrivals were obligated to stay in a 14-day quarantine before their registration. Up until November 2022, quarantine was imposed on all newcomers in Lesbos and Kos. Limited information regarding the procedures (before RIS and GAS) to be followed was provided to newcomers isolated in the quarantine areas. During the confinement period, access to human rights actors has also been very limited. A Joint Ministerial Decision published on 19 November 2022 (GG B' 5874) terminated the five-day quarantine period, stipulating that new arrivals who test negative to COVID-19 should be held in the CCAC's First Reception Area for registration by RIS, undergoing Reception and Identification procedures. Newly arrived asylum seekers who test positive are placed in mandatory quarantine for five or more days with restricted access to their rights in the above-mentioned conditions. However, registration by the RIS might not take place immediately upon arrival, due to the limited capacity of the latter.

⁹ Worldometer (2023, October 4). *Coronavirus Cases: Greece*. Retrieved October 4, 2023, from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/greece/>

¹⁰ AIDA, ECRE (2023, June 8). *Reception and Identification Procedure: Greece*. Retrieved October 3, 2023, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-identification-procedure/>

THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Throughout the year, and especially during the summer, the precautionary measures against COVID-19 in Greece were progressively reduced. Third Party Support in 2022 fell into the following categories:

COVID-19 & Medical Support

Seasonal Donations

Educational Support

Our primary focus was ensuring Gekko students were able to access public education, which required weekly COVID testing. The individual support provided to students and families included educational material and assets for home study areas, IT equipment, and PPE supplies.

Additional requests were placed by local organisations such as Iliaktida, Help at Home, and the Abused Women's Shelter for medical, hygiene, and PPE supplies. In addition to these actors, we distributed assets to the following organisations:

- Better Life with Refugees, Athens;
- IOS Association for Autoimmune Diseases, Lesvos
- Kypseli Association, Lesvos;
- Lesvos Minors Office;
- Lesvos Kids Sailing Club;
- Nostos, Athens;
- Night School, Mytilene
- Pandora Project, Athens;
- STEPS, Athens;
- Yoga & Sport with Refugees, Athens.



We are so excited to receive all of this beautiful wellbeing instruction equipment from our generous partners @betterdaysngo. We have received 20 eco friendly yoga mats, blocks, belts, high quality office equipment and some beautiful cushions and covers for #restorativeyoga and volunteer wellbeing sessions. It is through this incredible support that we are now more able to facilitate yoga and training sessions for volunteers and aid workers in different locations in Greece! Thank you for believing in us ❤️

Pandora Project, Facebook Post
24 February 2022



CLOSING STATEMENT

In closing, we invite the reader to conduct their⁷ own critical inquiry about the individual role each of us plays in protesting or perpetuating states of injustice. At Better Days, we felt the need to pause and reflect on the human impact of our work - and the value our donor's contributions in Greece, our birth country. We asked ourselves: Is our work still necessary? If so, for why and for whom? When do we do more harm than good in responding to gaps created by the lack of political will, corruption, or incompetence? What is our obligation to work with neglected communities, witness and document human rights violations, and lead the way to change? How do we pave the way sustainably and intentionally?

2022 marked the scaling down of Better Days on Lesvos, the conscious closing of all active programs that no longer served the populations we served given the significant contextual changes locally and globally. On the ground, the policies of securitisation that propelled the creation of the Closed Control Access Centres (CCAC) across the Aegean islands brought about extraordinary change. From the closing of ESTIA program¹¹ to the systematic implementation of securised practises at sea and land borders - in violent pushbacks,¹² police brutality, and unlawful detention - local and grassroots organisations came under attack. It became effectively impossible to coordinate aid and work alongside larger organisations and institutions to fill critical gaps in the provision of humanitarian aid for communities affected by displacement in Greece.

In summary, 2022 saw the effects of a shrinking civil society in Greece. Humanitarian action has been under systematic attacks, the most recent example the introduction of stricter and more intrusive - and expensive - registration requirements for CSOs (civil society organisations) working in asylum, migration and social integration. When these requirements were first introduced, Council of Europe experts warned they could lead to 'a worrying humanitarian situation' and recommended substantial revisions to bring new laws into line with European standards.' The warnings fell on deaf ears. Left with little choice but to comply, Better Days continued to work hard to remain compliant with the Ministry requirements.

Moreover, the new global reality brought about by the war in Ukraine made it difficult for our programs in Greece to survive without our donor's renewed commitment. Following candid discussions with Le Rosey and Choose Love, our two long-standing donors, Better Days decided to consciously close all existing programs and hibernate for the last quarter of 2022 as it performed an exhaustive needs assessment, which informed our decision on whether to conclude or renew operations. The big question: Can Gekko, with its unique expertise and personalised approach, make a positive and immediate change in the lives of displaced children and youth living in Athens? The answer came back loud and clear: YES!

¹¹ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/45627/greece-estia-housing-scheme-for-vulnerable-asylum-seekers-to-close-for-good>

¹² <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/07/04/violent-and-illegal-migrant-pushbacks-must-end-now-eu-warns-greece>



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SINCERE THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS, WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE IN BETTER DAYS' MISSION THROUGHOUT THIS YEAR OF CHANGES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT, WE COULD NOT DO WHAT WE DO WITHOUT YOU.





@BETTERDAYSNGO

