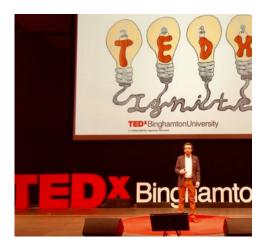




- 1/ ABOUT US
  Gekko Kids Summary
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  Alternative and Trauma Aware Education
- 4 / SCHEDULE
  Individualized Schedules and IEPs
- 5 / THEMIDA LEGAL & UASC MORIA
  Gekko as the lighthouse for missing and
  homeless unaccompanied children
- 6 / PARTNERS
  Aknowlegements

#### **HEAR FROM OUR DIRECTOR**



TEDx Binghamton University
The Capital T Truth of Education
Andrew Foley | Director
Better Days Greece
https://www.ted.com

## ABOUT US

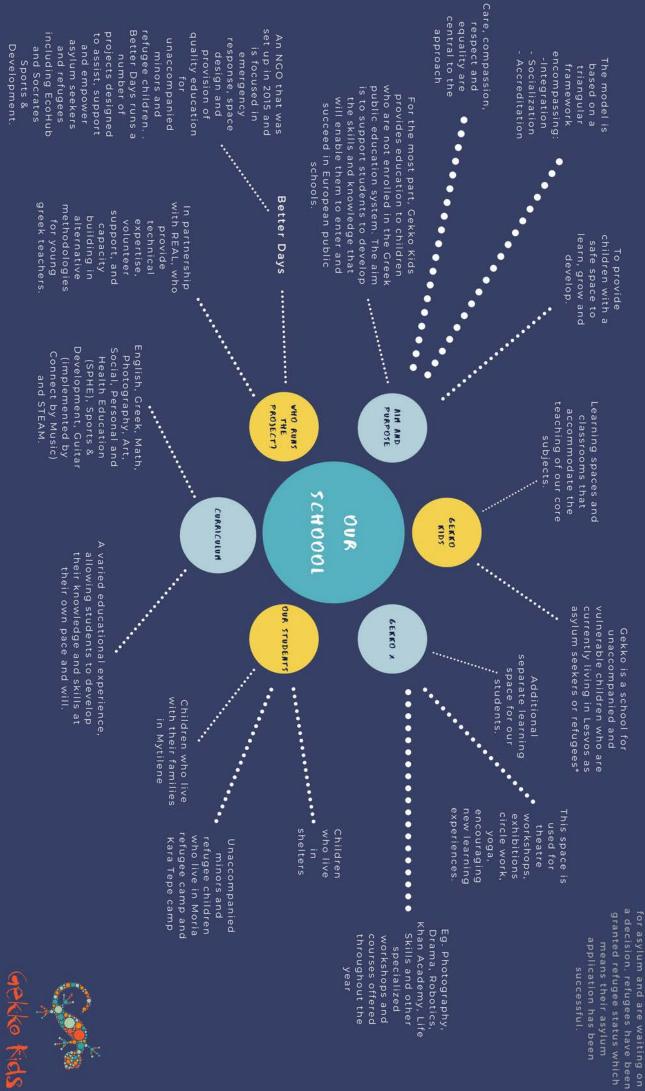
Since its birth in September 2017, Gekko Kids has catered to the emotional and educational needs of over 1200 refugee children of whom 80% are

Unaccompanied & Seperated Children

Better Days creates projects that address the ever-changing circumstances and refugees needs of and displaced communities. Some of our most impactful projects include two transit camps, 'The Olive Grove" (2015) also know as 'Better Days for Moria' and 'Elpida Refugee Centre', regarded as the best 'transitional' camp in Greece (UNCHR, 2016). Over 12 months from 2015 to 2016, we catered to over 70,000 thousand people and distributed millions of euros worth of emergency aid across Greece and supported over 21 projects. In March 2018 we worked with UNICEF to design 'TAPUAT' a child & family support center on Lesvos for women and children living in Moria camp. In that same year, TAPUAT received over 42,000 'Eco-Hub', The Better environmental headquarters, was founded in August 2017. It has since offered environmental education and training workshops to hundreds displaced children and adults living in the camps. To this day Better Days dedicates significant time and resources emergency response programs. In December 2019 more than 400 UASC. previously considered missing, were identified by Better Days on the olive groves of Moria, and over 38 legal interventions were performed before Christmas. This project remains operational to this day. Over 80% of our Gekko students at are now unaccompanied minors living in the olive grove surrounding Moria, colochialy know as "The Jungle". The end of the year was marked by significant growth and recognition in the field of emergency education and child protection specifically for UASC.

Gekko Kids was designed by Better Days in May 2017 to challenge existing notions of refugee school set-up and education in emergencies. Today Gekko Kids provides informal, alternative education located in the center of Mytilene, equipped with modern teaching equipment in a beautiful and healing environment. The project was originally founded to support the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) housed in urban accommodations. Since 2018, Gekko Kids opened its doors to refugee children aged 12-18 years old from Moria and Kara Tepe camps. To this day it has provided quality education to over 1250 refugee children.

We launched our 3rd academic year in September 2019, alongside 'Socrates' sports & development program, 'The Light Space' photography course and a brand new STEAM Faculty at 'Gekko Together they offer an extensive parallel program of subjects activities for the Gekko students; from 3D Design to Khan Academy, DIY Design, Robotics, Nutrition, Life-Skills seminars and so forth. In September 2018. Gekko Kids welcomed its first School Counselor and professional. Slowly but steadily we invested in developing expertise and building capacity in Child Protection and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) practices. Additionally we celebrated the formal introduction of Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and Individual Scheduling, a closure with Iliaktida, and the establishing of Gekko Kids as a lighthouse for homeless and missing unaccompanied children living in the olive groves of Moria.



for asylum and are waiting on means their asylum

# MEET THE TEAM



ELENA MOUSTAKA

Managing Director



ANDREW FOLEY
Development Director



MYRIAM CORREA
School Councelor & PSS Manager



DANIEL TEOUMA
Socrates- Sports & Development
Program Director



ANNA TAXEIDI

Coordinator



GEORGE PAPADOPOULOS IT Manager & Computer-Maths Teacher



MYRSINI VOUGDI English Teacher



IRENE TRIKOU
Special Educator



ROMANE BERNET
Program Associate & Volunteer
Coordinator



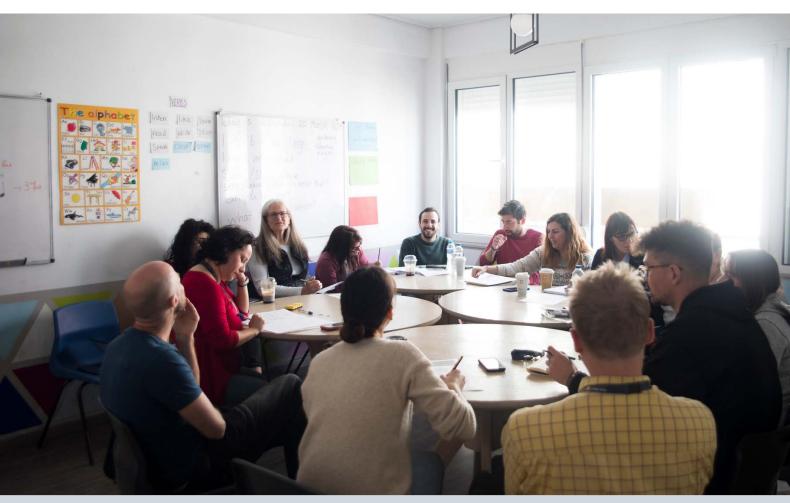
OLGA SALIAMPOUKOU TLS Photography Instructor



AREF DAWLATYAR
Farsi Interpreter



IRENE SALVASELLI
Adminstrative Officer







# 286

### **ACTIVE STUDENTS**

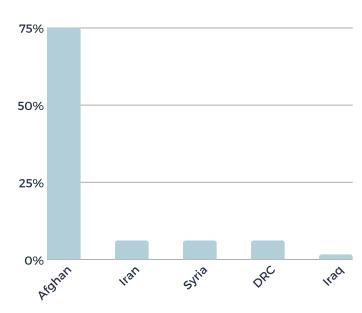
Total number of students that attended Gekko Kids at least one time.

# 10985

## **CUMULATIVE ATTENDANCE**

Total of students' daily attendance from Sep16th to Dec 21st 2019.

### **NATIONALITIES**



# 1473

## **TEACHING HOURS**

Hours taught by Gekko Kids' educators during the last quarter.



**258 UASC** 

28
FAMILY

62
CLASSES/STUDENTS

Average Number of classes attended by students during the last quarter period.

27%
FEMALE STUDENTS

**73%**MALE STUDENTS

Gekko Kids students mainly reside in Moria camp and the surrounding olive groves, Kara Tepe camp and alternate accomodation in Mytilene.

30%

Percentage of Gekko Kids students' registered in Public School for academic yer 2019-2020

# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Alternative, Individualized & Trauma Aware Education



Better Days has recognized the need for safe space and constructive environments for displaced people. At Gekko Kids, we have created a transformative space for unaccompanied and separated children.

Since the founding of Gekko Kids, we have worked to create positive experiences of education for unaccompanied and separate children in Lesvos. We have worked toward to creating positive and healing spaces, with a broad range of workshops and subjects for students to choose from. We believe that students should be active participants and have agency over their education and that at it's core, education should cater to the specific needs and passions of students.

### 1.INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL APPROACH



- 1. To achieve individualized development & academic growth.
- 2. Facilitate integration into the host community & public school system.
- 3. Help them mature emotionally & socially.
- 4. Sharpen their ability to communicate, find their place in the world and choose their voice.
- 5. Enable accreditation, certification & unleash their potential supporting long term integration and employment opportunities.

#### 2. TRAUMA AWARE EDUCATION

Children who have been exposed to multiple trauma or traumatic experiences have less capacity to process new information and social and environmental cues: challenges can become verv complicated for them. Trauma becomes a veil that doesn't allow them to see all the good around them, all the good inside of them. Essentially, it makes them less permeable to new information and learning.

The student becomes 'the subject' of our education approach. During registration we aim to identify the student's individual characteristics and invite them to help us construct their educational profile. This is a very participatory process throughout. Our main priority is to provide all students with a positive experience on education, awaken curiosity, challenge biases and build confidence.

## BLUEPRINT FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS



# INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANS (IEPS)

Better Days believes in Individualized Education that caters to specific needs and passions of students. We have focused on providing Individual Educational Plans for vulnerable cases. individualized approach education lies within the core of our pedagogical philosophy. personalized learning, personalization, refers to a diverse educational variety of programs, experiences, instructional learning academic-support approaches, and strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

In essence all students are given a personal schedule but not all of the students have the opportunity to work on an IEP. In the absence of a second social worker or child psychologist, we have a maximum capacity for 30 IEPs at one time. Below you can find the vulnerablity criteria that cases present which will priositise them for IEP (case profile):

- -Depression and suicidal tendencies
- -Behavioral disorder and impulse control
- -Special Education Needs
- -Anxiety/panic attacks/epilepsy -Prevention for vulnerability in adult life
- -Sadness/grief
- -Alcohol or drug abuse

The IEP (Individual Educational Plan) is a powerful social education tool that analyses every child's (PSS case) needs and sets objectives to achieve in a period of 3-6 months. A successful individual intervention requires that the School Counselor and educators work closely together to facilitate the student's social and emotional development and academic growth. The IEP indicators are assessed every day. The educators assess the students behavior from pedagogical a perspective while the School Counselor works with thoughts. emotions, behavior. and beliefs. Successful implementation of the IEP allows us to evaluate and track individual progress for each educational plan.

Our aim is to provide a safe space where the children can let their guard down and feel calm, accepted, cared about and protected, so that other processes, such as education, playbased learning and other healing activities can take root.



# PSS DEPARTMENT

35 PSS CASES

These 35 cases represent the students attending Gekko Kids with the most urgent social and emotionals needs.

134
IEP INTERVIEWS

The School Counselor interviews every student as part of their registration at Gekko. This help us determined their emotional and educational needs and identifying learning and other issues.

30
INDIVIDUAL EDU.
PLAN (IEPS)

IEPs have the objective of merging education and psycho-social support to foster positive practices and a nurturing environment where children can expand their capacity and grow. Students with IEPs are chosen based on their psychological assessment. Our maximum capacity for this year was 30 students.



The well being of our beneficiaries is of paramount importance to us. To meet the needs of students, we have invested in a School Counselor who operates full time at Gekko, implementing and overseeing all child protection protocols and working with the educational staff. They provide counseling to students, supporting them with useful techniques that the children implement in their difficult environment. Additionally the School Counselor supervises the implementation our first SEL and PSS-specific classroom sessions lead by volunteers in December 2019.

In 2019, Better Days developed a custom PSS program for Gekko Kids. It entails mindfulness sessions to cope with anxiety, social skills groups to work on behavior, circle-work for girls to talk about gendersensitive topics, grief support groups to cope with loss, emotional groups to find relief and individual sessions for further and specific support.

During the month of November, a few new initiatives were born. Besides the regular counseling hours and IEP interviews; Art Therapy and Psycho Moto Therapy activities were ready to launched in December, and our collaboration with Yoga Sin Fronteras was formalized. Social Emotional Learning provides a safe space of equal fun and learning. This participatory methodology creates dynamics based on equality, respect, freedom and boundaries to work on social skills and emotional education. It is an effective strategy to support those dealing with traumatized population as it creates a sense of empowerment for students.

In 2018 we ensured that SEL training was all staff and long term provided for volunteers. The Child Safeguarding Policy and Better Days Pedagogical Philosophy became our foundation for enhancing the creation of trauma aware environments in space, safely and appropriately accompanying our students through their emotional and learning journeys, supporting our staff and dealing with the constant rotation of students, frequent changes in circumstances and dealing with serious protection concerns and consequences of acute trauma teenagers.

> You turned on the light inside of us.' - OMID, Afghanistan addressed to his theater teacher.



# PSS DEPARTMENT

67
INDIVIDUAL
COUNSELING
SESSION

Each student has access to optional individual sessions with the School Counselor through out the week.

3

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING GROUP SESSIONS

33 students benefited from SEL sessions.

18

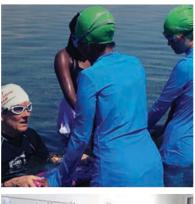
HOURS OF YOGA & MINDFULNESS

Yoga is essential for student suffering from attendtion deficit. For the reporting period

4

ART THERAPY SESSIONS



















In 2018-2019 Gekko Kids has offered 16 parallel subject courses including Robotics, Theatre and 3D Design Courses and continued with the second year of the TLS Photography Course, The Arts Scholarships and TOIEC English Classes.

Accredited exams were offered to advanced students in English (TOEIC), Computer (ECDL) and Greek (ELLINOMATHEIA). A total of 14/15 students passed accredited exams.

Socrates Sports & Development for male students was launched in February 2018. By the end we had observed positive results in behavioral improvements, emotional development, trauma support and academic engagement for all 42 participants.

16

PARALLEL COURSES AVAILABLE

3
ACCREDITED CLASSES

We continue to offer a wild range of parallel courses enabling the students to experiment with new experiences and subjects and develop their passions and creativity. We believe that the broader offering off subjects available at Gekko enables individual flourishing and healing and provides an alternative means and pace of learning for students who are in the process of relocation or therapy.

The Gekko Girls Empowerment Project run by REAL, continues to support female unaccompanied minors. By December 2019 the program had supported over 63 female students and offered gender specific classes in swimming and cycling (2018-2019)

During January to August 2019, Gekko Kids also offered Adult classes for Greek and English language to 172 adults from 18:00 to 20:00. Unfortunately due to lack of capacity the adult classes had to be closed in September 2019. We are looking to relaunch the program in 2020.

At public school exams, we achieved 72% success rate in May-June 2019.

## ACCREDITATION

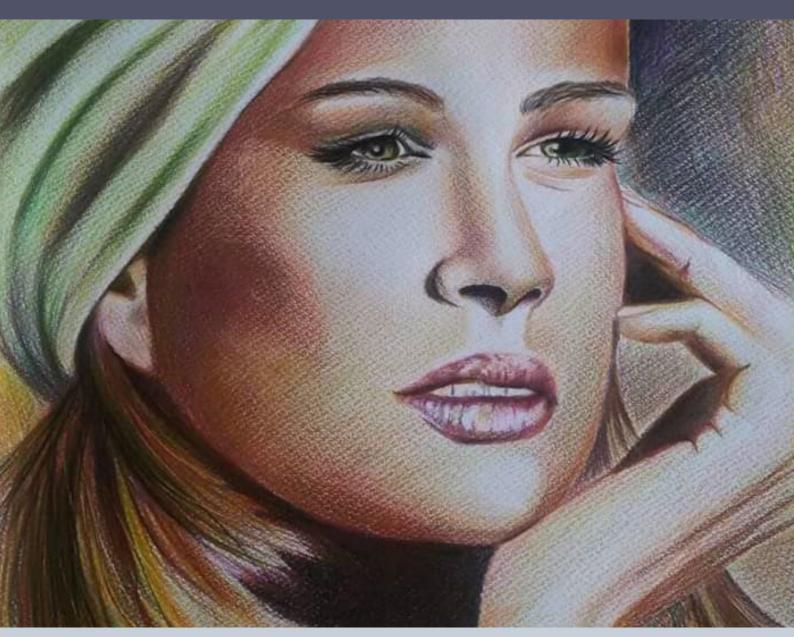
Gekko Kids prepares advance students to sit examination test and receive accreditation in English language (TOEIC), Computer (CEDL), and Greek language (ELLANOMATHEIA). In 2019, 8 Gekko Kids students passed successfully the Greek language certification and 6 passed the TOEIC exam.

Since October 2019, Gekko Kids students also have access to the online platforme of Khan Academy where they receive certification after each courses completed. So far 22 students received their certificate from the Khan Academy online courses.



# ART SCHOLARSHIP

Since September 2018 Better Days started a collaboration with a local art center 'Poliana' to respond to the requests of many of the Gekko students who wanted to further explore the field of arts. Together we aspire to provide an alternative space for healing and growth through creativity and empowerment. This exhibition has been made possible thanks to invaluable partnership. To this day Better Days has awarded over 34 'art scholarships' to Gekko Kids. A total of 7 students have worked on preparing art portfolios and currently 13 students attend Poliana Art classes regularly. From the 19th to 23rd of December 2019, Gekko Kids students organized the 'WALK WITH ME' Art Exhibition compiling their artwork and presenting it for a week long exhibit. This group exhibition was composed of art pieces selected by the artists themselves using their work as a medium to present the world through their own eyes. In collaboartion with Alison Waldman, many pieces from the exhibit have been toured in the United States to bring awareness of the situation facing children in Greece and promote solidarity.







## PHOTOGRAPHY

Since 2018, in collaboration with The Light Space, Gekko Kids offers photography classes to its students. In April 2019, our photography students presented their work at Gekko X, during a photography exhibit on "Freedom" and sold some of their artwork fundraising over 1000EUR for equipment. It was highly praised by UNHCR Greece and local media. The photography exhibit that was then successfully exhibited in Los Angeles, with the generous support of our partners The Light Space & Sony. Our wonderful photography instructor Olga Saliampoukou represented the kids and Better Days.

'Photography is not looking at something; it is feeling something. When you look at something, you feel it. You can make other people feel something when they look at your pictures. The point of taking photographs is that you don't have to explain anything by words.'

- ALI





Gekko Kids' students rehearsed intensively over the summer with Israel (now 18yrs) stealing the show when performing (singing and guitar) a greek rock song. CbM are now also holding Saturday Guitar Classes at Gekko Kids bringing kids and youth from Mytilene, Moria & Kara Tepe camps. Gekko awarded Israel with a 1-year scholarship at the local music Institute, starting as of September 2019.



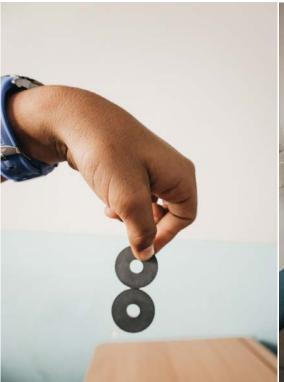


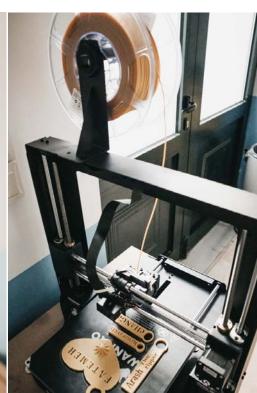
# GEKKOX

Gekko X is a component of Gekko Kids based on the design of a STEAM lab. Gekko X is a step forward in realizing our vision in offering quality teaching in these disciplines and expanding our current curriculum at Gekko Kids. This new centre allows the students to explore and attain new competencies, while also improving upon our facilities and programming in the arts. This year we had also launched accredited elearning courses which were very popular amongst the more advanced students.

Gekko X's schedule is currently full 9:00-18:00, with Robotics, Photography, Yoga, Guitar, Science, Khan Academy and Dance classes and other technical and creative workshops in carpentry, theatre, 3D design and so forth. Gekko Kids also offers robotic scholarships to 8 advanced students at Mini250's steam lab in the centre of Mytilene.







WWW.BETTERDAYS.NGC

'Football is passion, we play with our heart, with our mind and we have to learn to control our feelings' Muhammed 17, Gambia

# SOCRATES

SPORTS & DEVELOPMENT

In March 2019, Better Days launched a sports and development project built around trauma-aware football training and theoretical instruction sessions for unaccompanied minors. which sucessfully registered 37 active players.

Unaccompanied minors are deprived of family structure, languish in even greater isolation, and can struggle with their displacement and its traumas.

In January 2020, Socrates project will enter a second phase aiming to promote good physical and mental health. through sports and specifically through the international language of football, Socrates will provide students with a supportive environment, teaching the students teamwork, a culture of respect, collective goal-setting and other life skills. This project is encouraging them to grow, develop and build residence towards better social integration, physical and mental well-being.

This program is launched with support by Athlead, La Liga & MediaPro.



# The Chalk Circle



Adapted from "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" by Bertolt Brecht





Emergency Response for Unaccompanied & Seperated Children

OUR PRIMARY GOAL WAS TO CREATE IN THE FIRST PLACE THE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENT SO AS TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST WITH EACH CHILD. THIS IS WHY BETTER DAYS AND DCI CHOSE BD'S HO IN MYTILENE TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEWS. DURING THE FIRST INTERVIEW THE CHILDREN HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET INFORMED ABOUT THE PROCEDURE, THE DOCUMENTS NEEDED AND WERE ALSO GIVEN THE SPACE AND TIME TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS, FEARS AND WISHES. CHILDREN SPOKE ALSO ABOUT THEIR RELATIVE THEY WANT TO BE REUNITED WITH, THEIR RELATIONSHIP, THE REASONS WHY THEY WOULD PREFER LIVING IN THE OTHER COUNTRY, ABOUT THE CONDITIONS IN MORIA REFUGEE CAMP AND THE DANGERS THEY FACE. DCI GREECE ENSURED THAT CHILDREN UNDERSTOOD FULLY THE WHOLE PROCEDURE AND DEPENDING ON THE STAGE OF EACH CASE, SPECIFIC LEGAL ACTIONS WERE MADE WITH SUPPORT FROM RIC FOR CLARIFICATION AND URGENT APPOINTMENTS WHEREVER NECESSARY.

WE PROVIDED SNACKS, FOOD AND FULL WINTER PACKS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. ALL THEMIDA CASES ARE NOW ATTENDING GEKKO. THE FOLLOW UP OF THE CASES IS ADMINISTRATED BY DCI IN ATHENS AND BETTER DAYS IN MORIA.

# EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MINORS

Since 2017, Better Days provides ongoing support to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Moria and the surrounding olive groves through educational and emergency programs. Since December 2019, Better Days launched a new emergency response program for UASC living in Moria. The current situation for UASC is catastrophic with official safe sheltering capacity for 200 UASC. However by December 2019 there were 1156 UASC in Moria.

There is also an increasing number of alleged adults claiming they are minors, many presenting official documentation from their native country supporting their claims. Of those 1156, over 650 are currently finding shelter in the olive groves surrounding Moria , many of whom are homeless and sleep rough. The safety and security concerns facing minors are untold, pediatric care is inaccessible, access to legal aid is not available for a majority of UASC many of whom are turning 18 having not had the opportunity to apply for family reunification.

Incidences of sexual abuse, self harm and violence against children is increasing with almost daily reports and some fatalities. Access to information, basic NFI's including clothing, hygiene, blankets and tents is currently not available.







In mid December, following a request for from Reception and support Identification Service (RIS) Minors Office we conducted the first assessment to identify, locate and monitor UASC living olive groves, homeless considered missing. Today the program is identifying and assessing minors who have been considered missing for months and the program is also supporting the transfer of vulnerable cases to safer accommodation as well as scheduling appointments for asylum and medical screening. Thanks to our collaboration with DCI, and funding by Help Refugees, we have launched a legal intervention program 'Themida' taking on 38 legal cases for family reunification.

In 2020 we hopping to launch 'Themida 2' and take on additional cases in critical need of legal intervention. Meanwhile all Gekko students and Themida cases have received Emergency Winter Packs. Further on NFIs is distributed to extremely vulnerable cases identified on the olive groves who are then referred to Gekko/ education where they can access further support.

In 2020 we will continue to work with UASC in Moria. We are hoping to see the creation of a UASC Info Point. which is desperately needed as current services are severely under resourced and essentially inaccessible to minors. We are also working with partners to address the need for improved shelter for homeless UASC. This is part of Better Days emergency response programs for 2019/2020 however we expect the need for this programming to be medium to long term. These services for UASC are desperately needed and no NGO or authority currently has the capacity to provide for UASC in Moria.

Better Days has built the network and expertise to be able to operate on the olive groves and support the Minors Office identify and address some of the severe services gaps for UASC. We are currently coordinating outreach to UASC with key partners such as RIS Minors Office, UNHCR and Nordcap.

## STUDENTS' TESTIMONY

'In this world that we are living in, there is war, inequality, poverty and many bad things.

If everything can be equal and all people can come together to save the world, we can achieve freedom.' - VELAYAT, Iran, 17.yrs

"Meditation is the best thing that happened to me in life. Oh my God, everything has changed! My anxiety is so much better now, I can sleep, I can think, I am ready for life. Please show me more about it Teacher Mariam." - Gekko Kids student during a PSS session

Q:What is the thing you need the most that you don't have?

A: Security

Q: What is the think you have you are really thankful for?

A: Gekko

YOUNES, Afghanistan, 16yrs

Q: What is your biggest fear right now? A: The moment the sun goes down.

Q: Are you afraid of the dark?
A: I am afraid of what it brings; the noise drunk people make signing, the bad people arguing; and yet if it is a quiet night, I am also afraid of the cold... sometimes the cold is unbearable and in the morning it is very hard to see the doctor, you know. So we wait in the dark until sunrise. Sometimes we are lucky enough not to get ill. And some of us are even lucky enough to go to school.

Conversation with a 16 years old homeless boy living in the olive groves of Moria

'If you feel like you are losing everything remember that trees lose their leaves every year and they still stand tall and wait for Better Days to come'. MAHDI, 17 years old





## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None of this work would have been possible without the support of our sponsors, partners and incredible volunteers.

INSTITUT LE ROSEY
HELP REFUGEES

REAL
CONNECT BY MUSIC
THE LIGHT SPACE
YOGA SIN FRONTERAS
POLIANA
HUMANITY NOW
ATTIKA HUMAN SUPPORT
JUIS PLUS
BOOKAID
DCI