

## **Field Report 10/9-10/10**

After the fire in Moria and the immediate response to it, Better Days had to reassess the feasibility of existing and future programs on Lesbos and Greece. Following the transfer of 409 UAMs, very few unaccompanied minors, alleged minors and separated minors were now housed in temporary shelters outside the new camp waiting for their cases to be processed. Approximately 69 minors fit that profile.

### **Step 1: Map-out & Locate 'our clients'**

Whether a student, a PSS-case or a Themida participant, our clients survived another horrifying experience. 48hrs after they were living a new reality. Scared and anxious about the distribution and consequences this change will bring to their medical treatments, legal cases, mental health and education they begged for advice and information.

*"Hello Ms E, all my documents are burned. Is there a problem for me and for my reunification case?" Hassan asked. "Miss why did they separate me from my younger brother, He is my life, I cannot live away from him. When will I see him again?" Saleh said.*

Following the fire in Moria camp and the relocation of most UAMs (living in Moria and surrounding olive groves) our first priority was to locate and account for all of our PSS and Themida cases, now scattered around Greece. Some UAMs were only moved locally whereas others were relocated to Thessaloniki and Athens. On Lesbos, Themida

cases were mapped living in +18s or UAM shelters managed by Iliaktida, TAPUAT center and the new camp (most of them +18s). Outside the island, many children were relocated to IOM's hotels across the mainland (mainly Thessaloniki area of Athens).

### **Step 2: Re-establish communication**

It was our duty to find them and accompany them through this process. To do so our Themida team, both in Athens (DCI) and Lesbos (BD) started reaching out to the IOM and other representatives (differ per location) and PSS team connected to all of our students and Themida cases individually and through our Whatsapp groups. A +18s group was created to manage separately the children who turned 18+ (prefire) and were no longer considered UAMs, hence could not be relocated to the mainland. For the legal and shelter options differ and had to be managed carefully and under the supervision of our PSS Manager, as frustration and desperation hit them hard, especially for those who had to move into the new camp.

*"Please tell us, will our tickets come soon. We are growing desperate here, waiting for over 6 months, please allow us to purchase them and go on our own. They don't care about us now that we are 18."*

Legal, shelter and general information was provided to the children and their families who were worried sick about them. Only a few hours after the fire, people from all over Europe started texting us asking for updates about the safety of their loved

ones. Keeping them informed was an absolute priority.



### **Step 3: Introductions (establish communication with the new representatives/shelters)**

A week in, we started getting in contact with the new IOM/ or other shelter representatives in order to inform them of Themida and each child's individual legal and PSS profile. Some shelters and representatives were easier to work with than others, however, confusion and uncertainty about what's next were frequently expressed by the shelter staff. Unfortunately by mid-October children started projecting signs of severe anxiety, depression, and expressing intent to self-harm, often caused by the discontinuation of legal, educational or PSS programs. "We need information, what is going to happen to us? to our education and to our cases?" Several reports and testimonies from the children spoke of limited access to all of the above services, as well as a medical aid. Additionally, we would normally receive feedback about the food being of very poor quality, sometimes even rotten and uneatable. "It looks like leftovers".

### **Step 4: Advocacy**

Following 10 months of legal aid for UAMs, examples of malpractice by the regional Dublin offices were documented by the DCI/Themida team:

- German Dublin Office almost default request for DNA tests
- German Dublin Office rejection of cases with strong positive DNA result
- by October 50% of our cases had received a positive answer, the majority of whom remained in the custody of the Greek public prosecutor and awaited for the Greek Transfer Office to issue their tickets so they can be reunited with their families. The Dublin offices would contact the families/ or on several occasions the child directly and inform them of their case being closed because of delays in their departure causing them severe anxiety.
- Conditions in the new camp were absolutely appalling. Referrals of alleged minors pleading for age assessment whilst being exposed to serious risks and physical danger were reported to the authorities and UNHCR.
- A campaign focusing on +18 young individuals with ongoing family reunification or relocation cases was designed to create public awareness and encourage the EU and Greek authorities to address this issue with urgency.
- Communication exercises to highlight the issues faced by UAMs and youth in Greece were designed with the support of external consultants.

- Our second Advocacy Debrief Report was submitted to Save the Children.

## **Step 5: Referrals & Needs Assessments on Lesbos**

We continued case management and started to investigate the possibilities of continuing scheduled DNA testing and age assessments for our cases in the mainland. DCI's helpdesk line was on fire as of early October, putting the Themida team under serious pressure to respond to the needs and reorganize itself and its capacity so that we could launch our third and largest exercise so far, **Themida Legal Intervention III; also called Themida Greece.**

The third exercise was going to be simultaneously launched and operated on Lesbos & Athens. Themida Greece consists of the existing legal workload plus at least 40 new cases. The primary goal is the continuity in the provision of quality legal aid and information to UAMs in Greece. However, capacity was created to take on cases outside this group, namely:

- alleged minors
- +18s
- vulnerable groups in need of critical and immediate legal assistance

Additionally, the Themida semestrial legal report was submitted to our sponsors and provisional budgets for Oct-Dec 2020 and Themida Greece 2021 are under preparation.

Romane Bernet, Themida's legal officer on Lesbos participated in a 15 hours webinar on Sexual and

Gender-Based Violence highlighting best practices when handling SGBV cases.

In early October we met with Natasha Savvidou, representative of the Minor's Office/EASO to discuss Themida's issues and the potential needs for a Themida III component on Lesbos. She informed us that in theory, they shouldn't have any unaccompanied minors in the new camp and that legal need of family reunification will be covered by the facilities where they are transferred after their arrivals.

We also had meetings with Alexandra Tzanedaki, exRepresentative of Section A, regarding the preparation of SoP and liaising with Greek authorities regarding possible future relocations to the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Germany.

## **Backoffice & Compliance**

This year allowed for the accumulation of expertise in the following areas which have proven necessary for the survival and growth of Better Days operations and programs:

- **Audit & Compliance**
- **Accounting**
- **Logistics & Procurement**
- **Risk Assessment**
- **Health & Safety**
- **Advocacy and Communications**

The last months of 2020 have challenged us profoundly. The creation of a new temporary camp succeeded in the destruction of Moria almost overnight. Ultimately the events that followed the fire, became another tragic chapter in the history of Lesbos. Witnessing the severe violations of human

rights on Greek soil, the physical and mental abuse of refugees including women and children deprived of shelter, food and water, affected us deeply. To many, our decision to obtain from any activities contributing to the setup of the new camp remains convoluted. To us, this was a matter of integrity and it has only but fuelled our determination to grow and continue to support the community in a meaningful, dignifying humane and sustainable way.

So we worked harder, worked to support each other, meet extremely tight deadlines, and prevail in unsafe and even life-threatening situations. The internal capacity built by Better Days in the face of Maro Galanou, Anna Taxeidi, Dan Teuma, Dani Larios, Romane Bernet, Elena Moustaka, Myriam Correa, Andrew Foley and Bryce Cleborne Berube have enabled a responsible, efficient and effective response on behalf of Better Days, during the most challenging times. Although we are glad this year is coming to an end, with being hunted by the 30000 people living in deplorable and inhumane camps on Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos and over 1000 homeless unaccompanied minors who remain exposed to serious risks such as abuse, human trafficking, extreme weather conditions and Covid19.

## **GEKKO KIDS: a refugee for the Better Day's team**

The second wave of active transmission and deaths hit the island and soon after the first couple of possessive cases were reported in the camp. The local aggression escalated and NGOs buildings and community centres were targeted again. Postfire we decided to relocate our HQ to Gekko Kids,

which (given the circumstances), could not resume normal operations until further notice.

Not long before the Ministry had announced new NGO registration requirements (within a tight deadline) including meeting health & safety standards on company premises, an ISO certificate and audit reports for 2018 and 2019. At Gekko, the backbone team of our organization (procurement, logistics, accounts, audit and legal departments) set forward to meet the requirements and produce the documentation requested by the Ministry. This project is estimated to cost more than 20,000EUR and will require a heavy investment of resources and capacity between September - February 2020.

## **Iso9001 Certification**

In October we started working with an external consultant on creating the Quality Manual System for Themida program. The management will need to review the manual and assist its completion by the end of the year.

The manual requires a lot of preparatory work, which has been delegated amongst the team:

- creating or adapting a series of templates and documents
- conceptualizing and finalizing protocols
- weekly progress calls with the consultant
- data analysis assessment
- Filing
- Registry of active and inactive agreements chronologically
- Registry of inactive and active employment contacts chronologically

The advantage of this certification is that through its procedure, BD will grow in professionalism by designing and abiding by the international standards of quality. Our staff will build capacity on how to design future programs accordingly.

The main challenge is that due to the latest developments on Lesbos (coupled with the consequences of the pandemic), continuous assessment and programmatic adjustment is required to keep Themida's quality and impact intact within shifting environments. It is challenging to work on specific components of the program who are currently under restructuring such as the provision of PSS through 'e-spaces' 'online' and 'remotely' shift the narrative completely.

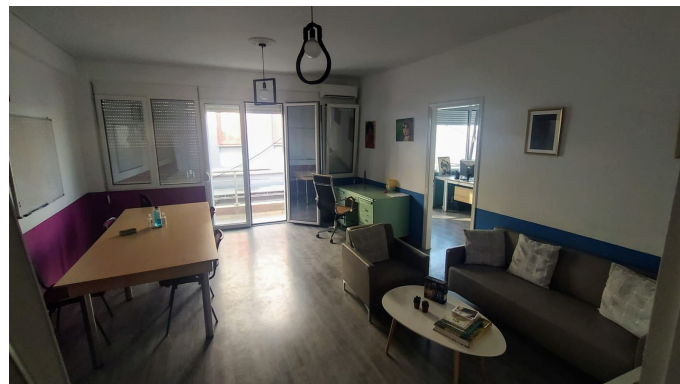
## **Health and Safety Standards**

Improvements in our space have been made to ensure that the working environment is safe and health standards are met. A health and safety external provider was contracted in September as per the request of the Ministry.

## **Covid19 Protocol**

By mid-September, BD's Major Outbreak Protocol was put in effect following a series of outbreaks amongst the NGO community. To avoid contamination and an internal outbreak, office space, cars and housing were segregated according to the field of operations in order to avoid unnecessary contact between the members. The refurbishment and infrastructure (moving furniture, installing closets, moving spare furniture, sorting out stock and ordering office-appropriate furniture) were organized as per the instructions of our Health & Safety Consultant. Within two months,

Gekko Kids was turned into a covid-appropriate office space whilst maintaining its multifunctional ability to host seminars, classes and workshops.



## **Giveback: Supporting Local & NGO-Communities alike to revive or maintain their operations**

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Better Days with the support of Le Rosey and Help Refugees has raised to the occasion and supported NGO and local communities alike to respond to the covid19 challenges, financial burden and critical PPE shortages.

Postfire and with most UAMs safely relocated to the mainland, Gekko Kids school and Gekko X STEAM lab were not going to reopen within the year 2020. Hence we decided to use any additional stock, existing inventory, assets and emergency funding to support partner organisations and local medical centres to provide essential services to the refugee community now sheltered in the new temporary camp of Kara Tepe (Moria 2.0). With a great sense of responsibility and solidarity, Better Days stood by OHF when requested to operate their community centre for 500 a week, almost overnight. Since then, Better Days has fully funded OHF's PPE needs to ensure that standards of a hygienic environment and covid19-regulations are



met. Furniture and other necessary equipment was donated to OHF as a priority so that they could launch their space without delays.

Similarly, with the second wave of Covid19 outbreak in Greece, local medical centres such as IKA, and Mytilene hospital were in grave need of PPE. By October, critical lack of PPE and medical aid were met at the Lesvos Shelter of Women at Risks, the Centre of Autoimmune Diseases on Lesvos, The First Responders Team and so forth. Through our collaboration with the local group, KANENAS MONOS over 70 underprivileged families were supported with grocery and IT equipment to support their children's distance learning.

A long list of available equipment was compiled (from both sites). Donations included a variety of clothing, sporting equipment, furniture, educational resources and materials, tools, computers, tablets, games, greek books and more. We have accumulated plenty of assets over the years, and organising it into categorised and tidy sections, for beneficiaries to choose from, was a massive undertaking in itself.

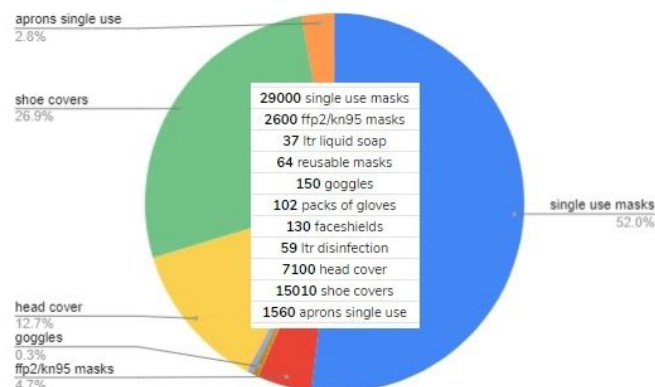
To date (November 1st), with donations still being arranged for the coming weeks, we have been able to support the following different organisations with a variety of donations:

- **Attica Human Support;** Clothing, blankets, towels and bedding
- **Art Bridges;** Clothing, furniture, tablets
- **Abused Women's shelter;** Furniture, educational resources, sports equipment, toys & games, PPE and medicine

- **Maker Space;** Tools, workshop equipment
- **Mosaik Support center;** Furniture and books
- **One Happy Family;** Furniture and educational resources, PPE
- **Polianna;** Furniture and educational resources
- **School Of peace;** School equipment for students
- **Sappho Womens Football club;** Kits and training equipment
- **Yoga and Sport for Refugees;** Clothing and sports equipment
- **Wave of Hope** for the future School; Art equipment

We have also supported **local village health centers**, who are currently underfunded by EODY. In response to their requests for PPE, **Polichnitos** and **Plomari** centers have been supported so far and pending deliveries include **Antissa health center**.

Medical Donations data to the above beneficiaries document 82 different product types, including medicine and PPE.



## Central Triage Closure

After the fire, the Triage Clinic ceased its operations. We worked on paying the final purchases, checking that the costs have been correctly allocated and a narrative report along with the budget expenses were submitted to HR.

September's medicine and PPE have remained in stock and were included in the donations to other actors. Further outreach is needed on promoting the donation of drugs for use by medical organisations, initially, MSF, MVI and BRF, who are currently looking to provide services outside the camp, or other locations where there is a need.

## A Challenging Environment for PSS

Since September the 9th, the work of our PSS team has been implemented before Covid19, and then after, became impossible. Following the transfer of 409 UAMs to the mainland, our PSS Manager & Gekko Counselor focused on daily check-ins with our students, PSS and Themida cases in Athens and Thessaloniki. In daily phone calls, she would provide emotional support in these times of uncertainty and be a familiar face in an ocean of strangers. Desperation, confusion, uncertainty, loss, resignation, abandonment and trauma were detected amongst our beneficiaries on a daily basis.

On the ground, and postfire assessments led to the identification of alleged minors. A database was created which was shared with the Minors Office, EASO and UNHCR, in charge of these cases.

In conversations with the children, they would share information about the new shelters. Limited capacity to communicate effectively was repeatedly

mentioned due to the lack of interpretation services. This compromised the quality of PSS services at the IOM shelters. A staff member from the hotel also admitted that 'the hotel was understaffed'. One of Themida's cases showed alarming signs of depression a few weeks after his transfer to the shelter stating, "I may do dangerous things", "It is like a prison here", "No one listens to us", "I need sleeping pills". The Themida and PSS team have been in touch with the responsible and PSS teams of the shelters. In relation to the boy mentioned before, a referral was made to the social worker of the shelter. Two weeks later no action was taken, according to the UAM.

## OHF Survey Assessments, PPE and Solidarity:

Our work with OHF goes back to the Olive Groves of Moria in 2015. Following the fire, OHF was allowed to reopen its community centre and provide services to 500 people per week. Our primary objective in supporting OHF, was to ensure a covid-safe environment for their services, and cover 100% of their PPE needs (Oct-Dec 2020).

We initiated an initial stock count and introduced means to track consumption and usage of the PPE so future deliveries could be adjusted to more accurately fulfil their needs.



Our second aim was to use our expertise to perform outreach (on behalf of OHF) and help them better understand the specific needs of the camp inhabitants when funding or prioritizing the introduction of additional services/aid at the centre.

When designing the questionnaire (for the outreach exercise) all questions were carefully considered with the objective to:

- a) inform the OHF's assessments so they can make efficient use of funding and resources
- b) assess the conditions in the camp.

The second section of a questionnaire was designed in KOBO. We have trained 8 team members in data collection using Kobo and are looking forward to utilizing its capabilities in future interventions. We deployed the questionnaire via 2 full days of outreach (before 10th of October) in which 147 people were interviewed. Constant briefings and debriefing are taking place before and after each intervention in order to improve the exercise and get more familiar with the use of KOBO.

Additional support:

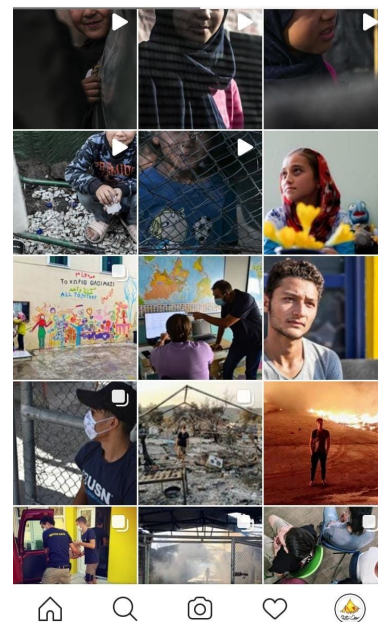
- To provide emergency egress route maps, and overall floor plans for OHF to use in the planning and programming.
- To provide Emergency Status Protocol template
- Emergency Protocol training & template
- Incident SOPs templates
- Emergency Response Training for new volunteers
- Provide an Incident report template
- Security Risk Management guide

Finally, we will be supporting OHF in procuring Rapid Covid tests for the upcoming winter and continuing with population assessments aiming at 500 interviews.

## Communications:

For the past year, we have invested heavily in gathering information about the situation inside the camp for internal and advocacy use. Postfire our advocacy work remained of the essence and contributed to public awareness campaigns and bilateral discussions regarding relocations, UAM, +18s and alleged minors.

A new advocacy campaign was developed and implemented in October. A great team effort has resulted in a strong claim for the rights of young adults, unaccompanied boys and girls that once were minors and now fall through the gaps of the system net. A total of one medium article, one strong relocation advocacy post, and 5 audiovisual storytellings have been created with help from TLC.



Simultaneously other communications efforts have taken place in order to maintain an active presence on our social media platforms, as well as spreading the message and advocating about the current situation in Lesbos with:



- SAVE the Children: Support for +18 yo advocacy campaign efforts
- [Change.org](#): Fire Moria Camp: Call for urgent evacuation and radical change
- [Europe must Act](#): Aegean Grassroots Report
- [Refugee Rights](#): Urgent Call to Action from Civil Society Organisations across Europe
- [Lesvos Solidarity](#): Save Dignity, Save PIKPA And Kara Tepe
- [Catalan Government](#): The Government of Catalonia is committed to taking in a minimum of 120 refugees

Meanwhile, we have been in contact with and maintained networking communications with different Catalan and German press outlets, international journalists, interested funders and government officials.

In October Better Days launched two new programs:

- 3-month Capacity Building program for CBM (Connect by Music) Educators (x8) on SEL methodology (lessons drawn by TAPUAT & Gekko Kids), Classroom Activities and Child Protection.
- Funding and training of 15 educators and child protection staff for ChildHouses in Syria. Better Days will implement lessons learned at Gekko and tailor-made a CH Pedagogy and PSS program of activities for Orphan and Vulnerable Children in partnership with SARD, Happy Caravan and ChildHouses.

## Year-End Deliverables

Additionally, as 2020 comes to an end, we start preparing for internal audits and preparation of year-end reports:

- 2020 Annual (Impact) Report
- Mobile-friendly Website (complete)
- Athens Needs Assessment / Mapping Exercise / 1000UAMs
- Prepare Communication & Fundraising Engagement and Impact Report
- 2020 Financial Statements
- Submit Annual Audits 2018 & 2019
- PSS & Legal Impact Report for 2020/ with DCI
- 2021 Budget Projections
- 2021 Themida Greece Program Framework
- Design Educational & PSS/SEL Curriculum in Syria: ChildHouses
- Workshops & Capacity Building for CBM Music Educators on SEL/PSS-informed pedagogy and Child Protection
- 2020 List of Donations