

Action for Education

Quarterly Report
January - March 2019

THE TIME TO ACT

Introduction to the report

What do we achieve with our work in Greece?
Why is it important that we persist?

Each year, our volunteer team collectively puts in over 115,000 voluntary hours. Without payment or much of an audience, something very real, something very powerful, impels grassroots responses such as ours to keep on going.

We are at the point where there is such persistent nakedness to the human rights violations in Greece that it has become a new normality. It is a hard task to communicate and convey this protracted crisis. We do a poor job of it. Instead, we have a tendency to keep our heads to the ground, to run our projects, teach our lessons, register new students, cook more meals. It's not about humility, if anything, it's the fearful recognition that in so many places in the world, we would be met with disinterest or derision.

A report though, such as this, is one small way of sending a message to the world. Its quarterly punctuation is a reminder that whilst both we and the world continue, there is a time to speak up. Here we speak of the situation in Greece, the impact of our work, and demonstrate how the generosity of our supporters and volunteers makes such a big difference.

Together, this triangle of need, response and support is the structure that alleviates a degree of suffering, injustice and irresponsibility. Though what we achieve with these 115,000 hours and freely-given resources is by no means enough, it's contribution is part of a much wider effort - an often unacknowledged one - that has collectively sought to stabilise a critical situation on the edge of Europe.

As Action for Education enters its second year of operations in Greece, we're proud to have expanded what we are doing to 3 locations: Chios, Samos and Athens. Here we have a bigger impact than ever, reaching more communities, teaching more students, and providing more basic services.

This is ultimately what we achieve and the reason we persist.
It is not yet time to leave.

SITUATION ON THE ISLANDS

The previous months have been the coldest, wettest and hardest for asylum seekers stuck on the islands. Here, without permanent structures or hard roofs, thousands are exposed to sickness and freezing temperatures brought about by a lack of planning and initiative by those responsible.

As winter came to an end, over 15,000 asylum seekers were squeezed into camps with a combined capacity for just 9,000. Once again, failure to winterise the camps led to death, sickness and a steep decline in mental health and general well-being.

CHIOS

On Chios, the adverse effects of the season have been compounded by the shocking absence of a regular bus service from the camp of Vial into the town. After initial plans from UNHCR to hand over transportation to the Municipality failed, following lobbying from local taxi and transport companies, all services were suspended. This act has added to the sense of imprisonment and detention felt by those residing in the camp on the island. In such a context, AFE's bus service has been one of the few NGO-run services offering relief and an escape.

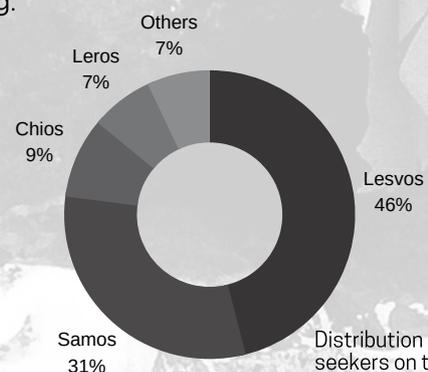
In more positive news from Chios, there is the continued expansion of governmental education which, with the combined efforts and advocacy of NGOs, has enabled a number of minors, included unaccompanied and separated children, to now access local schools. AFE is campaigning to expand this programme and ensure all minors can attend formal schooling.

SAMOS

Though the dire conditions suffered by asylum seekers on Samos has reached international headlines and drawn condemnation from governments and human rights groups, meaningful responses by the political establishment aimed at ameliorating the day-to-day living standards are lacking.

**WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT AND STAND
IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE THOUSANDS OF
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLEEING
WAR, PERSECUTION AND POVERTY.**

Letter to the EU Commission signed by 10 NGOs on Chios,
25th January 2019



Distribution of asylum seekers on the Aegean Islands, March 2019

...CONTINUED

Instead, it has fallen to volunteer organisations to fill the massive gap in service provision, whilst safeguarding lives and upholding basic rights. The first quarter of 2019 has seen far fewer new arrivals onto the island than the previous quarter. Nevertheless, numbers on the island itself have remained constant and the past few weeks have already indicated arrivals will increase substantially as the weather now improves.

Over the past months, long-standing groups on the island have entered into close collaboration with new actors arriving to the island, aiming to fill the many gaps in the provision of legal advice, medical support, education, protection and access to hygiene. Education actors are seeking to cover a range of demographics, but no organisation, alone or combined, is currently able to meet fully the demand for services.

The current education actors are: The Ministry of Education, Praksis, Still I Rise, Samos Volunteers & Action for Education. February saw the much-awaited beginning of DYEP schooling. These separate afternoon classes, run at several local schools, have fuelled anger amongst Greek parents' associations. A culture of xenophobia has led to widespread protests and hostile rhetoric that poses significant challenges to local authorities and teachers working to integrate refugee children into public schools.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IS THE RESULT OF THE FAILURE OF THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INHUMANE LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE EU HOTSPOTS.

Letter to the EU Commission signed by NGOs on Chios, 25th January 2019

SITUATION ON THE MAINLAND

Though the islands continue to receive new arrivals, their situation remains fundamentally unchanged. This is not the case on the mainland, where a looming social crisis risks destabilising thousands of asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants.

For refugees whose travel restriction is finally lifted, Athens seems like the light at the end of the tunnel. It feels like it might just be a long-awaited gateway to freedom. However, the situation in Athens is as deplorable as that on the islands. Massive overcrowding in camps, long distances to the city and a lack of services in the wider Attiki region brings many refugees to the streets of Athens, where people are regularly left with no option other than to live in squats or on the street.

With the termination of UNHCR Accommodation (the ESTIA programme), many are being left without any access to housing. While shelters do provide some respite for a lucky few, the waiting list for a place in a shelter can stretch for months. As a result, demand for support services is rising as people try to find their own self-made path out of vulnerability.

REFUGEE EDUCATION CHIOS

An update from our projects

Following our winter fundraising campaign, we have been able to maintain and sustain our projects on Chios. In order to build a more inclusive and sustainable model, the restructuring of our education service started at the beginning of 2019 is still ongoing.

WINTER ON CHIOS

The first quarter of 2019 has been intense on the island. Our program has almost constantly been at full capacity, reaching over 150 youth per week. The demand for our safe spaces and education programmes are constant and we keep trying to fill those gaps as much as possible.

With much worsened conditions in the camp due to the effects of winter and the absence of any free public transportation from the camp to the main town of Chios, teenagers and young adults living in Vial desperately need psychosocial support and infrastructures to support them.

FIGHTING FOR EDUCATION

As part of a strategy of inclusiveness and integration for our participants, we have been reviewing and reevaluating our education programme on Chios.

Our program has been operating at full capacity until the end of January in our High School facility located in Chios town. Since then, we have been working on a transition enabling us to collaborate with other educational actors for teenagers and young adults on the island in a shared space. We are expecting to be able to deliver our service in this new facility during the second quarter of the year the same way.

In the meantime, and to accompany this transition in the best possible way, we have been delivering part of our education programme in the Youth Centre, both through newly intergrated English classes and project based learning sessions.

Ultimately, our goal regarding education remains to advocate for all minors seeking asylum in Greece to be given access to formal education through the Greek public system. Our 15 to 18 year olds participants are still not provided pathways to integration and we will keep fighting for those changes to happen.

IN THE YOUTH CENTRE

All groups in the Youth Centre have been fully subscribed over the first three months of 2019. Participants' creativity and input has had a hugely positive impact in the delivery of this service. Groups were able to discuss the themes of music, drama, identity throughout January, February and March. Creating songs, movies, writing poems, reflecting on themselves, doing paintings and crafts, cooking dishes from different cultures, practicing sports, working on their English is a non exhaustive list of possibilities that our students have had this quarter. Their creativity in such a variety of aspects and topics has been impressive both for our staff and for themselves.



EMPOWERMENT

This year we wanted to put a stronger emphasis on empowerment. The aim of this project is that the community, participants and community volunteers take ownership of the Youth Centre space and start running its operations and initiatives in daily shifts, but also in the broader decision making process.



- **PAL, participant and leader:** As part of this push for more empowerment, PAL is a new programme started for our young adult participants. Under conditions of having a certain level of English comprehension, and after submission of an application, between 10 and 20 of them will be starting a training around various topics such as principles of youth work, child protection and boundaries, project planning, technology and non verbal communication, giving them all the tools and possibilities to get to a leader position within the Centre.
- **Community Volunteers:** In February, we started a recruitment campaign for volunteers living in Vial. These volunteers, over 22 years old, act as role models, teachers and youth workers. Our objective is to adopt progressively a more and more community-led model, similar to what we've been able to build on Samos in our youth project.

PROJECT PLUS

Given the worsened conditions in the camp of Vial and the absence of free transportation options, we decided to provide extra activities in town to our participants outside of their usual Youth Centre groups. Football, meditation, journalism, museums visits and many other activities have since been organised.

THE BANANA HOUSE SAMOS

A critical new education centre on Samos

Our decision to open a project on Samos in early 2019 came in response to the clear need for non-formal education and recreational activities for youth living in dire conditions on the island. We recognise the right of teenagers and youth to access quality education and safe spaces. However, we also recognise that for many, accessing education is not possible without first covering a range of basic needs. As such, The Banana House project offers much more than just lessons...

EDUCATION CENTRE

Our education centre is located in the city centre, set in what was formerly a kindergarten. This renovated space contains three dedicated classrooms, a kitchen, a chill out room, 2 showers, 3 toilets and a spacious garden.

The centre is run by a team of 8 international volunteers and over 40 volunteers from the refugee community, sharing responsibility for teaching, cooking, space management and outreach. We have capacity for up to 50 courses per week, operating on 4 - 8 week cycles. At full capacity, the centre can have up to 300 students registered.

THE BANANA KITCHEN

The kitchen is a vital part of the education centre, providing a hot meal to every student and volunteer each session. Our chef teams are all volunteers from the refugee community.

We work with local suppliers to order dry food items and, using a devolved financial system, our chefs have a daily budget to buy fresh ingredients. The meals cooked truly meet restaurant standards (many of our chefs have extensive experience in this field!) and draw on recipes from the Middle East and Africa. Food is enjoyed in The Banana House garden, under the shade of our orange trees.



DIGNIFYING SHOWERS

The Banana House is also equipped with two showers. Providing a safe and dignifying alternative to the exposed and overcrowded showers in the camp, every student can take one shower per week. We provide towels, soap and hairdryers, as well as ensuring a pleasant environment. We are working to provide sanitary products to female participants too.

THE NEST, SAMOS

We're excited to be partnering with The Pedagogical Institute of Los Angeles and to have opened a dedicated space for early childhood education. We've recently taken on a building and set up a play-space for 2 - 7 year olds, designed to develop and stretch young children to continue their education journeys, even whilst in the midst of a difficult period of transition.

WOMEN'S ONLY SUNDAYS

To support women to access The Banana House, we open as a women's only centre every Sunday. Following a structure that removes barriers to attending courses, this day is open to women of all ages, as well as their young children. Utilising a flexible timetable as well as ongoing meal options, women can come to the centre at a time which suits them.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

We've been working closely with volunteers from the refugee community and have so far welcomed over 60 individuals into our team. We provide weekly teacher training and host our 'Banana Parliament' for all volunteers every Monday. Through collective decision-making we respond to concerns and develop our services. We've also enjoyed a few team-building days at the Beach and in The Banana House between volunteers.

THE HALCYON DAYS CENTRE

An update from Athens

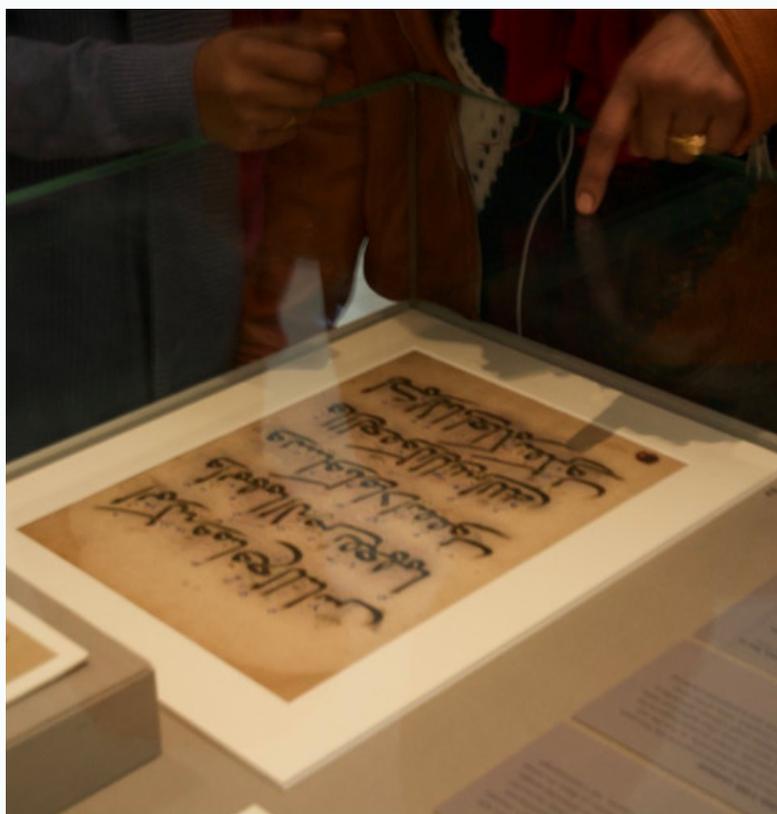
Since January, we registered 98 women for language classes. However, limited resources meant they were added to an ever-growing waiting list. In response, we sought to increase capacity by reshaping the centre's operating model. Rather than attending five days a week for two hours, our participants will enrol in eight-week courses to develop their language skills and participate in workshops offered by volunteers and members of the community to broaden their linguistic horizons and improve their chances of employment here in the capital.

DIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

At the Halcyon Days Project, we are proud of our diversity. Under our roof, we have women from over twenty nationalities who all contribute to creating a welcoming, diverse and engaging environment where women of any age or background can grow and learn together. The coordination team runs robust trainings on a regular basis to ensure that all volunteers maintain a professional standard of behaviour and safeguarding. Our volunteers each bring different interests and energies to the project and draw on diverse professional backgrounds to contribute their skills to create a vibrant, holistic learning environment.

LEARNING IN ATHENS

An archeology professor who volunteered with us in February used her connections to the Academy in Athens to gain entry for our students to the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art and the Acropolis Museum. Her local contacts and international donors fundraised for both trips, which we would not be able to offer otherwise to our students. We send a warm thank you to Dr. Lisa Trentin and all her supporters, for opening the doors of Greece's rich culture to its newest residents and allowing them a glimpse into the similarities between their own cultures and the historic foundations of Greece.

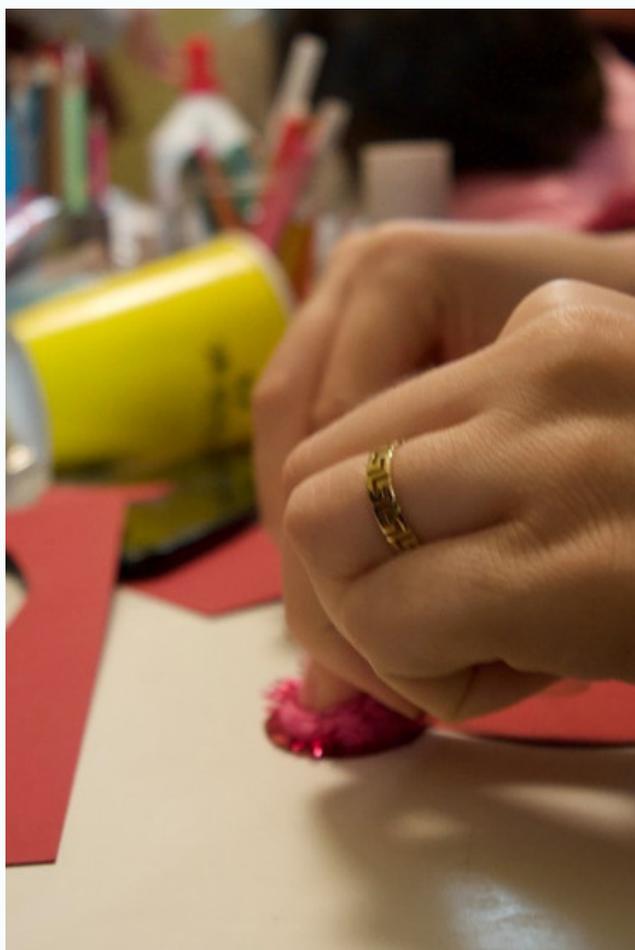


INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On the 8th March, we raised our banners with women all over the world. The women of the centre - participants and volunteers - joined together to celebrate the achievements of women all over the world and acknowledge the struggles they face daily. In each classroom at school we ran different creative workshops, giving an important social space and voice for participants to discuss concepts and experiences womanhood and its place in society.

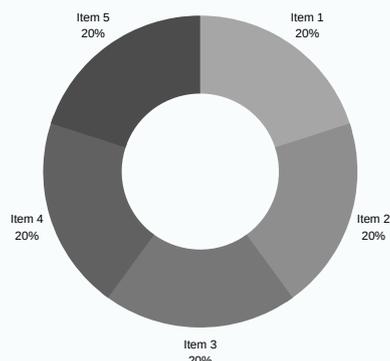
THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

We would like to thank our partners Action for Women for their collaboration, their tireless work for women's rights, and for offering legal and psychological support to the Halcyon Days participants.



96 NEW PARTICIPANTS REGISTERED
JANUARY - MARCH 2019

14 to 52 AGE RANGE OF NEW PARTICIPANTS
JANUARY - MARCH 2019



NATIONALITY BREAKDOWN

33% - Afghanistan
33% - Iran
11% - Syria
9% - Somalia
14% - Other

FUNDRAISING SPOTLIGHT

Efforts in solidarity with refugee education

IL TORNEO DELLA SOLIDARIETÀ, ITALY

On 5th January, the Women's Football team 'US Nomi ASD Femminile' in Trentino organised a football tournament in support of Action for Education. Over 11 local football teams took part in the fundraising and in total over €1900 was raised! Grazie mille!



DRINK FOR EDUCATION, SWITZERLAND

On Friday 8th March, in recognition of International Women's Day, bars and cafes in Switzerland raised awareness and money in support of women's education through the sale of coffees and drinks. Over €1600 was raised! Thank you!



AN EVENING OF OPERA, LONDON

On 15th February, Daniela Bailey organised an evening of opera in St Mary's Church, London. Featuring a high-quality line-up of professional singers, the evening raised just over £600! Thank you Daniela!



IN NUMBERS

Quantitative Analysis of our work

Since January, we've pushed hard to reach more people and provide wider services in Chios, Samos & Athens

Over the past 3 months, 12,332 pairs of feet have walked into our centres. We've registered more than 440 new students for language courses and cooked over 7,000 meals.

In the Youth Centre on Chios, over 100 young adults attended sessions twice a week. We've provided over 1200 hours of psychosocial support and welcomed participants from 13 countries.

In Athens, attendance has increased, amounting to 80 registrations and 1,800 hours of English taught. Around 120 women and girls attend classes every week with an average age of 28.

In Samos, since opening The Banana House in early March, we've worked with over 60 community volunteers, registered over 200 students, cooked more than 3,500 meals and started 25 courses in English, Greek, Music, Dance and Arabic.

Across Greece, we've worked with more than 80 volunteers, from over 24 countries, who speak 15 languages. Together, we've invested more than 25,650 volunteer hours into refugee education.

Across our projects, we spend just 2% of donations on administration (accountancy, bank fees, lawyers and insurance). The other 98% goes directly into running our projects for refugees in Greece.

12,332

visits to our centres in Chios, Samos & Athens (Jan-March 2019)



7,000

hot meals cooked (Jan-March 2019)



25,650

volunteer hours given (Jan-March 2019)



**ACTION FOR
EDUCATION**

SUPPORT OUR WORK?

www.actionforeducation.co.uk/donate

WE DON'T DO THIS ALONE

Thanks to our partners & supporters

As a 100% volunteer-run organisation, operating in 3 locations, we can only achieve what we do with your help.



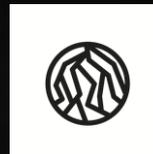
ACTION FOR WOMEN
Implementing Partner, Athens



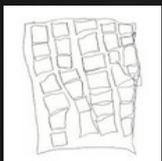
HUMANITY NOW
Funding Partner



PRISM THE GIFT FUND
AFE UK's Collective Fund Administrator



GLOCAL ROOTS
Implementing Partner, Samos



THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES
Implementing Partner, Samos



VEREIN FAIR
Major Donor



HELP REFUGEES
Funding Partner



INDIGO VOLUNTEERS
Recruitment Partner



DONATE 4 REFUGEES
Funding Partner



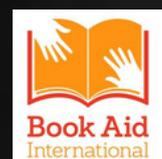
NADA NORD
Major Donor



BE AWARE AND SHARE
Funding Partner



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
Major Donor



BOOK AID
Education Partner



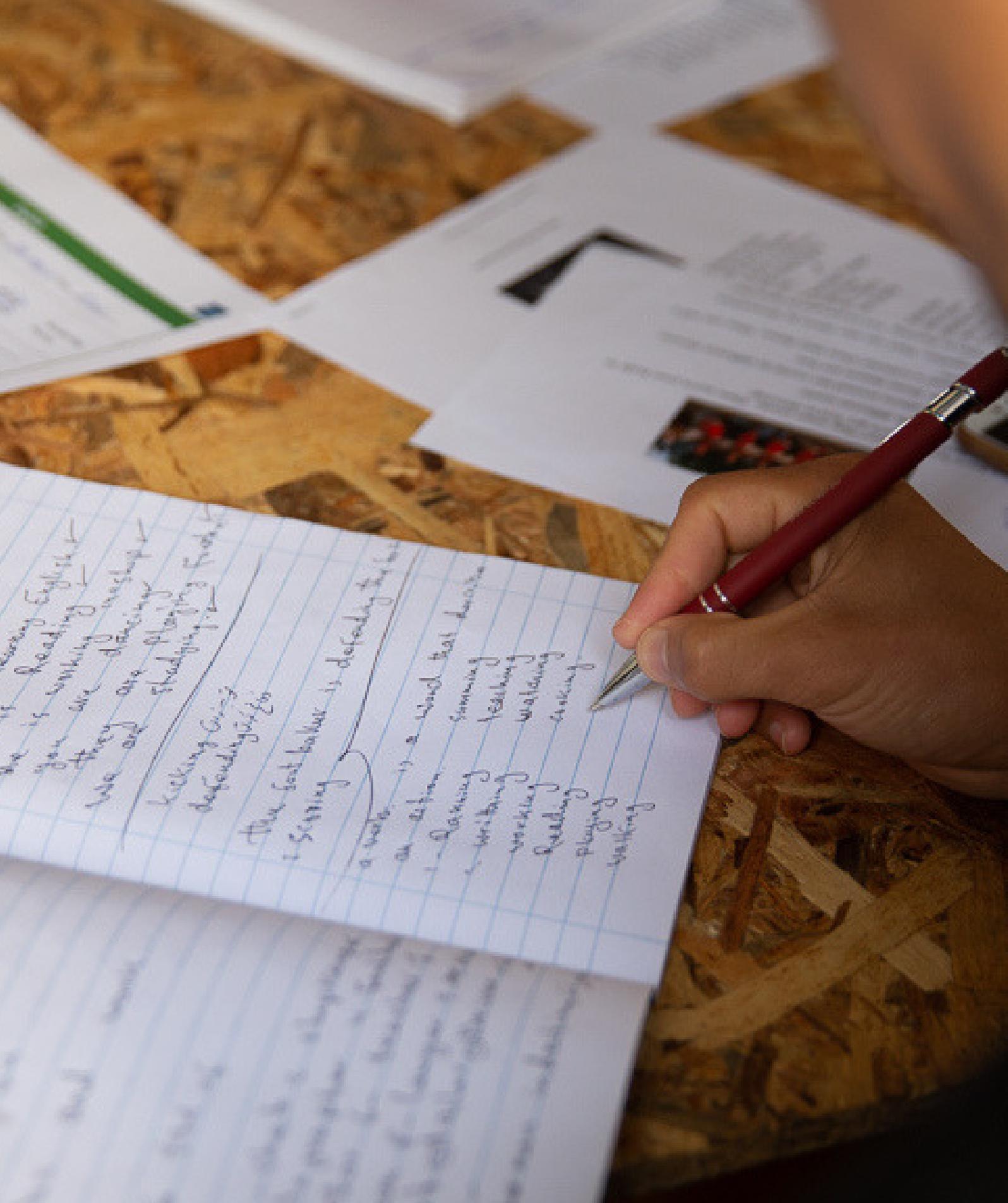
TRUE CHANGE GLOBAL FUND
Major Donor



ONE STOP ENGLISH
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Acknowledgements:

Lutz Sedelmayr
Ayla Estreich
Jasmine Husseini
Sophia Agathocleous
Phoebe Blades
Antoine Guitin
Jacob Warn
Solange Wuersten
Massimiliana Odorizzi

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Action for Education is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, registered charity 1099682 and a registered non-profit in Greece (no. 997220609)

