The Third Quarter: A Welcome

Dear supporters,

The days shorten and the heat that scorched the earth over the long summer gives way to fresher winds and cooler nights. Such is the season as we mark the third quarter of 2018 in Greece.

Welcome to this quarterly report and to its overview of AFE’s continuing fight for the rights to education and safe spaces for children, youth and women in Greece.

Over these three months, social and political developments have forced us to stay relevant, to seek out vulnerable and marginalised groups, and work ever closer the community for whom we are here. On the ground, this has meant higher numbers than ever, greater challenges, but importantly new opportunities and renewed motivation to act with determination and professionalism to respond to emerging needs swiftly.

Our activities on Chios have seen our volunteer numbers swelled with teachers and youth workers from the camp community. These individuals have brought fresh perspectives, knowledge and passion to our work. We’ve pushed for greater NGO collaboration and hosted events and meetings designed to bring together actors and individuals. We’ve established firmer and deeper relationships with partner projects and organisations to diversify and deepen our services. Finally, we’ve invested time and effort into future education projects to ensure relevance and reach.

Meanwhile, across the Aegean, we’ve successfully commenced operations in Athens. Along with Action for Women, the Halcyon Days Project has begun, providing language and livelihood support to female refugees in the Greek capital.

As ever, we remain truly thankful for your generosity and support. This continued support is the driving force that enables us to continue, to grow and to keep fighting for education.

Best wishes,
The Action For Education Coordination Team
Situation on the Island

Summary

The Aegean islands have made a return to the news in recent months, though the focus has largely centred on the island of Lesvos. Reports of child suicide and abuse, sanitation scandals and legal junctures, and eyewitness accounts of the abysmal conditions as Moria Camp’s population surpassed 10,000 have all forced the government, public and news organisation to take note of, and renewed action towards, a persisting disgrace.

But just 56 miles south, many of the issues being decried in Lesvos resonate all too familiarly with NGOs and residents on Chios. There has been shocking stasis in the populations on Chios over the months, with very little movement to the mainland. Boat arrivals have soared, meaning ever greater overcrowding in Vial camp and ever greater strain on the resources and services available to asylum seekers.

As of October 4th, there were over 2500 asylum seekers and refugees present on Chios, with over 2300 living in Vial. The expansion area of the camp is full and hundreds have been left to construct temporary shelter from sun and rain using tarpaulin or small tents ill-suited for long-term use.

Whilst the weather has been temperate of late, this protracted state of affairs is set to deteriorate considerably as winter comes. Without a warm place to go, our spaces will become all the more necessary over the coming weeks.

In more positive news, the Ministry of Education has finally begun classes for children up to 14 at local schools. The build-up to these classes was riddled with complications, but despite hostile and vocal parents’ groups who opposed its implementation, Heads of Schools and municipal officers have ensured a successful, if delayed, start.

91
Number of boats arrived to Chios so far in 2018

3300
Number of asylum seekers arrived to Chios (January - October 2018)
Working Together for Education
Collaborations and Partnerships

The last months have witnessed far closer collaborations with teachers and volunteers from the community in Vial, as well as with other NGOs on Chios.

- **Trainings for Students and Volunteers** — Many have benefitted over the past months from trainings in a variety of areas provided by external actors, including: Drugs and Alcohol awareness by SMH, Mindfulness and Relaxation Therapy sessions, and Self-Defence Therapeutic Karate by El Halev.

- **Vial’s Got Talent Show** — To mark the end of our talent-themed month in the Youth Centre, we hosted a talent show in Vial for the community. Performances comprised rap, guitar, song and dance, and participants were aged 6 to 60!

- **High School Excursions with Alios Tours** — Following the success of previous excursions as a means of leaving behind the contexts of the camp and growing closer together as a group, we ran excursions with the support of Alios Tours for all our High School students. The tours began with a visit to Olympi Caves, followed by a tour of Mesta and a Greek coffee, followed with a swim and picnic dinner on the beautiful Agia Dama Beach in the South.

- **The Athena Women's Centre** — We continue to work closely with Action for Women's centre on Chios, providing ESL teachers for their women's only space and hosting events for women only, such as a recent all-female Talent Show in our Youth Centre.

- **Inter-NGO Litter Picking Event** — For World Clean-Up Day in September, AFE organised a litter pick in the areas surrounding Vial. Over 80 volunteers, children and adults helped pick up more than 200 bags of rubbish! A big thank you to all the organisations who supported the event!

- **Book Aid International** — We’re delighted that Book Aid International have supported us again with a delivery of much-needed English books to develop our teaching and ESL programmes here.

- **Sky School** — In September students completed Sky School’s 'Peace-building in your community' course.
New Programmes and Projects

An Update from the High School

**Goodbye Group A! (12 - 14 year olds)**

There has finally been progress when it comes to state-run education for asylum seekers living in Vial and since October children up to the age of 14 can register for afternoon classes at local schools. In order not to operate parallel non-formal schooling, we said goodbye to Group A, known to many former volunteers as V3, S3 and SV3.

A major theme of the recent UNHCR Refugee Education report [1] laid heavy emphasis on the responsibility of actors not to run parallel and competing education programmes, and we remain committed to upholding this principle.

Nevertheless, as demand for our 15 - 22 year olds has never been higher, a new Group A for 15 - 22 year olds began in the middle of October, and we’ve since welcomed 30 new students into the school.

**VOLUNTEERS**

Throughout August, September and October we’ve continued to recruit and support teachers from the communities of Vial. Working alongside these teachers, as native speakers of Arabic, French and Farsi, has strengthened our communication channels with students, allowing more accurate and appropriate means of addressing student needs.

At the same time, these community teachers are powerful role models for our students, who aspire to join our volunteer team in a similar capacity. As of September, we have 10 volunteers from the community of Vial working alongside us, each volunteering between 8 and 20 hours a week.

**PROJECTS**

With limitless enthusiasm students and volunteers have delivered projects that continue to enthuse and inspire those who attend our school. There have been an increase in projects delivered by students for their peers, focusing on technology skills and language learning. We’ve also enjoyed many music classes offered by more advanced student musicians to beginners.

A safe space for teenagers and young adults
An Update from the Youth Centre

Our Youth Centre continues to provide a safe space in the city centre for 14-22 year olds. This quarter we have run many fun and exciting projects.

FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES

Gym
We have a gym room where participants are able to stay active and fit. They can learn new exercises routines without judgement and we have also been running yoga sessions to practice mindfulness as well as building strength and flexibility.

Jewellery
Making jewellery is a creative outlet for our participants where they can make something in a relaxed atmosphere.

Baking
Our participants like to be able to share their culture with each other and making dessert for each other is one.

Museum trips
The location of the Youth Centre in the city means it is walking distance from a number of important cultural institutions, such as the Chios Maritime Museum and the Koraes Library. We have been on trips with all the Youth Centre groups to learn more about the culture and history of the island.

TOPICS OF THE MONTH

August
Our first topic this quarter was talent, giving the participants an opportunity to showcase all their different skills and talents. To finish the month, we put on a Talent Show on the football pitch at Vial where we had over 50 people perform!

September
In September our topic was emotions. We explored all types of emotions including happiness, sadness and anger and how to deal with these feelings. These discussions highlighted just how important the safe space of the Youth Centre is for our participants.

October
We finished this quarter with the theme of love. This led to many different project ideas, including painting a love mural on the wall of the Youth Centre and a love photography project around Chios.
Women's Got Talent
An all-female show at the Youth Centre

"AN ATMOSPHERE OF SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP"

On 14th October at the Youth Centre we put on a women-only talent show, where around 70 people attended one Sunday to join in the celebrations. With our women’s youth group, we decided to host a show where they could invite their friends and family to watch them perform. They spent the weeks before planning the acts, practicing together, and making posters and decorations for the show.

On the day, the participants split into four groups to prepare, with different teams in charge of decorating the space, preparing food for the guests, hair and makeup, and hosting.

Performances varied from Ed Sheeran’s ‘Shape of You’ mashed up with Suliman Khan’s ‘Laili Jan’ from Afghanistan, accompanied by ukulele. There was group dancing to Syrian and Iraqi bangers such as ‘Ta’al’, and a grand finale of singing, dancing, and drumming to Shakira’s ‘Waka Waka’ by the whole group.

The Youth Centre participants all proudly took control of the event, and worked as a team to put on the best possible show for their friends and family. By the end, the show became one big party with everyone up dancing and singing together. It was the atmosphere of support and friendship that really stood out, and we left feeling uplifted.
The Halcyon Days Project
A new all-women learning centre in Athens

A sanctuary for learning that builds social connections and empowers women to develop essential skills towards further education and jobs.

In partnership with Action for Women, we opened the doors to the Halcyon Days All-Women Learning Centre for the first time at the beginning of August for the start of our pilot month. During these four weeks we invited participants to informal focus groups to better understand the demand and interests of potential students. The feedback was clear; all 20 women and girls in our initial groups wanted to learn English and to be able to come 5 days per week; on top of this people wanted the option of additional lessons in Greek and Computer skills, though at a lower frequency. From this feedback we built our programme and since that first week of August we have been operating English classes five days per week and, since September, Greek and Computer classes twice per week.

During August and September we welcomed 56 students for their first classes and a total of 10 children in the child-friendly space. The majority of our students are at an introduction or A1 level but through the first two months we have already had students progress from A1 to A2 levels in English. In August we operated on a basic schedule whilst we observed the demand and interest of students and since then have had to twice extend our schedule to keep up with the number of new registrations. We now have classes from 9-5, each 2 hours back-to-back and have a growing waiting list.

Our highest daily attendance in our first two months was 42 and we are expecting more and more women and girls each day as we open more classes and extend into Saturday activities through Autumn.
Our quarter in numbers
Summary of Quantitative Data

Over the past 3 months we have registered a total of **190 new participants** across our High School and Youth Centre in Chios.

**REGISTRATION**

Over the past 3 months we have registered a total of **190 new participants** across both institutions and age groups. Alongside our standard education programme, we’ve maximised the hours available to beneficiaries through implementation of co-delivered educational programmes and additional events.

New registrations for the High School and Youth Centre came from over **15 nationalities**. The major countries of origin remain: Syria (32%), Iraq (20%) and Afghanistan (15%).

In this quarter, **52%** of newly registered students were 14 - 17 years old and **48%** were 18 - 22. This reflects our average since August 2017.

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**7846**
visits to the High School and Youth Centre (July - September 2018)

**31,384**
hours of education provided to asylum seekers on Chios (July - September 2018)
We continue to thank our partners for the valuable support they provide. If you would like to discuss a possible partnership with us, please email our team.