

Report on Jafra Team in Greece May 19, 2016

Beginning Our Work

Jafra team in Greece, Refugees to Refugees, is a group of youth volunteers, who escaped the war in Syria and found ourselves stuck in Idomeni Camp on the Macedonian/Greek border. Since that time we found that we needed to work, as there are no organizations working with children.

The initiative to begin our work with our fellow refugees started after the gathering of 6 persons who have volunteered with several civil society organizations inside Syria, especially Jafra Foundation. The team has various experiences, most importantly working with children, civil society based trainings and work, and community and peacebuilding experience.

Due to the absence of any organization providing psychosocial or educational support for children inside Idomeni Camp, we set a meeting on April 10, 2016 in order to establish an organized working mechanism addressing the problems children face and the programs that we are able to implement to address those problems.

On April 12th, the team started constructing a space for conducting psychosocial and educational activities by placing simple tarps on wooden pillars. The initiative started with preliminary recreational activities with 56 children from different ages in attendance. Later, the children who wanted to participate in the activities increased. At the same time, the team began developing new ideas and activities to grow and expand our work. Fortunately, the team succeeded in receiving humble personal support with materials and stationery from the team's volunteers, some organizational workers and various journalists.

During this period, the number of children participating in the daily activities increased from 56 to 130 children.

The living situation inside Idomeni Camp started to deteriorate and many families, as a result, moved out of the camp into another camp, after their firm belief that the borders to Europe will not open.

Lakadokia Camp

Educational and Psychosocial Support for Children

The majority of the children that were participating in the team's activities moved out of the camp with their families into Lakadokia Camp, which is a camp for families only.

The Jafra team later found that there are no organizations working inside the camp, except UNHCR, whose operations are limited to registering newly arrived refugees.

After discussing our initiative and project with UNHCR, the team was allowed to leave Idomeni Camp to work in Lakadokia Camp.

Despite the fact that Lakadokia Camp can accommodate 1,000 refugees, UNHCR has only registered 851 refugees.

Lakadokia Camp refugees include 309 children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old, and another 255 children under 5 years. This means that more than half the population inside the Camp is under the age of 17 years old.

Within Jafra team's programming, children are separated according to age. Each age category has special programming including psychosocial and educational support, drawing, puppet making, and music, in addition to recreational and sport activities.

Waste Collection and Cleaning Campaign Activities

After a few days of our arrival Lakadokia Camp, the team noticed a need for waste management activities since garbage was scattered across the camp, and toilets and showers required cleaning. This was a priority as it can directly affect the residents' health, especially for children. The Jafra team decided to establish a cleaning team. The majority of the residents inside the camp welcomed the decision.

Since its work began, the Jafra team has daily received persons from amongst the refugee residents who want to volunteer to work with the team.

In the present time, the team consists of **14 volunteers** including those who have past experience in voluntary work and working with civil society and community based organizations.

The team has assigned 6 volunteers who have previous experience in working with children to specialize in conducting the psychosocial and educational support sessions. The team has a set schedule for the daily sessions. Sessions are conducted daily, except for Sundays.

Team Structure and Volunteers

There is a coordinator for the children's team.

The team is divided as follows:

- Team working with children of 6-8 years old.
- Team working with children from 9-13 years old.

The rest of the team is divided as follows:

- Four volunteers are the logistics team.
- Volunteer responsible for the financial issues and all issues related to equipment, materials and team's daily coordination.
- Volunteer who is the team administrative whose responsible for coordinating with other organizations.

The Jafra cleaning team consists of 14 volunteers conduct cleaning activities three days weekly.

The Jafra volunteer team has received a huge and welcomed consent from the refugees residing in Lakadokia Camp. One piece of feedback received **expressed the significance of a team of refugees working with refugees rather than any other organization due to their knowledge and experience in the same issues that refugees facing.**

The prime aim of the Jafra team is to employ and engage refugees in caring for their own community inside the camp. Furthermore, the aim of the team is *to prove also that the refugees are capable of organizing their temporary settlement and have the right to develop themselves and express their voices to others during their residency inside the camp.*

Other Ongoing and Proposed Activities

The Jafra Refugees to Refugees team regrets the dreadful fact that if refugees remain in tents, they will be tortured with thoughts of their difficult past, distant future and remnants of war itself. The team understands that the many cases of violence within families are often times the result of *absence of purpose*.

This fact compelled the Jafra Refugees to Refugees team to establish a community center for daily conversations and communication amongst the camp's residents. Those persons who are taking their daily anger out on their family were prioritized to be engaged in rehabilitating the

center *in order to use their energy to provide purpose for their community*. This community space is equipped with handmade wooden benches and tables from simple materials, made by those same persons. The team attempted to set a plan for continuing the work with the same persons. The community center will offer tea, and screen films using a projector.

The Jafra team has also received new comers to the camp, offering UNHCR staff assistance with translation for new families. The team aims to set up an information point for 12 hours daily to provide information to new families, and assist families in finding or reaching out to loved ones, providing them with information about what services are available inside the camp, and to notify families if distributions are to take place (including registration for distributions).

The team started to establish an embroidery project using the simplest methods and supplies available since it requires simple tools: thread, needles and canvas. This project will gather the women inside the camp in order for them to be able to communicate and get to know each other. The Jafra team plans also to conduct hygiene and safety awareness campaigns at the same time. Suggestions for the final embroidery product include is preparation for an event where the products can be exhibited so that anyone has an option to buy a product and donate to some woman or to the team in order to ensure the sustainability of the project.

All the implemented work, including the activities, sessions, information and community center, constructing tables and benches, equipping the place, preparing tea, awareness and cleaning campaigns, require hard and difficult work. **The team aims to engage the refugees in the camp in implementing the work as persons who will benefit and contribute to their new community.**

Facebook Page: Jafra Team in Greece – Refugees to Refugees

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