

Final Report
on the Emergency Response Program
funded by the Akelius Foundation, 2016-2022



Photo by Giorgos Moutafis, Kara Tepe Camp 2021

Overall

Greece has been in the international spotlight for over a decade as it was hit by multiple-level crises (ie. financial, humanitarian, health, and political), which left an immense footprint in the social context and indicated a challenging future ahead. Despite the devastating financial recession, the Greek nation had to face and deal also with a profound humanitarian emergency, the refugee influx beginning in late 2015.

As anticipated, one of the most affected parties has once again been children, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds who require immediate support to grow with safety and care in an encouraging and appropriate environment. To respond to this immense crisis, many local and international stakeholders reached the country and established services on a national scale, trying to fill the gap of the demanding and acute needs of individuals fleeing war and poverty.

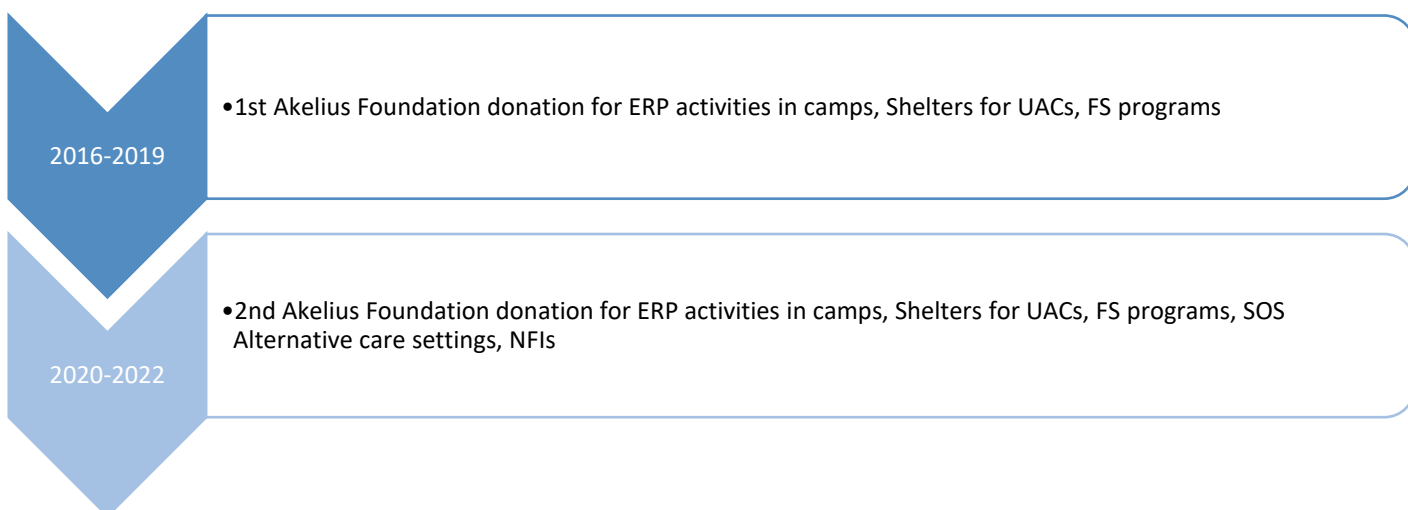
SOS Children's Villages Greece, could not be uninvolved in such a child welfare and humanitarian crisis and through services that were specifically assessed and designed to meet **a)** the real needs of beneficiaries, **b)** respond in actual time and offering support in a wide range of services, and **c)** avoid as much as possible potential overlapping in services, and created a wide range of cognitive, behavioral, emotional and educational level services towards its beneficiaries.

The Organization's scale of support included the operation and provision of quality services in different, and many times very challenging, settings, according to the needs of vulnerable individuals. Hence, SOS Children's Villages Greece expanded its actions in:

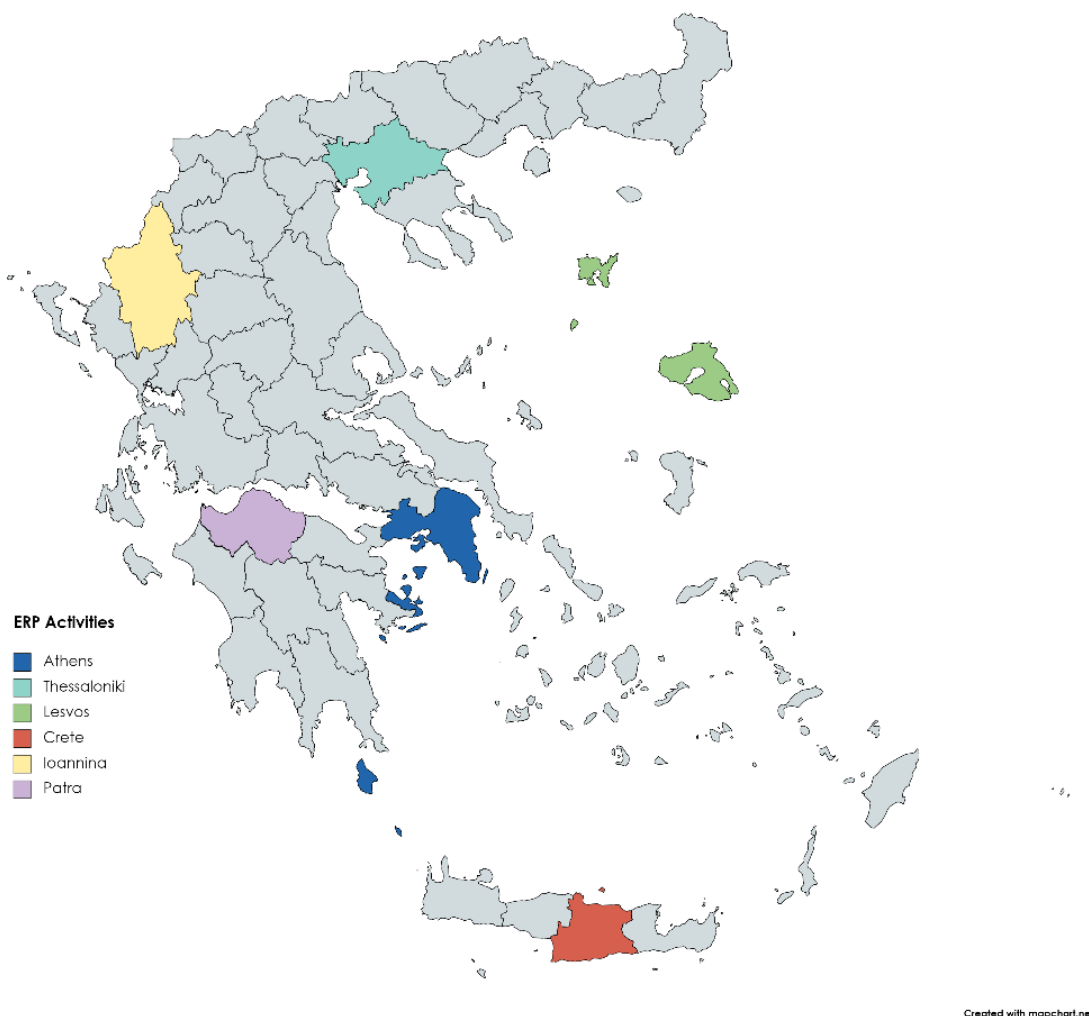
- Reception and Identification Centers (camps),
- Shelters for Unaccompanied Children,
- Family Strengthening Programs, and
- Alternative Care Settings (SOS Villages & Foster Care)

All of the provided actions and support were to a large extent funded by the generous and long-term support of Akelius Foundation. The support has, in addition to meeting the direct acute needs, made it possible for vulnerable individuals to regain their dignity and lost childhood, through providing families and individuals with tools that promoted their resilience, self-sufficiency, the opportunity to become adequately socially and educationally developed in order to enter smoothly into the European community, become self-empowered and strengthen the family cohesion which has been tremendously shaken for a prolonged time, since 2016.

Timeline of the Akelius Foundation support



Areas of intervention 2016-2022



PROVISION OF SUPPORT

Phase 1: Emergency Response Program, 2016-2019

In early 2016, the ERP team established an assessment and intervention plan, by identifying the open needs of the population at the time. As the influx reached an enormous rate of **338.665 new arrivals** during the timeframe between the years 2016 and 2019, the demands for the provision of services were extremely high. At that time, the officially registered refugee individuals that reached Greece either by land or sea were reaching approximately 1.000.000 souls.

The majority of individuals lived in camps in large cities such as Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Serres, and Crete under challenging conditions, lacking basic and continuous access to crucial services such as psychosocial support, legal support, education, and stress-relief activities, in addition to essential NFIs (Non-Food items), including hygiene packages, food, clothes, baby formula, and diapers, for a significant prolonged amount of time.

These gaps were early identified by the Organization in 2016, and the establishment of prompt local collaborations with all public authorities (i.e. Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Ministry of Education, local Municipalities, local schools, and other operating stakeholders), was the first step in the creation of the wide net of services that were provided on a national level for over a period of five years.

Hence, during the years 2016-2019, SOS teams were active in the **camp**s of Eleonas and Schisto in the region of Attica, in Diavata and Limani in Thessaloniki, as well as in KaraTepe on Lesbos island. Services included:

- Operation of non-formal remedial educational and preparatory classes,
- Operation of non-formal Kindergarten
- Greek, English, and German language classes
- Psychosocial support
- Special education
- Recreational and stress relief activities
- Sports activities

All classes have been offered by trained educators and cultural mediators in small classes that were adapted to the learning stage of the beneficiaries, to their developmental needs, and focused on specific requirements to better serve the demands of children and families.

Additionally, since 2016, the Akelius Foundation has supported the operation of **Shelters for Unaccompanied children** that were specifically established to meet the rising needs of the approximately **5.500 minors** that were present in Greece. Under the services that were provided to young boys, single underaged mothers, and adolescent girls, the Organization could support up to 300 children in total, for a life span of three years. Among the provided services that were available to beneficiaries were:

- Accommodation and provision of nutritious meals
- Psychological support in single and group empowerment sessions
- Legal aid
- Pedagogical services
- Life skill activities
- Social assistance
- Educational classes in Greek, English, German
- PC Literacy
- Recreational, stress-relief, and self-empowerment activities
- Sports
- Hobbies such as painting, dancing, and music classes
- Leisure activities
- Community engagement

Again, all services that have been provided to children without parental care traveling alone, have been offered by qualified mental health and pedagogical professionals trained in child safeguarding principles, cultural aspects, and trauma-related support. The assistance of cultural mediators in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and French, was significantly helpful in the minimization of the cultural gap, the empowerment of trust, and mutual collaboration. Additionally, the monthly supervisory support to the interdisciplinary team was a fundamental aspect of the provision of high-quality services to beneficiaries.

Reaching the end of 2019, the refugee scene has changed a lot since the beginning of the crisis in late 2015. By then, a minimization of **-91%** in new yearly arrivals has been recorded according to official data issued by the UNHCR¹. This was partially occurring due to the termination of the war in Syria and the evacuation of the nearby cities in the previous

¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

times. Additionally, children on the move being unaccompanied has also significantly dropped in new arrivals in comparison to the previous figures.

Greece has always been considered a transit country for most of the population. Their main aim was to move to other European countries (mainly Germany, Sweden, France, and the UK) after having been recognized in Greece with refugee status. As this was extremely time-consuming and legal asylum procedures endured an extreme delay in issuing a decision, the despair led many individuals to cross pass Europe illegally and with highly dangerous means.

SOS Children's Villages Greece has closely monitored all local and international development regarding this humanitarian crisis and has, with flexibility, shifted and reformed its provided services accordingly to meet the needs. Thus, in late 2019, due to the changes in the asylum procedures and the mobility of the population from the islands to the mainland and particularly to largely inhabited cities, such as Athens and Thessaloniki, the need for providing social integration and self-empowerment activities was noteworthy.

The first step the Organization took, was the **integration of refugee children** that have been accommodated in SOS Shelters, after arriving in Europe back in 2016, into the national family care programs. Initially, 5 children have been transferred into the SOS Children's Villages in Vari (Athens) entering the regular SOS Homes with SOS Mothers while four adolescents were accepted in the semi-independent living program of the Youth House in Athens. This was a pioneering decision as never before had refugee or migrant children been integrated into long-term programs in the country. Gradually, up to 15 children with a refugee background, have been supported through the alternative care programs of SOS. This also led to the first-ever placement of refugee children in foster care families, following all necessary governmental procedures. By the end of the Akelius Founding in December 2022, a total of 10 children have been placed in a new supporting family in Greece.

The second step was the expansion of **Family Strengthening Programs** in late 2019 to the refugee population as part of their social integration and holistic family support. Through tailor-made assessments and adaptations, services have been offered in primarily two different locations in Greece (Athens and Thessaloniki), including the following activities:

- Psychosocial support and self-growth empowerment for children and parents
- Psychotherapeutic intervention and training on resilience building, stress relief activities, and healthy coping strategies for children
- Systematic parental counseling and development of parental skills
- Non-formal remedial educational and preparatory classes
- Greek, English, and German language classes
- Special education
- Specialized services such as Speech therapy and Occupational therapy
- Recreational and stress-relief activities for children
- Community-based activities

Phase 2: Response for children and families in migration in Greece, 2020-2022

Based on the huge request for services in the previous years and following a thorough assessment of the refugee situation in a local state, SOS Children's Villages Greece continued and focused the years 2020-2022, mainly on the continuation of the provision of services through the Family Strengthening programs.

Significant emphasis has been given to education, not only in a learning and developmental approach but also as a stress-relief and psychosocial support intervention, especially in times when children have faced another profound and long-term humanitarian crisis - the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, to ensure the right to education for refugee and migrant children, SOS Children's Villages Greece had once again to reshape and adapt an appropriate educational scheme offered to its beneficiaries, taking into account the specific needs, restrictions, health-care policies, locations, and circumstances, despite the extreme time pressure.

Therefore, a further **expansion** of locations and services has been made, including the regions of Ioannina, Patras, and Crete. A primary effort has been given apart from the educational development, also to more activities towards a smooth integration into the European culture, to the self-empowerment of women and young person employability, in addition to their resilience building aiming at the strengthening of family cohesion and minimizing the risk of separation.

So, the updated set of services included the following services:

- Psychosocial support and self-growth empowerment for children and parents
- Psychotherapeutic intervention and training on resilience building, stress relief activities, and healthy coping strategies for children
- Systematic parental counseling and development of parental skills
- Non-formal remedial educational and preparatory classes
- Non-formal Kindergarten
- Greek, English, and German language classes
- Special education
- Specialized services such as Speech therapy and Occupational therapy
- Recreational and stress-relief activities for children
- Art workshops
- Women Empowerment workshops
- Community-based activities

As part of the continuous collaborations and adaptations of services during the Covid-19 era, with the beginning of the new academic year (2020-2021), the Greek public educational system lacked the readiness required to meet and follow all necessary revisions for embedding distance learning as a formal form of teaching, leaving many children out of the schooling process.

Thus, the Special Secretary for the Protection of the Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUM) of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, requested SOS Children's Villages' collaboration in a joint effort to secure equal access for all children to the right to education, and a special child support program was created as a response. Unaccompanied children accommodated in Shelters on a national level have been enrolled and supported since November 2020 and offered a series of non-formal and remedial educational lessons that are provided in **distance learning** modus. Courses have been specifically designed based on the needs and the assessment of each child and the creation of a tailor-made support plan, including:

- Remedial support
- Synchronous and asynchronous educational material
- Greek, English, and German lessons
- Math and Physics
- Digital Skills training
- Escape Room and leisure online activities
- Recreational and movement-based activities
- Employment: Job - Academic Orientation

- Visual arts, Music, Photography, and Cultural Education classes

With this joint project, more than **250 children** have been engaged and supported and has been able to continue their educational development, and remained safe and active during Covid-19. In cases where Shelters lacked the required technological means, SOS Children's Villages Greece provided all necessary equipment to beneficiaries means (ie. laptops, tablets, and data).

Another pioneer service that was established and offered as part of the acknowledged presence of SOS CV Greece in the Emergency Response field, was **capacity building** that was launched after the requests of local stakeholders and public authorities for support and training of professionals working directly with the refugee and migrant population.

Since November 2020, capacity building trainings have been launched addressing MHPSS-workers, Educators, Caretakers, Cultural Mediators, Social workers, and Lawyers supporting unaccompanied children in different NGOs, after the request of the Ministry of Migration. As a scale-up, capacity-building trainings have also been offered to professionals and educators in public schools on a national level. All capacity building trainings included thematic as:

- MHPSS and Child Protection policies
- Child safeguarding policies and methods
- Children's development methodologies
- Crisis-management
- Professional empowerment
- Professional skill development
- Cultural differentiation and support
- Resilience building of professionals
- Positive communication and problem resolutions
- Safeguarding policies and professional ethics
- Follow-up support
- Supervision

Financial summary 2020-2022

	Total costs (SEK)	Transferred 2020	Transferred 2021	Budget 2022	Transferred 2022
ER Greece – July 2020-July 2022	21 053 000	9 536 565	4 280 000	7 236 435	7 236 435
Total	21 053 000	9 536 565	4 280 000	7 236 435	7 236 435

Overview of the year 2022

SOS Emergency Response program, despite the upcoming closure of the refugee programs at the end of 2022 due to lack of funding, operated in different locations of Greece throughout the year, covering a wide range of services that focus on psycho-social and educational empowerment and community-based activities as part of integrational support and capacity building of professionals to both children and families living in camps or urban areas through its Family Strengthening programs (FS).

FS programs in Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Patras, and Crete continued their operation and provision of support throughout 2022 to refugee and migrant children and parents through specialized intervention plans that aim at keeping families connected and empowered. Through the blending of both local and refugee populations, beneficiaries

interacted in shared activities such as workshops, focusing on the development of their life skill training, self-empowerment, and personal growth, and facilitating the gradual social integration into the Greek reality, apart from their educational development and psychosocial support.

The Women Empowerment Workshops in Athens and Thessaloniki continued to provide services to the teams that were formed during this year and the sewing teacher made sure that all women participating acquired a comprehensive knowledge of dressmaking and are now able to become self-sufficient through their knowledge.

Also, supplementary vocational skills classes in Greek, English, and PC Literacy have continued in Athens, Ioannina, and Patras providing support to parents who wish both to strengthen their educational level, and also become more active assistance to their children in their educational development. Until now, this has been specifically beneficiary also towards the interpersonal relationship bonding between parents and children and towards the additional empowerment of self-esteem for participants.

In regards to the continuation of the collaboration with the Special Secretariat for Unaccompanied Minors, during 2022, children residing in Shelters or SIL (Semi-Independent Living schemes) operated by several Organizations, maintained their active participation in the specifically designed distance learning program. However, this year, children's attendance tended to be quite unpredicted due to the major relocation schemes, transfers of children to other European countries, or other accommodation schemes, following the postponement of operations of many local NGOs due to lack of funding and beneficiaries.

Finally, families continued to be supported through the provision of food and NFIs as part of the Organization's collaborations with local stakeholders as part of the holistic assistance, with necessary materials including educational supplies, personal hygiene packages, and everyday materials for the entire family throughout the reporting period.

Statistics for 2022

Type of Beneficiaries (1/1/2022 – 31/12/2022)	No of Beneficiaries
Total number of children beneficiaries (1/1/2022-31/12/2022)	719
Children supported by FS programs	454
Distance learning for Unaccompanied Children	255
Children accommodated in National Programs	10
Total number of adult beneficiaries (1/1/2022-31/12/2022)	287
Number of parents supported by FS programs	247
Women empowerment workshops	10
Capacity building of professionals	30
The total number of families supported (1/1/2022-31/12/2022)	507
Families supported by FS programs (Food & NFIs)	195
Families supported through collaborations with other NGOs	312
Total number of beneficiaries	1.006

Total number of families	507
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***Note:** Please mind that the above numbers reflect the population supported through the Akelius Foundation

Good Practices for 2022

- Continuous assessment and adaptation of services to meet beneficiaries' needs.
- Individual support provided to students that needed extra help and guidance with their classes and/or their homework for public school.
- Expansion of new activities based on open needs.
- A special focus has been given to the improvement of the writing skills of the students, a neglected subject due to distance learning.
- Atypical mentoring guidance from women to women participating in the Women Empowerment Workshops, in assisting them towards self-empowerment and independence.
- Integration of interactive and playful methods of learning in the educational programming, also facilitated the SOS-CV Educator's capacity to follow up with their student's progress and overall development, whereas drop-out rates scored low.
- Facilitation of Covid-19 testing for beneficiaries through referrals to public health authorities
- Support and referral of a refugee family of beneficiary children of the Educational Center of Crete to a specialized lawyer for filing an objection to a deportation decision.
- The establishment of collaboration with a local basketball team in Patras gave free access to the training programs for the center's beneficiaries. Additionally, tickets for the matches were offered to the beneficiaries' families.
- Preparation of several students for the English language Certification exams and final school exams
- Creation of many seasonal recreational activities for children and parents.
- Communication of several children that have left Greece after being granted asylum with their educators to catch up and thank them for their support.
- Informing the beneficiaries on the gradual closing of the services and referring them to other structures that can provide corresponding support.

Challenges for 2022

- Mobility of population with relocations of families created open spots in educational classes and other activities during the reporting period.
- The mandatory Covid-19 regulations that remained till May 2022 created feelings of frustration and were also time-consuming in terms of the smooth operation of classes and other activities
- Cultural peculiarities that make it difficult for people to participate in activities (husbands refusing to allow their wives to participate in sewing workshops, difficulty communicating feelings and weaknesses, etc.)
- Several children losing interest in putting an effort into school as they are preparing to leave the country as asylum procedures have been intensified
- Difficulty with the impending closure of the program by professionals and beneficiaries due to the relationships built between professionals, children, and their families at the SOS CV centers

Overall Statistics (2016-2022)

Phase 1 (2015-2019) total beneficiaries	158.902
children	119.612
adults	39.290

Phase 2 (2020-2022) total beneficiaries	14.074*
children	8.780
adults	5.294
Total beneficiaries supported by the Akelius Foundation	172.976**

***Note:** Of these, 8196 (4098 adults and 4098 children) belong to 2049 families that has received NFI (Non-Food Items) and support through collaboration with other NGOs and local stakeholders. The number of beneficiaries is based on an average calculation of 2 children and 2 adults per family. No double counts have been made.

****Note:** Please mind that the above numbers reflect the population supported through the Akelius Foundation. This reflects **80%** of the entire ERP beneficiaries since the Akelius Foundation was the primary and major donor of all activities from 2016 to 2022. The above numbers include the beneficiaries count for 2022.

Collaboration with local actors

A crucial part of the successful implementation of ERP activities has been based on the establishment of a wide network of local actors; authorities, civil-society organizations and other stakeholders on a local level. Through collaborations and coordinated support, participation in working groups, and provision of support to each other, SOS managed to reach a larger number of beneficiaries and support even more those in need.

Specifically, collaborations mainly relied on the provision of food and NFIs (Non-Food items), dissemination of SOS's activities, advocating for children's rights, and referring individuals to specified services depending on their needs. All of the below stakeholders have been collaborating with SOS for an extended time, and include both private and public institutions and authorities:

Site Management of RICs and camps	UNICEF	Ministry of Education
Special Secretariat for Unaccompanied Minors	EODY	UNHCR
Municipalities	Metadrasi	Diotima
IRC	Intersos	Praksis
Iliachtida	Caritas Hellas	War Child
Solidarity Now	Praksis	Arsis
ReAct	IOM	Med-in
MVI (Medical Volunteers International)	Faros Elpidas	Home Project
Bridges Humanitarian Initiative	Good Will Caravan	Elix
Albatros	Irida	PPKKA

Overall Good practices (2016 – 2022)

During the six-year operation in a different settings, SOS Children's Villages Greece managed to record some good practices from its provided activities, and, based on these, develop even further the support to its beneficiaries, by securing a high quality of services.

- Unaccompanied children entered long-term care schemes in SOS Children's Villages as a pioneering service and approach.

- Low rates of absconding children minimizing the risk of children being victims of exploitation and trafficking.
- High rates of children engaging in legal procedures (asylum, family reunification).
- Successful accommodation and support of children with serious medical conditions (including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart diseases, and surgeries).
- Cooperation and apprenticeship of youth at the Barilla factory during the summer as part of the development of their life skills and cultivation of their independence.
- Operation of a non-formal Kindergarten for the support of infants that were excluded from any educational activity, either within the camp or in public schools on the island.
- Most of the students enrolled in public schools, have been prepared and assisted by SOS before their enrollment.
- Provision of distance learning education to unaccompanied children that lacked any other educational support for a prolonged time.
- Preparation of students to attend European schools to integrate into the European culture more easily.
- Undisturbed psychoeducational support to children during lockdowns with the daily distribution of educational and recreational material in addition to the provision of online classes.
- SOS facilitated the WiFi upgrade at the old KaraTepe camp in collaboration with the Vodafone Foundation to ensure that children could continue with their education in cases access to the camp was challenging.
- Distribution of technical means (i.e., tablets and wifi data) to secure the continuation of activities during lockdowns.
- Creation of synchronous and asynchronous educational material for maintaining the educational development of children.
- Creation of YouTube tutorial videos for the usage of distance learning platforms used (i.e. Google Classroom).
- Creation of digital Escape Rooms as part of Greek, Math, and Science classes, to teach these subjects and problem solving in a pedagogical, creative and fun way of learning.
- Creation of Robotic classes as part of a STEM project in Crete.
- Organization of digital Literacy Workshop with children from the local community, focusing on learning and developing digital skills using new technologies.
- Game-based activities for interactive classes (i.e. digital poster, Video editing, document creation, creation of their dictionary and language games, etc).
- Facilitation of and setting up technical equipment for children to be able to attend online classes.
- Preparation of students also in distant learning modus for the new academic year.
- Support and continuous preparation of one student who, during quarantine, continued his preparation for applying and succeeding for one of the most challenging school units in Greece, a so-called Model Experimental School that is considered far more advanced than public schools and accept children with higher grades than average.
- Expansion to services to older students (17-19 years) as part of vocational training and preparation to enter the labor market.
- Collaboration with local stakeholders for the enrollment of beneficiaries to SOS services.
- Continuation enrolling children in pedagogical services despite challenges with the Site Management of different camps.
- Launch of new psycho-educational empowering workshops for children and empowerment workshops for women targeting employability.

- Various psychosocial projects organized targeting children's and parent's awareness on a variety of topics (i.e. Mental health management, Cyberbullying, child protection, and child safeguarding policies and rights).
- Daily transportation (ie. purchase of bus tickets) for children and parents residing in camps in Ioannina and Crete, to daily visit the Day Care Centers to attend activities.
- Daily provision of healthy snacks and light lunch to children (for some children this was the only healthy meal during the day).
- Constant cooperation with representatives from the Ministry of Education aiming at enrolling the center's students in local public schools after their educational preparation in the program.
- Raising awareness of parents on the importance of education and continuous strengthening of their parental role through targeted workshops and interventions (also during Covid-19 restrictions imposed).
- Weekly provision of Covid-19 tests and hygiene packages to secure all healthy regulations and measurements.
- Cooperation with other NGOs and actors for supporting children's interests and promote their talents (kick-boxing tournaments, music lessons, painting lessons etc.).
- Participated with an invited speaker at the European Forum on the rights of the child an annual conference organized by the European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=128349
- Participated in the Round Table "The Role of non-governmental organizations as promoters of positive practices in care and accommodation for refugee and migrant minors", 2nd part of the 2017 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/apce/eidc-at-a-glance, Strasbourg (France).
- Nominated, shortlisted, and awarded as a good practice applicant regarding the issue of a Handbook on family reunification by the Council of Europe (2017-2019) call.
- Invitation of UNHCR UK to participate in global research on the migrated profiles and the family reunification cases.
- Accepted a visit of a parliamentary delegation by the Council of Europe <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=7159>
- Roundtable on Supported Independent Living for Unaccompanied Children 29-30 January 2018, organized by UNHCR/UNICEF, Athens Greece.

Overall Challenges (2016 – 2022)

- Constant mobility of population and need for re-arrangement of classes and scheduling of the center's program and outreaches to the camp.
- Covid-19 and following regulations especially in Kindergarten maintaining at the same time a sense of stability for the children.
- Cultural peculiarities that make it difficult for people to participate in activities (husbands refusing to allow their wives to participate in sewing workshops, difficulty communicating feelings and weaknesses, etc.).
- Reluctance to attend online or through telephone counselling sessions and to "feel connected" with the SOS mental health professionals.
- Mandatory Covid-19-testing for children attending out of camp activities including SOS activities.
- Difficulty in achieving normalization of Covid-19 measures applied by all the NGOs and public authorities currently active in the field.

- Parents' reluctance to let their children come to the Centre so as not to take Covid-19 tests as in case of a positive result the family loses any scheduled appointments at the asylum service and enters a mandatory quarantine inside the camp.
- Resistance from some refugee women to have a male interpreter when receiving psychosocial support/challenges to find female interpreters.
- Prolonged lockdown for residents of the camp who cannot exit the premises of the site.
- Weather conditions that make the attendance of children difficult (heatwave season during summer, rain, and snow during winter months).
- Power shortages that made operations challenging.
- Communications on the program's closure due to recent developments to the refugee scenery in Lesvos was difficult for beneficiaries who trusted our services for a long time.

Overall Success stories (2016-2022)

- Children attending SOS CV services gained the possibility to interact in a child-friendly environment which promoted their self-growth, made them become more socially interactive and developed their communicational skills in a supportive environment.
- On an educational level, SOS CV beneficiaries were adequately prepared for their enrolment and attendance in public schools depending on their age and educational level (both for schools in Greece and/or other EU countries).
- Many former beneficiaries of SOS activities, continued to request support and contact with the SOS CV staff after reaching different European countries. The children maintained remote social integration and educational assistance until the end of the program.
- The creation of a Kindergarten that filled the gap of accommodating children in need and outside of any type of support in a child-friendly environment was a pioneering move for the refugee reality on the island.
- The success story of Kourosh:

Kourosh was a long-term student and participant of SOS activities that managed to excel in the national exams for entering public universities in Greece, receiving a total score of 18.25/20 points. Kourosh entered one of the most prestigious university departments, that of Electrical Engineering at the Technical University in Athens. Alongside, Kourosh was also accepted into two universities in the USA within the same field of studies. Nonetheless, his dream is to continue living, studying, and succeeding in his second home, Greece, and he will be further supported by SOS CV throughout his studies.

Kourosh came with his family from Iran to the island of Lesvos three years ago. First, the child experienced unbearable conditions in the camp Moria but the family was later transferred to KaraTepe.

Despite his difficulties in the language, Kourosh became educationally and psychosocially supported shortly after his arrival in Lesvos from the local SOS team, and managed, through hard work, great success. The International SOS Children's Villages Office dedicated an interview for this math wizard

back in 2020, about World Refugee Day². Kourosh was personally congratulated on three different invitations for his achievement by the President of Greek Democracy, the Prime Minister, and the Vice President of the European Commission.

Outlook for 2023

SOS Children's Villages Greece continues to provide support to the vulnerable population on a national level and put in motion its long-term involvement in assisting individuals under challenging conditions. As in all emergency settings, constant developments and differentiations are to be expected.

Thus, assessing **a)** the reduced participation in provided services, **b)** the constant mobility of the population, **c)** the provision of similar activities by other organizations to beneficiaries, and finally **d)** the decrease in funds, and **e)** the high costs for the provided services, the Organization minimized its services through the Family Strengthening programs, whereas it continues to support the families and individuals that have already been part of it until their conclusion of support.

Additionally, new requests for admissions are individually assessed and cases with extreme vulnerability are enrolled, whereas the remaining ones are adequately referred to other NGOs. In the case of children with refugee backgrounds being assisted in the alternative care settings of SOS Children's Villages Greece, the Organization continues with self-funding to assist children until reaching self-sufficiency and become individuals.

However, SOS is ready at any point to escalating and re-provide services in case this is believed to be for the benefit of the children and the families. Its wide networks, highly trained professionals, and long-term experience are and will be outstanding in the field of humanitarian work in Greece.

² <https://www.sos-childrevillages.org/news/refugee-success-story-on-lesbos>