



LEGAL INTERVENTION PROJECT IN LESVOS AND ATHENS

Reporting Period:
January - April 2023

- LESVOS - OUR BENEFICIARIES

- Families
- Single mothers
- Survivors of human trafficking, torture, FGM
- Youth transitioning to adulthood
- Single Women
- Young Adults
- Unaccompanied Minors

Countries of Origin:

Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Yemen, Iraq, Cameroon, DRC, Angola, and Uganda.



- LESVOS - OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

39 Risk Assessments

were conducted aiming to detect any risk factor, need and vulnerability of every individual coming in contact with our team

39 beneficiaries

have been legally represented during their asylum interviews (admissibility and eligibility)

39 tailored legal memos

were submitted before the asylum authorities in order to support our beneficiaries' asylum claims both in the 1st and 2nd degree

3 Unaccompanied minors

were supported for the Family Reunification process

8 Camp residents

were benefited from the "drop-in" sessions, where they had the chance to be informed about their rights, the asylum legal procedures and any durable legal option available to them depending on their cases

4 Community Volunteers

received proper information about the asylum procedures but also legal guidance and advice on the cases they were handling

70 Camp residents

received updated and official information about the asylum procedures

37 of our beneficiaries

alongside the legal support, were granted access to social services through our referral pathway. Amongst them:

28 beneficiaries

including single mothers, young adults, and parents were referred to specialized **psychologists** so as to receive proper psychological support

9 women

were referred to the camp clinic and MSF for **gynecological support**

- LESVOS - OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION

Our intervention includes:

- Contact/Initial meeting to assess and identify possible risks and vulnerability
- Tailored individual legal sessions and asylum interview simulations
- Legal support and representation
- Draft of personalized memorandum to support the asylum claims before the 1st and 2nd degree, both for Admissibility and Asylum Eligibility procedures
- Support with subsequent claims
- Presentation of legal information to the beneficiaries about their rights, and asylum procedures
- Extensive follow-up case management
- Informative sessions for asylum seekers (camp residents and non, Parea community volunteers, etc)
- Effective/Strong cooperation network among the actors in the field to support efficient referral pathways

The legal sessions took place in the space provided by **Flüchtlingshilfe Doro Blancke Organization** in the Parea Community, which operates as a focal point for the creation of a safe environment for our beneficiaries. The office, in addition, has been designated as well as a “drop-in” space, where both asylum-seekers and professionals can receive updated information on the asylum procedures from our team member present on the island. During those sessions, camp residents, community volunteers, and organization staff can present their individual cases, and/or their doubts, and receive guidance on the current practices, in order not to miss important deadlines, or properly support other colleagues and beneficiaries.



- LESVOS -
OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES

- **Single mother from Afghanistan**

“The journey was long and difficult. Undertaking it without my husband, and with 3 children was even harder. I had to be strong for them”

Aziza and her family spent a whole year in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. She and her husband have 3 daughters, two under 10 years old, while the older one is 15 years old. The daughters used to go to school until the Taliban restricted access to education for girls and women. During that year, their life changed. They had to rely solely on the father, until one day he was unlawfully arrested by the terrorist group. They were not safe in Afghanistan anymore, so Aziza took the hard decision to flee the country with her daughters.

The journey from Afghanistan to Greece was full of difficulties and risks, specifically, they faced violence and discrimination in Turkey, where the younger daughter also got sick and was stopped from receiving medical treatments. Aziza made multiple attempts to obtain legal documents to guarantee the safety of her children, unsuccessfully, so their only hope was to seek protection in Greece. Although it was clear to them why it was not safe for them to live in that country, Greece still consider Turkey a “safe-third” country, making Aziza and her 15-year-old daughter undergo the Admissibility interview on Lesbos. Having to share their story, from the moment they lost their husband and father, to the difficulty of the journey, put both mother and daughter under visible stress.

DCI-Greece accompanied the family every step of the way, from the explanation of their rights and the simulation of both Admissibility and Eligibility interviews, through the legal representation in front of the asylum authorities, and the submission of a legal memorandum to support their statements, until the reception of the final decision, providing legal support, and cooperating with other competent actors in order to fulfill the family’s needs.

Aziza and her children are now living on the Mainland, due to the relocation put in place by the camp authorities in Lesbos. We have been recently notified about their positive Refugee Status, but we continue supporting them building their future by enrolling their daughters in school, and guiding them finding a job.

- LESVOS -
**OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES**

- **Young male adult from Yemen (recruiting, violence along the way)**

“I lost my family and my home. I don't have a place to stay anymore. My only wish is to find a safe place where to have a future.”

Since 2014, Yemen is affected by the civil war. Thousands of young men over the years have been recruited into the ranks of the Houthis, while others like Ali, have rebelled and suffered the consequences.

Ali was only 15 years old when he was first approached by the armed movement (Houthis). Despite the efforts of his family to hide him and change their location, the Houthis were always able to track him due to their connections nationwide. Ali was kidnapped, mistreated, and forced to learn to become a soldier following a refusal. After three weeks he managed to escape, but when the Houthis discovered it, they enhanced the threats and killed his younger sister. Ali and his family decided to take the risk and flee Yemen illegally. Their journey was long and difficult, and in Somalia, he lost both parents due to an explosion near the place they were hiding.

Having a Somali mother and a Yemeni father didn't guarantee him safety in Somalia either, being marginalized, and considered as with no nationality.

Transitioning to adulthood in a similar context brings a burden to someone so young, where Ali wished he had gone along with the armed forces so as not to cause harm to his family.

When the DCI-Greece team in Lesvos met Ali, he was very confused about the questions he was asked upon his arrival in Greece and had little understanding of the asylum procedures. DCI-Greece clearly explained to the young adult the multiple aspects of the asylum system in Greece and was open to clarifying any doubts he had.

During our first meeting, we introduced our work and created a trust bond, for Ali to feel comfortable in sharing his story with us. We then proceeded, in the second meeting, to run an interview simulation, in order to help him familiarize himself with the procedures. Having suffered multiple losses in his family, at such a young age, we could see, through his story, and with his permission, the need to link him to a competent psychologist that could help him overcome those traumatic memories.

On the day of his interview, DCI-Greece legally represented Ali in front of the asylum authorities and submitted a detailed legal memorandum to support his statements.

We were recently informed, that the asylum office in Lesvos accepted his fear of persecution, and granted him Refugee Status.

- LESVOS -
OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES

- **Married couple from Sierra Leone (FGM, Torture, attempted human trafficking)**

“I carried my baby through very challenging moments. My husband and I had nothing and were treated like nothing. I just want to give my daughter a better life.”

Juliette and Roland met in Sierra Leone after she moved from Guinea upon her father passed away. In Sierra Leone, she reunited with her mother and grandmother, who introduced her, at the age of 21, to the Buntu society. Being the daughter and grandchild of two important women in society, Juliette was forced to undergo the FGM at adult age and expected to be the next leader. After refusing, the members and allies of the Buntu society kidnapped and tortured Roland, thinking he was the one opposing her takeover. Once freed, Juliette and Roland understood that the only way to escape from society and the violence was to flee the country. One man offered them help with the documents to travel to Turkey. Once in Turkey, they discovered that the man sold them to a trafficker who was expecting Juliette to prostitute herself despite being 7 months pregnant at the time. Roland fought against the decision, so they were left for almost two months in a cell with no food and poor water, trying to protect and carry out the pregnancy.

When DCI-Greece met Juliette and Roland, she had just given birth. The difficulties of the journey added to the pressure of being in a new country, and the worries of being new parents visibly marked the couple. DCI-Greece walked them through the whole asylum process, providing them with all the necessary information, and clarifying all the questions and doubts they had. We ran together a simulation of the asylum interview in order to make them familiar with the type of questions, and the importance of clearly explaining their story. Afterward, we outlined the pending actions, and referred, with the couple's consent, both to MSF psychologists, Juliette to a competent doula and gynecologist, while Roland was suggested to apply for the certificate of torture in order to support his claims.

Due to a lack of interpretation provided by the asylum office, both husband and wife are still waiting to undergo their interview, raising their daughter inside the camp under poor living conditions.

DCI-Greece is cooperating with the relevant actors in order to fulfill all the needs of the family while waiting to represent Juliette and Roland in front of the asylum authorities.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL NEEDS ON THE GROUND? CURRENT CONTEXT: LESVOS

The first months of 2023 were marked by structural changes within the asylum office on Lesbos as well as serious translation gaps. This situation put additional pressure on the operation of the NGOs on the ground. However, DCI-Greece due to its strong presence on the ground since 2016 and its capacity to adjust to the dynamic context, managed to maintain its support to the new arrivals and residents of the Camp by redefining the way of delivering its services.

Our legal programme run with the support of Flüchtlingshilfe Doro Blancke Organization reconfirmed itself as a constant in the provision of legal support to the camp residents of Kara Tepe and Mavrovouni, and the community volunteers in Parea. Our legal project provided, on a daily basis, efficient and vital support and representation to asylum applicants.

Another development was the restart of the asylum interviews of unaccompanied children on the move at the local asylum office in Lesbos, which in itself leads to an increased need for legal aid services for all the applicants, a legal aid that is not provided by the state. On top of that, the number of new arrivals has started to critically be increasing in the last month. On the other hand, the need for due legal support information and representation remains great.

In this regard, we emphasize the importance of further strengthening the legal assistance on Lesbos, in order to support asylum-seekers throughout their asylum claim properly. It is imperative for us to reach and continue supporting asylum applicants currently living in Kara Tepe and Mavrovouni camp, ensuring our beneficiaries fair access to all the asylum procedures while enhancing the cooperation network with the field actors so as to guarantee the implementation of our holistic approach for each and every individual.



- LESVOS -
**OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES**

- Single woman from Afghanistan (vulnerable)

“I lost everything. My house, my family, and my rights. I suffered a lot along the journey, and the nightmare is not over yet.”

Esra was 20 years old when the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021. She and her family decided to leave. Once in Turkey, her old father fell sick and couldn't work. She found a job to help her family, but shortly after, the employer started abusing her. After a few months, her parents decided to send her to Greece to escape from that situation, staying behind due to their age and health conditions.

In Greece Esra fell into a deep depression, being in constant worry for her parents. Inside the camp, she doesn't know anyone. One day she met a person, and she trusted him with her story. After a while, she started receiving phone threats from that person. This situation put Esra under a lot of stress and pressure.

When DCI-Greece met her to discuss her approaching interview, we ran a Risks and Needs Assessment, where we discovered her past trauma, and the current issue inside of the camp. After carefully accompanying her through the asylum application process, we highlighted the following needed steps. Once explaining the importance and received consent from the girl, we referred her to the vulnerability office of the relevant state actor. They put us in contact with the police inside of the camp, who managed eventually to track the phone from which the threats were coming. Moreover, in collaboration with the office and Esra, we found an eligible psychologist who specialized in GBV, and vulnerability.

Esra is now waiting for the decision on her Eligibility Interview and is followed by a psychologist and the vulnerability office. We are carrying out cooperation with the competent actors in order to prevent further obstacles, guaranteeing all-around support for Esra and all our beneficiaries.



- LESVOS -
OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES

- **Single mother from Cameroon (victim of human trafficking)**

“My wish for the future is to find a safe place where to raise my child, and have a normal life”

In Cameroon, Jacqueline was married to a man actively involved in the civil war. Being from the French side, their family was targeted by the anglophone separatist forces, who kidnapped her and her child, and tortured her in order to have information about her husband. After almost two months of food deprivation, rape, and torture, the separatists released her, leaving Jacqueline without any updates about her husband and child. Despite her efforts to be reunited with her family, she couldn't find her way back to her village and, still in shock, she found shelter with a couple. The husband and wife listened to her story and convinced her that the best idea was to leave the country and that they could help her with the documents. Jacqueline trusted them and flew to Turkey. There, a man was waiting for her in order to bring her to her new work. She soon realized, however, that the job promised never existed. For more than one year, she was forced into prostitution, even when she realized to be pregnant.

In Lesbos, Jacqueline took part in one of the informative sessions run by our staff member on the island. During the meeting, while touching on multiple aspects of the asylum procedures in Greece, and their rights as individuals and asylum seekers, DCI-Greece identified the women, like Jacqueline, who needed to receive further information about Human Trafficking, Torture, FGM, and GBV. In separate meetings, Jacqueline and the other vulnerable women entrusted our staff with their stories, allowing us to take relevant actions to better support them throughout their asylum claims.

Due to a lack of interpretation at the asylum office, Jacqueline is still waiting to undergo her interview. In the meantime, DCI-Greece is continuing the holistic support, linking her to a competent psychologist, and to an organization that can certify her as a survivor of torture.



- ATHENS - OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

27 Risk Assessments

were conducted aiming to detect any risk factor, need, and vulnerability of every individual coming in contact with our team

19 beneficiaries

received support with their registration appointment at the asylum office

4 Single mothers

were assisted in the preparation for their asylum interview

4 Unaccompanied minors

were supported for the Family Reunification process

22 of our beneficiaries

alongside the legal support, were granted access to social services through our referral pathway.

Amongst them:

4 Single mothers

were referred to a specialized **psychologist** that collaborates with DCI-Greece, so as to receive proper psychological support

3 women

were referred for the **certificate of torture**

15 beneficiaries

were supported to guarantee safe living conditions

42 asylum seekers including young adults and single mothers received information about the asylum procedures



- ATHENS - OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL-LIFE STORIES

- **Single mother from DRC**

“I've been in Greece for 6 months. I feel completely lost and helpless”

Davina is a single mother of a 2 month old girl. She fled her country of origin to escape a forced marriage. In Turkey, she was sold and forced to prostitute herself. When she discovered to be pregnant after one of the many rapes she endured, she decided to risk her life to escape that situation. Already 5 months pregnant, Davina took a boat and come to Greece. In Athens, she quickly felt lost. She had no contacts and no idea about the asylum procedures.

Mother and child are homeless during the day and sheltered in a church during the night.

When the DCI-Greece team meet the woman, she appeared very vulnerable and in distress. We walked her through the possibility of applying for asylum in Greece, explained to her all her rights and obligation, and took note of her needs.

From the very first meeting, it was clear where our intervention was needed; from the material support with clothes for Davina and her child and the referral to our cooperation network to find a safe accommodation, to the schedule of therapeutic sessions with our psychologist. Furthermore, our team has managed to register the single mother so as to claim asylum before the asylum authorities. Our team will keep supporting her throughout the process, making sure that both mother and daughter are safe, and with the proper assistance network.



- ATHENS -
OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES

- **Single woman from Côte d'Ivoire**

“I've been kidnapped, tortured, and turned into a slave. In Greece, I only wish safety and freedom”

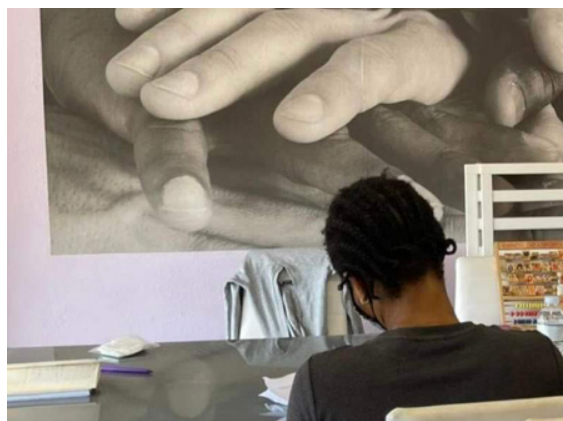
When Izabel was 12 years old, due to some religious conflicts in her area, she was kidnapped and forced into a house with her kidnapper. There, she wasn't allowed to go outside and was treated brutally. For 8 years, the man repeatedly abused, tortured, and end her.

Once in Greece, Izabel got into contact with the African community with which DCI-Greece is collaborating and was soon referred to us so as to receive support during her asylum interview. The first time Izabel visited our offices she was only whispering, looking down and it was difficult to take a word from her mouth.

For us legal support though is more impactful when it goes hand in hand with psychological support. Izabel was called to speak about her traumatic experiences before the asylum office and it was obvious she was not ready to do so yet. We found it crucial for her to start immediately sessions with our psychologist and at the same time we linked her to the relevant actors so as the procedure for the certification of torture to start.

In the meantime we have managed to guarantee a safe accommodation for her in a shared house for vulnerable women in Athens.

Izabel's face is now brighter, she is waiting her decision but she does not let the time pass unproductively. With our support and guidance, she is now attending activities and soon she will start working at a cleaning company.



WHAT ARE THE LEGAL NEEDS ON THE GROUND? CURRENT CONTEXT: ATHENS

Arrivals through the mainland have continued to increase while the registration of asylum seekers continues to face great delays. The vast majority of refugees entering from Evros borders and reaching other areas in the mainland, such as Athens, are forced to wait for months for an appointment in order to apply for asylum.

This situation has left hundreds of people unregistered and exposed to serious dangers, wandering as ghosts around the city, as lack of registration equals lack of visibility, which in turn can also place people on the move at higher risk of being arrested by the police for instance, without even prior accessing asylum procedures.

At the same time, the ESTIA housing scheme for vulnerable asylum seekers is now closed. Thus hundreds of vulnerable asylum seekers have been evicted from these shelters and are being forced to move to isolated camps. The Camps however cannot cover all the needs and are already full, thus the alternative solution for the asylum seekers is to live out on the streets and/or shared apartments with other people they do not know.

More and more people especially young girls and single mothers are visiting our Protection Center asking for support. The majority of them are unregistered and/or homeless without any access to legal and psychosocial support. Young children 1- 5 years old are forced to live in precarious conditions together with their mothers, they do not attend any educational program nor receive any medical and psychosocial support. They are malnourished and many times they are witnesses to the abuse and exploitation their mothers are subjected to.

This is the reality for thousands of children on the move who arrive in Greece accompanied by their families and/or single parents to seek safety and protection.

Through our intervention, we aim to bring these homeless, unregistered young accompanied children and their mothers, that are exposed to violence, trafficking, and exploitation, into a place of safety, legality, and visibility before the official authorities.



- ATHENS -
**OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH
REAL-LIFE STORIES**

- **Single mother with a young daughter from Sierra Leone**

“My daughter and I are alone and homeless”

Leyla is one of our youngest asylum seekers at the moment. Her mother had to flee Sierra Leone due to serious threats against her life. She and her mother were homeless, wandering in Athens invisible.

Like many other minors, she was one of the ghost children we encounter. This is the result of a newly set up online asylum registration system that allows asylum seekers to have their first appointment to claim asylum only after many months. Until then, Leyla and her mother would keep being unseen, without any State provision for covering their needs.

If Leyla was unaccompanied she would have a better fate within the reception system. The fact that she is here with her single mother, a survivor of trafficking, is what makes her unseen as a child in need of urgent protection and care.

At the time being, children like Leyla are considered individuals of a second category.

Our goal is, through our intervention, to give a voice to children as young as her by providing full psychosocial and legal support equally to their mothers and themselves.

Leyla and her mother have now been transferred to a safe place for temporary accommodation and will join our sociolegal program, while after great pressure we have managed to register them so as to claim asylum.

Her mother is currently under our care trying to put her pieces back together in a context of safety and love until the moment of her asylum interview will come.



**** All names have been changed to protect people's identities**

#StrongerTogether

