



Youseph, 18, Inas, 16, Israa, 10, Anas, 16, Samy, 7, Moteia, 45, Rama, 5, and Talal, 45, left to right, a refugee family from Aleppo, pose for a photo in front of the apartment building where they live. Photographer: Oscar Durand

Integrating Social Cohesion Greece

CASE STUDY 5: REFUGEES LIVING IN GREECE STRIVE FOR A SENSE OF BELONGING AND SELF-RELIANCE

CRS and partners Caritas Hellas and Caritas Athens in Greece have assisted thousands of asylum seekers and recognized refugees in integrating into Greek society.

Through their programs they have been focusing on improving the social integration and overall wellbeing of adults and children around the broader livelihood issues of safe shelter, language instruction, employment workshops, and vocational training.

CRS' 3B – Binding, Bonding and Bridging – framework for strengthening social cohesion has guided program strategies to achieve more robust outcomes.

The Binding lens has helped build participants' resilience and confidence. CRS and partners, for example, provide interpretation services and accompaniment to government offices and banks to obtain critical legal documents. Participants attend social hubs and learning centers for group classes on Greek instruction and job preparedness – program activities targeting the Bonding component. The Bridging aspect was addressed through providing opportunities to build relationships with host country members to support intergroup dialogue and collaboration.

Country: Greece
Project Location: Athens & Thessaloniki
Target population: approximately 1,600 refugees and asylum seekers
CRS' role: Provides accommodation, job training, social services to refugees and asylum seekers in Athens and Thessaloniki
Duration: May 1, 2018 – 31 December 2020
Donor: Latter-day Saints Charities (LDSC)
Partners: Caritas Hellas and Caritas Athens
Collaborate: Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum's Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA)

The programs support children's enrollment in formal education and afterschool tutoring led by Greek teachers.

THE LIVELIHOODS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN GREECE PROGRAM

CRS and local Caritas partners collaborated with the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum's Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) initiative to support refugees and asylum seekers. The CRS-Caritas Livelihoods and Psychosocial Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Greece program has been targeting those residing in apartments in Greece under the ESTIA program. From May 2018 to May 2019, the first phase of the program supported 974 ethnically, socially, and culturally diverse refugees and asylum seekers (544 adults and 430 children).

In the next period, the focus shifted to adults, supporting them in better preparing for independent living. During March 2019 to December 2019, 62 women and 131 men participated in livelihoods programming, increasing to 205 women and 339 men from January to November 2020. These efforts complemented the UNHCR's Urban Accommodation program and other initiatives centered on cash and accommodation assistance.

CRS and local Caritas partners provided a menu of options to help refugees build integration skills: accompaniment to obtain documents necessary for employment; Greek language lessons; job preparedness such as soft skills workshops, CV creation, interview preparation and individual job search and application support; vocational training, and links to employment. CRS and Caritas partners also supported hundreds of children enrolled in formal education and afterschool tutoring. At the same time, CRS connected adults and children to psychosocial and recreational activities to improve their wellbeing and to promote integration.

MAIN PROJECT INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

CRS and local partners designed and implemented key components of the project by applying CRS' 3Bs (Binding, Bonding, Bridging) method. The project provided support and facilitated activities at the individual, intragroup and intergroup levels to build agency and resiliency of refugee community members. The project's application of the Bonding and Bridging components gained the most traction toward integration through learning Greek and finding employment.



Learning Greek for social and economic integration (Bonding)

Acquiring even the most basic language skills provides a foundation for social and economic integration. Project participants gained confidence and

built meaningful relationships with Greek people. Workshops on job-preparedness helped participants to document their skills and strengths, understand their rights and responsibilities as employees around minimum wage and overtime, and practice responses to typical job interview questions.

Vocational training expanded refugees' social-professional network, resulting in referrals to jobs and further training and education opportunities. Participants learned to create monthly household budgets by tracking food, rent, utilities, transportation, and other expenses. Independent living and household budgeting workshops aimed to transition participants out of humanitarian assistance. Participants learned to create monthly household budgets by tracking food, rent, utilities, transportation, and other expenses. At the end of the project, 85% of participants reported satisfaction with the workshops. Caritas refined the workshop's content multiple times to meet participants' needs best. CRS, the International Organization for Migration, and other Greek government partners replicated the workshops due to their success with the project participants.



Cultural and educational interaction with host community (Bridging)

Social networking played a crucial role in beneficiaries finding housing and job opportunities. Bridging events included museum and theatre visits and trips to community fairs and events and educational activities. The project also smoothed interactions between refugees and landlords. Caritas team members supported the enrollment of 85% of school-age refugee children during the 2018-2019 academic year. 251 children participated in regular afterschool tutoring in Athens led by 25 Greek community volunteers while 110 asylum-seeking children living in ESTIA apartments participated in Greek language classes and well-being activities over the summer. Children living in a shelter took part in end-of-school celebrations performing a play for the adults. Community volunteers also led a recycling art program that culminated in an art exhibition at the shelter.

LESSONS TO INTEGRATION

- The benefits of considering a less explicit 3B approach to program design and implementation to achieve positive outcomes.
- The benefits of acquiring language skills to support community integration and enhance sense of belonging.
- The opportunity to build resilience and instill confidence through interactions with both peers and host community members.