



OUR IMPACT
IN 2020

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INTRODUCTION

FORGE's overarching objective is for solo men to have the means to fulfill their potential and participate in society.

Our hands on contribution to this objective is to advocate for, and support, solo men to navigate their way towards independence, a project that, since 2018, we have steadily developed into the go to spot for male asylum seekers in Athens.

We offer support in navigating the asylum procedure; accessing the basics, like food, shelter and clothing; finding employment; building a network in a new environment; and using your own voice to fulfill these needs.



47

**COUNTRIES
OF ORIGIN**

2,495

PARTICIPANTS



34

**MOTHER
TONGUES**



**18+
YEARS**



**OUR
DEMOGRAPHIC**

VISITS &

JAN

1,059

FEB

1,075

MAR*

382

* 01/03 - 13/03

MAY*

221

* 18/05 - 31/05

JUN

594

JUL

640

AUG*

306

* 01/08 - 05/08

* 21/08 - 31/08

SEP

551

OCT

508

NOV*

157

* 01/11 - 09/11



5,493

total visits to our physical office space

34

daily visits on average

Due to COVID-19, we restructured the way we work so we could reduce the number of physical interactions with our participants until we are able to ensure the safety of our participants and staff.

We spent less time in our office space and more time responding to online queries.

We set up more ways for people to communicate with us and prioritised those interactions over face-to-face visits.

INTERACTIONS

132 MAR

163 APR

301 MAY

263 JUN

293 NOV

216 DEC

1,499

total remote interactions via phone, email, Whatsapp, Viber, and Facebook Messenger.

14

average daily interactions performed by two coordinators and one interpreter



COVID-19 Lockdown

Between 16th March and 18th May, and 9th November until the close of the year, there were Greek national lockdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19. This year has been a time of immense change and uncertainty, which is reflected in our reporting in 2020. Our remote interactions were not recorded from July to October and as such are not included.

OUR SERVICES

Our FORGE for humanity office operates primarily as an info hub from a small space in central Athens.

As the go-to spot for solo men, we stay up to date always with our specific demographic in mind. This means that we investigate services prior to recommending or referring our participants to them, and extensively research the topics we offer information on in terms of how they affect solo men. In 2020 we had to stay up to date on the latest developments regarding COVID-19 in addition to information on the asylum procedure and other available resources.

58

**GENERAL
INFORMATION**

736

**ASYLUM SERVICE
INFORMATION**

11

**VOLUNTARY
RETURN INFO**

HOW DO WE RECORD WHAT WE DO?

Our team uses a system of spreadsheets to keep track of case work, referrals to other organisations (e.g. for legal aid), appointments booked for participants (e.g. with the Greek Asylum Service), our employability program, and our own time spent on these tasks. These monitoring tools have been developed to reflect our activities.

1789

**Health Services
appointments**

284

**Connections with
other services**

251

**Asylum Service
communications**

374

**Greek admin
assistance**

Most adults wishing to claim asylum in Greece must apply for a registration appointment via the notoriously convoluted and inaccessible Skype system.

FORGE provides access to the Greek Asylum Service via Skype through an appointment system. While we were forced to close this program due to COVID-19 restrictions, we facilitated 619 calls, and later continued to offer advice and remote support to 65 callers.

There are almost no referral pathways to social housing for young, healthy solo men over 18.

For most, the stability of housing is paramount as a foundation for rebuilding a life in a new country. Through our partnership with Mazi Housing Project, we were able to assist in the accommodation of 9 individuals.

Also in support of autonomy, our employability program supported 65 people in producing their CV and cover letter templates and 69 individuals with online job searches.

Our commitment to providing a safe space for men, where they can freely share their needs, concerns, and opinions means that many visits to our office are harder to define.

To 54 new arrivals or those experiencing street homelessness, we provided blankets, sleeping bags, clothing and hygiene products.

As we provide computer/printer access, 268 people also came to use our services for admin purposes such as making job applications. Some also ask us to store valuable documents they cannot leave in their shared accommodation.



The individualised case follow up we offer means that 168 participants were able to contact us for updates on the progression of their case.

Some office visitors come only to use the community space, chat with other participants or say hi to our team members. Although this became more difficult in 2020, we still had 505 of these visits.

INDEPENDENT LIVING REQUIRES FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE, SO COUNSELLING THAT SUPPORTS FINDING LEGAL, SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL FOR OUR PARTICIPANTS.

OUR OBSERVATIONS THIS YEAR

We have seen a decrease in daily visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lockdowns in Athens meant that we were forced to close for 5 months. In addition to this, social distancing has meant that while our office was open for 6 of 12 months of 2020, we restricted our office capacity to 4 people at a time - 1 coordinator, 1 interpreter, and 2 participants, in a 25 sq.m space, limiting the number of services we offer, and the service capacity in one day (previously 2 coordinators, plus employability advisor and additional volunteers).

Due to this capacity restriction we were unable to:

- Offer Skype sessions
- Provide distribution as we are unable to keep people safe while waiting in line for items

RESTRICTION OF ACTIVITIES FOR OTHER ATHENS-BASED PROJECTS MEANT THAT THERE WERE LESS OPPORTUNITIES TO DIRECT OR REFER OUR PARTICIPANTS

THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE PROCESSING SPEED OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS WHERE ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE NOW STRANDED IN INFINITE LIMBO

- Allow our participants to come only for a “visit”, which has been a catalyst for the community aspect of our project and encouraged relationship and network building
- Continue our very successful community cricket program
- Offer our employability program

Other factors have also caused a decrease in daily visits.

- A construction issue that meant our office space was closed for most of August
- Changes in flows of people claiming asylum in Greece due to well documented pushbacks occurring at the sea and land borders of Greece

50%

OF OUR VISITORS WERE
"RETURNEES"

179

OF OUR PARTICIPANTS
REFERRED A FRIEND

HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

Measurements are difficult in a project where there are so many obstacles to success outside of the participants', and our, control. Unfair asylum systems and high unemployment rates mean that for many, the effort put in is not reflected in the outcome. At FORGE we see success as our participants using and sharing the tools they have learned while interacting with us, to act independently.

WE LIMITED OUR SERVICE TIMES TO FIVE HOURS PER DAY, FROM EIGHT, IN ORDER TO COPE WITH THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASES AS OUR PLANNED EXPANSION WAS NOT POSSIBLE

Due to our restricted office capacity, we spent more time with each participant, and offered them more privacy to discuss personal topics.

We spent more time on each case and interacted more with our participants regarding their asylum procedures, as the Greek Asylum Service's systems have become more difficult to navigate. The digitalisation of their services has meant that more assistance is required since many potential applicants lack access to an

electronic device or stable internet connection, and because they often come from countries with low literacy rates and even lower rates of digital literacy.

Our observation on the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) system:

In 2020, COVID-19 restrictions vastly affected the operation of GAS, reducing its services and face to face interactions with applicants to bare minimum. Consequently, we were unable to complete many previously simplistic tasks for our participants. Furthermore, we have noticed a rapid and obvious decline in the quality of the service provided to asylum applicants in need of protection. This is from a system which was already limited in terms of cultural awareness and accessibility for the people it was designed to serve.

OUR 2021 COMMITMENTS

1

ADVOCACY

We will do more to advocate for men travelling solo, and more generally, for refugees and asylum seekers in Athens. We have seen more and more evidence that supporting solo men should be central to social development and aid delivery, given their potential to enrich society. We will focus on providing accurate information through a better social media presence and facilitate a platform for our participants to speak from, and the motivation to use their own voice.

3

TACKLING MISINFORMATION

We will build an online community through Facebook, and use that platform to disseminate accurate, up-to-date information, dispel rumours and misinformation and moderate a place for our participants to network.

2

HOUSING OPTIONS

Having built a strong relationship with one organisation providing accommodation specifically to our demographic, we will maintain this relationship as both of our projects develop, and network with other local organisations to form more of these mutually beneficial connections so that more of our participants are able to access safe, stable, adequate housing.

4

ACCESS TO SOCIAL BENEFITS

Our knowledge of Greek social services is currently limited to basic unemployment benefits. We will do the appropriate research to further explore social aid systems in order to support asylum recipients better on their path to independence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to:

All of our private donors

Contributors:

Sheryl Bartlett

Geoff Bartlett

Financial Partners:

Ockenden International

Mass Action Fund

FORGE for humanity Market

Donate4Refugees

Partners:

Mazí Housing Project

Equal Rights Without Borders

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WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF
OUR PROJECT & PARTICIPANTS

FORGE
FOR HUMANITY