

SUMMARY REPORT

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# Ethnographic Assessment of Psychosocial Needs of Children at Vasilika Camp



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## 1. CONTEXT

Vasilika camp is one of the camps established by the Greek Government to house the Syrian refugee population trapped in the country after Macedonia closed its border in March 2016. It consists of seven large hangars that were previously used to house a chicken farm beside a major highway running East from Thessaloniki to the coast. The surrounding area contains industrial wasteland and factories. Opposite the camp is a scrap metal plant. There are no green spaces, food shops, or residential community nearby. Outside the hangars is a large area that was being graveled over while the survey was being done. There is a small open playground with some swings and sand on the ground. There is one shaded area. There is a very small school room without seating or desks. One of the hangars is used for loading and unloading lorries and for recreation space. There are chemical toilets and some shower facilities. Staff at the camp have access to a separate locked water toilet.

Military style tents are ranked in rows inside the hangars. Most families have attached small kitchen tents and are using a gas or electric stove inside these. The tents are carpeted with blankets and have no private space. The community has created one communal space at the end of one hanger consisting of 3 sofas and 10 basket chairs around a plastic table with some potted plants. In other hangars there are small self-made shops. There are some electric points outside the hangars with some electric stoves. At the time of the study, there was an estimated total of 979 people living in the camp, including 505 adults and 474 children. The camp had slightly more males than females (56% vs. 44%). Security was provided by 2-3 policemen at a small booth at the gate.

The population of the camp is Syrian Kurd (hangars 5-8); Syrian Arab (hangars 1-4) and a small number of Iraqi Kurdish families. Almost all of them were brought directly from Eko camp when this informal camp was evicted in June 2016. Eko camp was an informal camp supported by independent volunteers in the grounds of a gas station on the road to the Skopje border. Most refugees had been at Eko around 6-8 weeks. They had arrived in Greece too late to cross the border, but early enough to avoid internment and forced repatriation to Turkey.

It was interesting to note that there was some initial reluctance on the part of parents to actually sign forms, because they were worried as to what the signature meant. Once they and the children understood the purpose of the project, they were happy to participate. In fact, more children wanted to be in discussion groups than there was time to accommodate, unfortunately. Children had to be asked not to sit around the outside of the group while the insiders were talking. The children who participated appeared to enjoy the opportunity given to talk in depth and to be consulted as to their views.

## 2.METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 at Vasilika camp in Northern Greece. The findings of this report reflect the conditions of Vasilika camp in August 2016; however, the camp conditions have evolved since and continue to change over time. The aim was to have a better understanding of children's psychosocial concerns and needs and how these might be addressed. In order to explore this, four gender segregated focus groups were conducted with 23 children aged between 8 and 14. In addition, 4 key informant interviews were conducted with 2 boys and 2 girls. Two focus groups were also conducted with parents to gain their perspective on the same issues: four fathers and six mothers.

In all cases respondents were guaranteed anonymity and written consent was sought from the parent of the child, as well as verbal consent from the child themselves. The names used are pseudonyms. The consent forms used are attached (Appendix 1 and 2).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to identify a Kurdish English translator. The focus groups and key informant interviews were translated sequentially into both Arabic and Kurdish, so as not to exclude those who only spoke Kurdish.

The topics in the groups followed the skeleton protocol laid out below in the results, but, topics were explored in slightly different order and depth in different groups, depending on the flow and prompting of the children.

Questions were always addressed to the whole group and it was made clear that only those who wanted to answer the question should do so. Those who did not want to say anything on any topic did not have to do so. In some cases, where a strong opinion was voiced by an individual the interviewer asked for a show of hands as to who agreed and who did not. At the end of each group participants were given the opportunity to raise any concern or issue that had not been addressed thus far.

## 3. RESULTS

Key findings and issues raised by children and their parents are summarized below.

### *Children's Pre Camp Experiences*

Pre camp experiences were discussed in order to give children a chance to set their current difficulties within the context of their whole lives. It was particularly emphasized that only children who wanted to share their experiences need do so. In all groups and interviews the majority of children wanted to talk at length, and time given to this topic had to be cut short to move onto other topics.

#### ***Pre-War***

Children could not give very detailed accounts of their prewar lives and their memories were vague compared to the specificity and detail of both wartime memories, and their journey here. What stood out in the discussion was the importance of family, friends and school.

*... I liked School as well because I wanted to study to grow up and be a doctor. I want to become an educated person when I grow up, so none looks at me because I cannot read and write (boy, group B)*

*... Our home was near my grandfather and uncle and it was nice. We were a big family sitting together, and I loved going to school (girl, group B)*

The majority of children have had no schooling since the war began and only 11 of the 23 of the children could read and write. Most of these were girls over the age of 11 who had more than 4 years schooling.

#### ***War***

As noted above children had detailed recollection of both war time experiences and their journey here and wanted to share these, even though, as is clear below, the memories were upsetting for some. The majority of children had witnessed bombing. A number had experienced direct hits on home or school and minor injuries to themselves. Some had experienced police searches. Many had seen dead bodies. One child had lost a parent. Most had lost friends and or relatives.

*... We were living in a big house on the ground floor. A bomb came through all three floors and filled the house with smoke so we had to go to other families. Then a phone call came saying it is not safe where you are snipers are shooting in the street. We started to move and then we heard the house of a friend was bombed, and the whole house destroyed and all the family killed and in the neighbourhood many others were killed and our house completely destroyed. (boy, group B)*

... One day in January I was in my home and heard the sound of a rocket and we did not understand, and then we heard it destroyed half the school, and then we went to school and we heard they want to destroy the school. Then they sent another rocket and the blast touched us all and the teachers said go in the basement because they are looking for children to kill. So we stayed in the basement until they went away. [girl, Group B. After telling this bursts into tears]

## **Journey to Greece**

Understandably, because it is the most recent, this was for many the most frightening and most vividly remembered experience. It figured at length and without prompting in all the key informant interviews. The variations in the stories also illustrate the enormous difference in respondents' income, resources, geography and chance play. One key informant had to cross mountains in the snow, another travelled by car, another spent three months living in a garage in Turkey with no access to running water.

... The smuggler took us to a yard where he said we could stay. It was very dirty and full of water. You cannot imagine how bad it was and it smelled terrible. It was like a garage. There were 11 or 12 of us. The floor was concrete so we borrowed a blanket to sleep on. We stayed there 3 months. Father was always borrowing money to buy food. Our day was no different from night, it was all the same from morning until night. The place was so dirty that some people got yellow eyes from the dirt. There was no shower and only one toilet for all of us. You had to go out or go in the corner to wash yourself with a bottle of water. It was like a big shop. Someone in the city had given it out of pity. They gave the place for nothing until we had a solution. There was nothing to do. We did not go outside. The only thing we did was cry. My mother cried all day long. I cried too. Sometimes my mother became sick, so we went to the door of the shop and looked the people walking in the street. We all got sick with yellow eyes and mother had problems with her spine and her heart. (Anna, aged 9, girl K11)

The fourth worked as a tailor and gives a vivid account of how child refugees are exploited as labour:

... There was no school, so we worked. It was a shop owned by Turks. Me and my brother were not allowed to sit. We stood all day. Our job was to cut the pieces for sewing and to cut the thread. We worked from 8 am until 7 pm or with overtime until 10. We only had one-hour break in the afternoon. They let you go to the toilet but only for one minute. I don't remember how many weeks or months we were there but they did not pay us any money. (Jusuf, aged 13, boy K12)

## **Psychological Health**

Obviously children who actively volunteer to be interviewed are a self-selected group. As a whole, they appeared resilient and psychologically well. However, when asked directly, some complained of intermittent nightmares, flashbacks or night terrors. This is most vivid in Anna's story of the effect of seeing an injured boy:

... I have an illness, I can't explain because I cannot say it in Arabic but when I was in Turkey my legs were swollen and I had bruises. This happened because I saw the boy with the stomach. And now when I go to the toilet, I won't go alone because I am scared and I need my mother. This illness lasted two or three months. I am not fully recovered. When I am scared or anxious it comes again. When I fall asleep I see him in my dreams, then I wake up and start crying and my legs and hands become swollen. Just a little. (Anna aged 9 girl K11)

In addition, three children had mental health problems that require follow up. Boys in group B provide a good example of the variety of responses on this topic. When asked about the worst effects of their experiences, one complained of dreams that had now stopped. Two complained of continuing intermittent nightmares:

... During the first days in Turkey I would dream about home and in the dream I would see it being destroyed, but not any more

... When I sleep I see in my dreams a cat biting me and we are sleeping and the house collapses and a cat comes from nowhere and takes flesh from my neck and runs away. In another dream someone ties me in a chair and cats come round and bite me and eat me. I dream this at least once a week. I feel uncomfortable and frightened when mother wakes me and I cry.

... Around 1 at night I feel a pain in my head, I have the same dream 3-4 days a week, like someone smashed my head.

But two others complained that the main effect was on their future, through lack of school and being trapped here:

... The worst effect is that we have left school and cannot continue our studies and here we cannot study either, as you see there is no school, and they closed the border in our faces.

... When I get up early I feel afraid because I think about how many days we will stay here and we may never get out.

Children whose fathers are absent complain of missing them all the time, as with these two girls in group A:

*... My mind is not good here. I want to go to my father. Every day I talk to God and I hope*

*... My father is not here he is in Germany and I miss him and I cry all the time because I want to see my father in Syria, but you know it is war there. I hope I get out of here.*

### **Physical Health**

Many children identified lack of health care as a problem, comparing it unfavourably to Eko. Many children worried about their parents. For example, in girls group B:

*... My father is not getting any help. He has a problem with his heart and his feet, he cannot walk and he goes many times and they do nothing. Eko was better.*



*... In Eko the doctors were better than here. I have been five times. I have a pain in my head for three years and I want to go to Germany to fix it. In Eko they told me I need an operation on my nose.*

*... We would like a doctor here.*

Similarly:

*... I am very worried about my mother. She is sick and every day she is more sick and I don't see a solution for her condition. I am so worried, she has so many diseases and I become so upset. (Anna, aged 9 girl KI1)*

Parents outside the formal interviews identified physical health problems with themselves and their children and the failures of the existing health service to address them, as a major source of concern.

*... My daughter has a hole in her heart. When I take her in the shower she says mum I have a pain in my chest. I tell her its hot outside a cold shower is good for you. The doctors told her not to play outside in the heat it is not good for her. We have waited for a month trying to see the UNHCR doctor. She has problems with breathing and her heart and we were told in Eko she needed treatment. (Mother in parents' group bursts into tears while discussing this.)*

One boy key informant suffered from epilepsy, another girl in group A suffered asthma. Both parents complained of lack of care.

The mother above was connected to Protection team; however, other parents outside the group frequently raised small physical complaints, breathing difficulties and old injuries. Many requested a doctor after 4 pm.

## **Problems with Camp Life**

A starting point in the parent's groups, and in some of the children's groups, was that this was the wrong question. The most significant point, which the parents asked to be noted and broadcast, was that they should not be at the camp at all, that it was worse than Syria and that their lives here were humiliating and lacking in respect. The Fathers Group discussion made this particularly clear:

*... They are completely lost. We left home, running away to make our children's lives secure. We crossed the Syrian border and we saw a lot of human beings but we did not see humanity. Everyone has used our children for different political and economic agendas. They are using us as a playing card, first Turkey then Europe.*

*... My kids are lost*

*... I am a human being you are a human being. I ask you how many hours could you stay here. Everyone is using us as a tool to get money.*

*... It's obvious Greece gets money for refugees*

*... From the time of war to now we are living as if in the Dark Ages. No education, no basic needs. In Syria there were 23 million- a small country. And living there we had refugees from Lebanon, Iraq, Even Kosovo and Europe, but now 24 EU countries cannot take one million Syrians, they use us as a commercial product. We hope this message reaches the outside.*

*... In our country we had no problems with the children. We had plans for their future, but here they are living without a future.*

*... I can call this a guest house or a prison but what did the child do to stay here?*

*... Before we were here we did not think it would be worse than Syria but since living here we have realised the problems are worse than in Syria: first there are too many people, this creates instability in yourself and your family. Second the Atmosphere here. The father usually provides for the child: education, travel toys. Syria is a war zone. This is a country without War but we cannot do what we normally do. Why must the child live in prison?*

*...Guantanamo is a 3-star hotel compared to here. Yes, I can go out but when you go out you want to take the children for a picnic or a walk. How do we do that here? We are not free in that way. There are 1250 people here. Imagine 99% of us don't have money to buy bus tickets for Thessaloniki. My son needs a bag. I don't have the money for an ice cream. Children make big demands: I want an ice cream, I want a ball, they start to imagine potato crisps. Yes, the Camp is open but I don't care to go out for economic reasons.*

*... We have no money. It's an embarrassment*

*... It is like a farm for animals, like a Stable. There are 200 people in a hanger. In the morning they give us food. In the evening everyone gets and then they close the doors. Isn't that a farm?*

When one boy group was asked what improvements they would like, the first response was:

*... Open the borders so we can all go to our families*

Similarly, in girls group B:

*... Send us to Germany and end the story, we suffer a lot here. A house is better than a tent.*

*... First thing change the toilets, second, the NGO's who come here write our names and lie to us, so don't ever come back because you are giving us false hope.*

*... Let me go to Germany and find my elder brother.*

*... Open the borders and let us all go!*

Secondly, the majority of children compared the camp unfavourably with their experience in Eko where apparently the independent volunteer network did a better job in distributing quickly according to need, and providing education and health care:

*... We did not lack anything in Eko, we got whatever we needed. Here we lack so many things, clothes. A lot of organisations came and asked what we needed and gave it. Here they ask us what we need and do nothing and I am so fed up of their lying. (girl, group B)*

*... Toilets were better in Eko because they had water. (girl, group B)*

*... Eko was much better, here there is dirt everywhere, Eko was clean. The food was much better there. Many things were arranged better. (boy, group A)*

Although most children agreed that the provision of shade was better in Vasilika and there were less fights:

*... The best thing here is when we get up we don't suffer from the sun and we have Shade, at Eko the wind and rain came in our tents and we suffered a lot. (girl, group B)*

However, after participants were listened to and the interviewer explained their lack of power to move participants or open the borders, a concrete discussion of what could be improved in Vasilika Camp was able to occur. The consensus across parents' groups, children's groups and key informants was remarkable. The key issues are listed below:

### **Toilets**

Arguably this was the most upsetting aspect of Vasilika life. Everyone complained about the lack of water toilets, and their disgust and misery at having to use the chemical ones, because they were dirty, smelt bad and were stuffy. Moreover, water to wash hands afterwards was often not available.

*... The toilet is without sanitation, its filthy. Then we go to wash our hands and there is no water in the tap. Dirty toilets and then no water! (boy, group A)*

*... They don't have water so we have to take water from our tent. The other problem is some boys and girls do what they want and shit on the ground. (girl, group A)*

### **Food**

No one liked the food, and a couple of weeks prior to this study there had been a food strike. This was ended when children became hungry. It is interesting to note that food was the major complaint at Lagkadikia camp, which similarly engaged in a food strike. The topic is a constant source of discussion, and at the time of writing this report the Greek Government would not provide communal cooking facilities in any camp unless it could be provided in all. As a consequence, the interviewer witnessed enormous food waste in all the camps visited and informal cooking arrangements, including open fires, fires in tents, gas and electric stoves in tents and limited numbers of stoves at open electric points. The mother's groups were well aware of the dangers:

*... We cook outside on fires or the stoves, but there is not enough for the camp..*

*... I (cook in my tent) know it is dangerous.*

*... They talk about a kitchen but nothing has happened. They don't give oil or sugar and we cannot afford to buy it. If its donated, we can cook vegetables.*

Children in all of the groups complained of being hungry. In boys group B, all six boys complained of both hunger and losing weight.

... The worst thing is being here because it is not for humans it's for animals like cows, it is not good for us. And also the food is so bad, I just eat bread and cheese and nothing else. (boy group B)

... The food is not good and its little. (girl, group A)

... I want to kill it's so disgusting (girl, group A)

## **Clothes**

Mothers and children also complained about the lack of children's clothes

... There has been no distribution of children's clothes since the day we arrived. Two months ago.

... The clothes we wear now are what we wore in Syria. (Mothers group)

## **School**

The issue that dominated all group discussions and key informant interviews was the lack of school. It was clear in the children's groups and interviews that many had significant memories of enjoying school and the friendships made there.

... Before the war my father was working, everyone was working. I was so happy, I went to school and learnt English and I liked reading and writing. That was my favourite (girl, group A)

... I was with mother and father and my friends in school. I loved school and I liked English (girl, group B).

... I really liked school and even when father was afraid I wanted to go. I said let me go alone if necessary. (Ghadeer aged 12, girl K12)

The fathers made it clear that the main reason they had left Syria was for the sake of their children's education and that the absence of a proper school was a major problem

... The main reason we left Syria and became refugees was to educate our children and ensure they did not lose their future. Turkey was really difficult. Europe said come but it was a trap!

...You want everything for your child. What I care about is education.

... You would choose death for the sake of your children.

Mothers also emphasised the need:

... It is not systematic or organised. We want an organised school with a teacher and classes. The one here is one day on and 2 days off. The children go to school and are told it is closed. There is no commitment, no discipline, no structure neither for the teachers nor the children. (mothers group)

And, the children were detailed in their critique of the existing structure and of what they wanted instead:

... Number 1 a school. If we can learn here. There is a school. But it is not like Eko. It has to be better, bigger space and after we finished lessons we had play after school, now it's not available. Also we could be in school more hours. (boy, group A)

... This is not a school. We want a bigger place with desks and uniforms and nice teachers (boy, group B)

...School means discipline, we have to go every day not just when you like (boy, group B)

... You should make it better with lessons for girls and boys of the same age not 5-6 year olds and older. There is too much noise the younger children run around they are noisy and take our notebooks. (girl, group A)

... We have an English teacher, but no pens or papers (girl, group B)

## **Informal Activities**

Children did not spend much time discussing these, possibly because there was at time of writing an active programme run by volunteers. It was interesting to note that formal education was prioritised. Parents requested a playground with rubber mats, rather than the sand that irritated children's eyes. One key informant did make detailed recommendations:

... Now we have started to play, for example that is a playground, (he points to it) the school, it's better than nothing, and there is a shady area to play and then the foreigners come to play with the children and do different kinds of play. And we have started to clean all over the camp and we have started to have volley ball and some days we make a



party and also we organise football matches like a league between different teams, although that is for older children but we younger ones want it too and we did it 2 or 3 times.

What would make it better?

*The children would be happy if you organised different competitive games like football and basketball You should make the school bigger. It should have more staff and papers like in Eko. There should be study, play and different activities like drawing. Also there should be time for crafts and making things with our hands. (Jusuf, age 13 boy K12)*

### **Intra-family problems**

The stress of life in the Camp has led to an increase in intra- familial violence. Parents complain that their children are running wild and that the physical conditions of camp life, the lack of structured activities for children and the lack of privacy do not allow them to discipline the children correctly. They also acknowledge that there are more conflicts between parents including verbal and physical fights, which has a knock on effect on the children

*... They learn bad stuff from other children here and talk in a bad way, and when we advise them they say: all the children do that here. (Mothers group)*

*...There are more fights because of the conditions. We argue at home then Father says, enough I don't want to hear more; and the boy is not listening. It leads to depression, and arguments between mother and son become arguments between husband and wife. (Mothers group)*

*... This has a big effect on the children. They are afraid when they see Father beating mother. Also the children copy the Father and can be violent as well. (Mothers group)*

*... Another problem is that father's neglect children and their wives. They go out early and come back late because they are depressed. (Mothers group)*



One mother frankly acknowledged the change in her own behaviour, as a result of the living conditions. Although, the other mothers in the group did not agree that beating was common.

*... I am nervous with the children. I pull them inside the tent and I beat them. For example, just now my son took a shower, then ran in the dirt and came back full of dirt. I was so annoyed! How many times did I tell you if you take a shower stay clean, and because it is so difficult here, the toilets are not really any good and we suffer so much to take a shower- at home he could be clean again in a minute but here it is not possible, so when the child came back I beat him. If you want to research this problem here, do not do a group, people will not tell you. (Mother)*

Many of the children acknowledged that their parent's methods of discipline had changed significantly in the camp as illustrated by these three girls from group A.

*... When I was young my mother never hit me, she taught me good and bad by talking. When we came here, when I do bad things she hits me.*

*... In Syria my mother never hurt me. When we came here she started.*

*... My mother hits me. My mother changed when we came here, she never hit me in Syria.*

They were also able to understand that this was partly in response to the changed conditions of Camp:

*... My sister never listens to my mother, so she is always beating her. She didn't in Syria, only here. My mother wants to discipline her and tells her to stay in the tent all day but she is out 24 hours, she never comes back to eat or change clothes or anything else, she is out playing all day. (girl, group B)*

*... I see a little violence, because if I go and fight with another boy my father will hit me, he never did that in Syria. If I leave the tent without permission and come back, he will hit me. (boy, group B)*

And this girl vividly describes watching her parents fight:

*... In the tent where I live everyday there is an argument between my mother and father, and when they argue he threatens to return to Athens, and Turkey and Syria alone. It's just words not physical but they fight about the living situation and when my mother talks to my brother in Germany she is crying (girl, group B)*

### **Intercommunal violence**

The girls in Focus Group 2 reported frequent fights

*... I am frightened every time I see people fighting, they are carrying weapons here.*

*... There are many fights here between people with sticks and knives.*

*... Last night there was a fight between young guys but older ones solved it. It was worse in Eko.*

All seven of the girls in this group were upset by fights between older people and the knives. The police do not help.

*... That time there was a fight in section 2 it was a bad fight and they did not intervene. They saw the knives and did not move a muscle.*

*... I have seen fights in the camp. We had one in our section with knives during distribution. One guy beat the son of another guy. So the Kurdish man told others to come and beat the guy who beat the Kurd. My mother called me into our tent. It came to an end and there was peace. But another time a Kurds took an Arab guy into their tent and wounded his hands. [...] we are not safe here. We are not safe. Because my brothers are small I am afraid. (Ghadeer aged 12, girl K12)*

### **Harassment of children**

All 7 girls in the Focus group 2 made clear that they do not feel safe in the camp because of:

- The frequent fights between adults. These often involve knives, and the police do not intervene.
- They and other children are approached by individual adults and offered treats, or to be taken in cars, or asked to go to the sea alone.
- Three girls report that the police have asked them out.
- One girl reports a friend disappearing in a car with strangers

These reports were verified by our Kurdish translator, who has heard of many similar instances in the Camp.



Girls in Focus Group 2 reported:

*...There is a guy here who is trying to use food and sweets to tempt young girls and boys and take them to another camp and sell them.*

*... I always see a guy outside the camp, he is a refugee , he is drunk and beats older children.*

*... We see that drunk guy every night, he comes to this section (the empty warehouse section used as basketball court etc.) and he gets boys to stay with him.*

*... There is a guy here, he is taking children to do nasty things with them by the sea.*

*... The man taking the boys to the sea asked me to go. I refused and I told Mrs. S.*

*... He is very known and he is a foreigner.*

*... He was also in Eko. He is not a refugee.*

*(All the children were very clear that this is a different man from a well-known Spanish volunteer-who takes groups of children to the sea on outings.)*

*... One day I was with a new friend. She had short black hair and we were outside the camp. Two guys came with a car and asked us to get in. I refused but she got in. I told her don't listen. She was crying and yelling but she still went. That was 4- 5 days ago. She is from the Arab section; I don't know if she came back or not. I have not seen her since.*

*... One day I was taking my little brother outside the camp. A man came to me and said come with me I have a lot of toys for you and your brother, come and play with me. He spoke Arabic.*

*... There was a foreign woman. She was like a friend for me here and she told me she wanted to buy me a necklace and a bracelet, but she said we have to go outside to get it. Then she took me out, she had a car, I had my twin brothers and I said I must ask my parents or the police first, but the woman said: no its just between me and you. So I said No. So then she said: OK I will take one of your brothers, and then I saw a neighbour and I called her and said: please take my brothers and they did. That woman comes every few days to play with children. But from the time I said I must ask police I have only seen her once.*

*... We are so afraid of the police because the police sometimes are asking me to go out with them and my sister and my friend. (12-year-old girl)*

Two other girls reported that they know police ask girls out.

Key informants made similar reports:

*... One day a Guy outside the camp told me to come to the sea and I was afraid. He was a foreigner, English speaking. It was just me I was outside on the road and he told me to walk along with him to the sea. Because I was alone and there were no other children I was afraid. I told my mother. (Anna, aged 9 girl KI1)*

Her mother confirmed this

*... She came and said mum, I want to go to the sea. There is a man who offered to take me to the sea and he offered me clothes and things. I told her no, you don't go anywhere without me.*



## 4. SOME PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The most significant step towards psychological wellbeing would be to clarify and speed up the process out of the camp towards a stable future life. The feeling of being betrayed and exploited by Europe and indefinitely trapped in degrading and humiliating conditions was overwhelming, particularly from the fathers interviewed.

While living in the Camp, the research makes clear what concrete steps can be taken to improve psychosocial wellbeing.

It has long been established that psychosocial wellbeing is best addressed in the first instance by attending to basic needs and social issues. Children and parents at Vasilika have identified poor food, inadequate unsanitary toilets and a lack of security as major issues. All of these could be easily addressed in the Camp setting.

**Toilets** could be changed for water toilets, as are already provided in other camps. Hot water could be provided for a greater part of the day- this will be essential in winter.

The provision of communal **kitchen** facilities with an adequate number of electric points and washing facilities, combined with the distribution of either monetary vouchers or adequate culturally appropriate food rations, would not only improve nutrition. It would also contribute to camp cohesion by increasing opportunities for social contact and diminishing violence. It would allow for more structured social activities outside the tent and lower the risk of tent fires and accidental burns and electric shocks.

The **better schooling** issue may be addressed by allowing children into the Greek education system. Hopefully the children's repeated requests for: space, educational materials, structure, discipline, proper teachers, age appropriate, organised play and sport time, and uniform can be addressed in that context. However, depending how long this will take, the provision of structured educational activities in an adequate building would be helpful and also provide the opportunity to address protection topics and children's safety.

**Informal activities** would benefit from much more structure, skilled volunteers, materials for crafts, larger organised space both for arts activities and for volley ball and football in a safe area, as suggested above.

**Intra-family violence** and **intercommunal violence** might be reduced by first of all addressing the above issues. In addition, the provision of comfortable social space where adults can go to relax outside their tents would be helpful. The establishment of some kind of parenting programme, which allowed parents to meet and share ideas and receive support in the provision of non- punitive discipline for their children, would also be helpful. There should be more discussion with the women in the Camp as to what provision they would like to see to help address domestic violence. At the least, the provision of a responsive helpline number should be provided as well as a simple method of reporting in person and confidentially to UNHCR protection. None of those who were interviewed at the camp knew how to do this.

**Harassment** needs to be urgently addressed through the full involvement of the protection agencies and community. The complaints should be investigated. There should also be general camp wide training for children on keeping themselves safe.

**Health:** The existing health provision does not appear to be adequately identifying or addressing the needs of those children and adults with more severe problems, who may require individual attention. These needs should be discussed with the providing agency to see how they might be best addressed in a non- stigmatising way. In other camps, MDM has a psychologist attached to their team and has moved to 24-hour cover.

**CONSENT FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION IN FOCUS GROUP**

Date: .....

Camp: .....

I ..... (PRINT) as the parent or guardian of

..... (PRINT CHILD NAME)

hereby give my consent to him / her joining the group discussion.

I understand that the purpose of the group is to learn directly from children about their lives in this camp, what problems they face and their ideas for improvements. All interviews will be anonymous and the child's name will not be used. International Medical Corps will provide a full report for the community and will use this information to help improve the conditions for children in the camp. The information may also be published in various media for advocacy purposes to inform the public about the situation of refugee children in Greece. Even if permission is granted the child is free to leave the group at any time.

There is no payment of any kind for participation in the group.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Relationship to child.....

Child's DOB.....

Consent collected by.....(please print name)

Signature.....

**CONSENT FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION IN KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW**

Date: .....

Camp: .....

I ..... (PRINT) as the parent or guardian of

..... (PRINT CHILD NAME)

hereby give my consent to him / her being interviewed by Dr. Lynne Jones.

I understand that the purpose of the interview is to learn directly from children about their lives, both before they came to Greece, and in the camp today. These interviews are completely voluntary and anonymous. They will allow for a better understanding of the children's hopes, fears and aspirations, their particular needs, the problems they face here in the camps and their ideas for improvements. All interviews will be completely voluntary and anonymous and the child's name will not be used in any circumstances. The information gained will contribute to an assessment of needs in the camp and parts may also be published in various media for advocacy purposes to inform the public about the situation of refugee children in Greece. Even if permission is granted the child is free not to participate or to end the interview at any time.

There is no payment of any kind for participation in the interview.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Relationship to child.....

Child's DOB.....

Consent collected by.....(please print name)

Signature.....

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