WHAT DO REFUGEE AND GREEK YOUTH WANT?
FINDINGS FROM A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR YOUTH

Conducted by Refugee Trauma Initiative for its Dinami Youth Programme in Greece

SEPTEMBER 2020
SUMMARY

In Spring 2020, 37 young people living in Greece, from both refugee and Greek backgrounds, participated in an online survey conducted by RTI’s youth programme, ‘Dinami’. The assessment revealed their assets and needs as related to wellbeing, integration, and their futures, as well as their priorities for youth projects. We also gathered information on how they were affected by COVID-19, and ideas for support in a future lockdown. After initial analysis, findings were shared with a group of 12 previous participants in Dinami projects, who discussed and deepened the insights and recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE THAT THAT PARTICIPANTS ARE EAGER FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- Experience respite and relaxation in safe spaces
- Gain work experience, skills, and support securing employment
- Engage with and process their feelings and traumatic experiences through creative therapies
- Participate in a variety of projects -- reflecting the wide variety of priorities and needs
- Participate in projects that are easy to access, for example in a range of settings including refugee camps
- Connect to their own and others’ cultures and identities, for example through music, food, and dance
- Form communities and meet with others with shared experiences

INTRODUCTION:
WHY DO A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Refugee and Greek youth living in Greece face a range of challenges, from overcoming adversity through to finding learning opportunities, employment, and their place in society. In particular, those from refugee backgrounds may be navigating past trauma and loss, everyday hardships and obstacles such as language barriers, discrimination, isolation, securing asylum, finding employment and accommodation, and ongoing uncertainty about their futures.

At this crucial age, as these young people transition into adulthood, youth projects can provide vital opportunities to help overcome some of these challenges by fostering a sense of agency, belonging and community, through developing skills, confidence and friendships.

Since 2018, Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI) has been running a Youth Programme in Thessaloniki, called Dinami (Δύναμη), meaning “power” in Greek. Dinami brings together refugee and Greek youth aged 15-25 years old to learn, create, relax, and connect through a range of projects and activities. Through project-based learning and psychosocial support, the Dinami programme supports young people to feel empowered and prepared for their futures.

Reflecting the backgrounds of participants, the Dinami team is youth-led, with team members from both displaced and host communities. By bringing people together from different backgrounds and including people from the host community, we hope Dinami projects foster intercultural exchanges, integration, and the building of new friendships and communities.

In early 2020, the Dinami team reviewed past projects and Dinami’s direction of travel. Gathering lessons learned and feedback from the team and community so far, we arrived at a proposed structure for projects. However, to accompany this, we felt it important to conduct a more in-depth Needs Assessment to find out from the communities we work with: what is it that young people themselves want out of youth projects? What are their needs and what can they contribute to projects (assets and resources)?

While we gather and listen to participants’ feedback and ideas in an ongoing way to shape projects, we wanted this needs assessment to be a deep dive and a chance to ensure future programming is grounded in the priorities, needs, and assets of the target group. As we were planning this assessment, the COVID-19 outbreak reached Greece – shifting the proposed approach, as explained below.
We aimed to reach out to 15-24 year-olds, from both refugee and host communities, living in and around Thessaloniki, in order to understand:

1. WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND ASSETS OF YOUTH IN THE TARGET GROUP?
   a) Their wellbeing, particularly mental health and psychosocial domains
   b) Integration and building a future (e.g. employment and education)

2. WHAT ARE YOUTH’S PRIORITIES FOR SERVICES AND PROJECTS?
   a) Type, format, content, length of projects
   b) What are the opportunities for and barriers to participation?

Throughout, we intended to follow RTI’s monitoring and evaluation principles:

a) Equity-based approach which recognises power dynamics, uses participatory tools, and builds trust and relationships. We aim for the participants to feel they are the authors and owners of their data and narratives. Connected to this, we wanted to explore both needs and assets, recognising inherent resources, skills and strengths of participants.

b) Tools tailored for participants, which are trauma- and identity-informed, and youth-appropriate.

c) Gather data on what matters, in terms of youth’s wellbeing, such as sources of joy, relaxation, connection, and healing.

d) Ensure data adds value to both RTI and the community. Incorporate findings into our programmes in a meaningful way. Present findings back to participants at the end of the process as a launch pad into greater co-design and co-ownership of Dinami projects.

METHOD: HOW WE GATHERED DATA

When first planning the needs assessment in February 2020, we wanted to keep the spirit of Dinami throughout data collection. We planned to run workshops and have group activities which were interactive and engaging and provided data on the issues of interest. For example, small focus groups with people with shared demographics (shared language, gender, and/or living conditions such as living in a camp) who would participate in games and activities based around questions. The participants would be invited to answer in creative and movement-based ways, e.g. spectrum lines, use of posters and post-its, and other dynamic activities.

COVID-19 SHIFTED APPROACH TO AN ONLINE SURVEY

As COVID-19 measures came into place in March 2020 and prevented group activities, we needed to shift our approach and decided on an online survey. Alongside the original areas of interest, we added in questions specifically about the COVID-19 situation.

To help make the survey accessible, we selected a platform which was user-friendly, visual, and worked well on mobile phones, and we translated the questions into Arabic, Greek, Farsi, French, Kurmanji, and Urdu. Alongside English, this meant that participants could select out of seven languages to participate in. In simple ways, we explained the purpose of the survey, and how findings would be used, to help ensure informed consent.

During April and May 2020, the Dinami youth team (speaking Arabic, French, English, Greek between them) conducted outreach using tools and channels relevant to youth, particularly Whatsapp, as well as through NGOs and social workers. We reached out to the Dinami community and participants in previous Dinami projects (alumni), as well as to refugee and Greek youth who had not participated in a project before.
To help boost participation, particularly among women and people living in camps, some surveys were conducted over the phone and in person. For instance, a Dinami youth facilitator who speaks Arabic visited sites such as the area outside of Diavata camp and a refugee centre to conduct surveys in person, while adhering to social distancing measures.

In July, once we’d analysed responses, we met with a group of Dinami participants to discuss the initial findings and explore their feedback.

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### Method: How we gathered data

**Participants**

- 37 young people living in Greece (24 refugee youth and 13 Greek youth)
- From all over the world: Afghanistan (5), Egypt (1), Ghana (1), Greece (10), Kashmir (1), Iran (3), Iraq (5), Morocco (1), Pakistan (3), Syria (3)
- Refugees were living in both camps (12 people) and urban settings (12 people). All Greek youth were living in urban settings.
- Both men (20) and women (13) * (remaining did not disclose gender)

### Findings: What Young People Said

#### Range of Ages:

- 7 10 16 2
  - 15-18yrs 19-22yrs 23-26yrs 27-30yrs
  - Men Women

- 20 13

#### Limitations

While the responses and findings below provide some rich insight to shape and tailor RTI’s youth projects, we recognise that respondents were self-selected and of a small sample size, and therefore not necessarily representative of the wider population or others with shared demographics.
**RESPONSES**

1. **WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND ASSETS OF YOUTH IN THE TARGET GROUP?**

   **1a) Wellbeing and mental health**

   We wanted to check-in with participants about their levels of perceived wellbeing. However, given the pandemic situation and how this might have been affecting them, we also asked how this compares to before lockdown.

   Questions asked in this category included: Thinking about the best you have ever felt (score of 10) and the worst you have ever felt (score of 1), how have you been feeling recently? Is this better, worse, or the same as in February (before the COVID-19 regulations started)?

   Levels of reported wellbeing varied, demonstrating a range of needs.

   - Of the ten people who gave low scores (1-4 out of 10) only one of these was Greek (with a score of 3), and the rest were from the refugee community. This suggests that those from a refugee background may be more in need of psychosocial support.
   - Nine people gave high scores (7-10 out of 10), with four people from Greece and five from other countries.
   - The majority (18 people) gave a mid-range score of 5-6.
   - Nearly half (16 people) said they were feeling worse than before COVID-19 regulations, four said they felt the same, and eight said they were feeling better.

Within the survey were some open questions about the ways that participants relax and have fun, to gain some insight on their existing approaches to supporting their wellbeing. These coping strategies and interests can be incorporated and built into Dinami projects and foster the psychosocial support components of projects.

We grouped responses (see graphs X and Y - label as appropriate once graphs created), and found that reoccurring answers included mindful, creative, and expressive activities such as playing and making music; arts and creativity; being with friends; going out and being outside; sports, dancing and other movement; learning, reading, and writing.

A few struggled to think of ways in which they relax and have fun, and these people were generally living in refugee camps and therefore more dire conditions than those living in urban settings. The answers highlighted the wide variety of needs and assets, and therefore the importance of a variety of projects and activities.
**“It’s fun for me to go to restaurants and coffee shops with friends”**

19-YEAR-OLD MAN FROM AFGHANISTAN

**“I feel reassured and comfortable when I pray, and I love to draw too, and watch movies.”**

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN FROM IRAQ

**“Time passes because of the interest in writing and reading poetry. After expressing the words of the heart in the form of poems, the burden of the heart is reduced”**

MAN FROM KASHMIR

**“To walk, to exercise, to listen to music, to talk to friends”**

24-YEAR-OLD WOMAN FROM GREECE

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**1b. Integration and building a future**

Participants shared their aspirations for their future, and then what they felt they needed to reach their goals.

Asked about what job they would like to have, a wide variety of answers came back to this open question, with particular mention to creative jobs (6 responses) including working in fashion or being an actor, writer, or musician. Others would like to work in business (3 responses), medical professions (2), helping others (2), translation (2), and with food or a chef (2). Teacher, tailor, and programmer were also mentioned. Six did not know what they would like to do.

We asked refugee participants if they planned to settle in Greece, as this connects to their future aspirations, and the need for projects to support integration and language-learning, and build connections with the Greek community. Out of 24 participants, eleven said they think they will continue to live in Greece, eleven were not sure or undecided, and two said no. Many who selected ‘yes’ explained this is because they like the country and culture. One person said: “The Greek people are kind and warm-hearted, and the weather is great here, and I can’t think of a refugee life anymore. I just want to get a degree and live a normal life.”

One factor for deciding on staying in Greece or not may be levels of Greek languages. Of the 24 refugee youth who completed the survey, the majority said their level of Greek was poor (19 gave themselves a score of 1 or 2 out of 5). English levels were more varied, across both Greek and refugee youth, with lower scores in general among the refugee population.

**WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS FEEL THEY NEEDED FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURES, AND TO REACH THEIR FUTURE GOALS? KEY THEMES INCLUDED:**

- **Education, knowledge and studying, as well as learning languages** was raised by both people from refugee and Greek community. “Education and learn a profession”, “Trust in God, learn the language and work hard”

- **Work, professional, and vocation-specific skills and experience.** “Opportunities for relevant work to gain experience”.

- **Life skills and internal qualities:** “I need patience, persistence and diligence”, and “patience, perseverance, hard work, self-discipline”.

- **Help and support from others and feeling part of a community:** “Efforts and advice from experienced people”, “A good friend I haven’t met yet”, “I just need social support”. Some also mentioned they want to help others, with a few from refugee backgrounds saying they want to support fellow refugees and engage in related advocacy. “I want to work as a spokesperson to provide better guidance to refugees”.

- **Having a space to feel safe and explore experiences:** 10 participants said that having access to safe spaces to explore their feelings and experiences was important for their futures, speaking to the value of healing spaces.
WHAT ARE YOUTH’S PRIORITIES FOR SERVICES AND PROJECTS?

2a. Type, format, content, and length of projects

Reflecting the wide variety of needs and assets, respondents’ interests and preferences for projects varied. Reiterating some of issues raised above, the key areas of requested projects were:

- Creative and expressive projects
- Opportunities to practise and learn languages, particularly Greek and English
- Opportunities to gain practical and work skills, and support finding work
- Education, learning, and awareness-raising activities
- Support understanding the asylum process in Greece
We asked a variety of questions to understand priorities about time and length of projects. The majority of respondents preferred projects to:

- take place in the afternoon,
- be two hours,
- occur 2-3 days a week,
- last 2-3 months.

They also said that the best way for us to promote projects is through Whatsapp (16 responses), Staff from NGOs (13) and Facebook (11).

2b. What are the opportunities for and barriers to participation?

Currently all RTI projects take place around Thessaloniki city centre, with participants from different countries. We explained this in the survey and asked “What might prevent you from participating in these projects?” (closed question).

Many identified barriers to participation related to the location of projects in the city centre – that the distance is too far, or that they cannot afford travel costs. Some also mentioned lacking confidence or language ability (four from refugee community and one Greek). Two participants, both women, selected “My family might not allow me or like me participating”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The distance to Thessaloniki city centre is too far</th>
<th>I lack confidence to learn a new skill</th>
<th>I cannot afford travel costs to Thessaloniki</th>
<th>I don’t speak Greek or English</th>
<th>My family might not allow me or like me participating</th>
<th>The activities don’t appeal to me</th>
<th>I lack the confidence or interest to participate in a project with people from different countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek youth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee youth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19

We sent the online survey out between April and May 2020, when lockdown restrictions were in place or in the process of lifting. To acknowledge the reality of the situation and understand the impact on them to inform our COVID-19 programming, we asked a few additional questions about how the pandemic was affecting them.

In parallel, RTI conducted focus groups discussions through phone calls with people from refugee community for a separate report on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees living in Greece, which can be found on our website: https://www.refugeetrauma.org/s/2020-06_RTI_COVID19_REFUGEESGR.pdf.

Echoing findings from these group discussions, respondents to the online survey expressed a range of reactions and levels of concern about COVID-19. In addition, as mentioned above, nearly half (16 people) said they were feeling worse than before COVID-19 regulations, four said they felt the same, and eight said they were feeling better.
Many said they no longer had access to language services, education, legal and asylum services, and medical and psychological services (during lockdown in March-May 2020). Some mentioned lacking access to the internet or data on their phones.

On the whole participants said they had enough information related to COVID-19 and how to seek medical support. The majority (27 respondents) said they were happy with the information they were receiving.

Responses provided ideas for how young people could be supported in future lockdowns, including:

- Provide links to online learning platforms, activities, and opportunities
- Provide items to help them have something to do (e.g. notebook, pens, art materials)
- Online calls, social hang outs, and activity sessions with other young people (all remote)
- Provide information or videos on: movement and exercise, asylum process, and music playlists.

Other key findings include:

- Several participants from refugee backgrounds shared that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their asylum process or access to related information (see graph).

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“Of course it was a difficult period during the ban, but we definitely adhered to the laws. And I felt depressed during the quarantine period. And I tried to use this time for something useful.”

21-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, IRAQ

“Coronavirus has positive and negative points … the answers are we met with families and sisters, we rejoiced a lot and we thought a lot… and the negatives are the killing of a lot of people and the economy of the world with a waste … to the other”

25-YEAR-OLD MAN, IRAQ

“I had bigger problems than Corona and I didn’t care much for them and I overcame them.”

23-YEAR-OLD MAN, AFGHANISTAN

“The virus has greatly affected my financial, professional and social situation”

24-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, GREECE

Other key findings include:

- Several participants from refugee backgrounds shared that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their asylum process or access to related information (see graph).
FINDINGS: WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

WHAT DO REFUGEE AND GREEK YOUTH WANT?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Following the results of this survey and an initial analysis, we met with 12 previous Dinami participants to share these findings and explore whether they agreed and if any information is missing.

The discussion we had with the group reaffirmed the key findings and priorities for projects, and highlighted in particular the interest for:

- Creative projects related to music, dance, writing, and arts
- Skills-building projects such as gaining language skills
- Regular social and community events, and outings such as into nature
- Opportunities for work experience and opportunities for livelihood
- Co-designing, organising and leading workshops and meet-ups
- Intercultural exchanges and bonding such as through music, dancing, cooking, food related sharing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question asked: What could RTI and other organisations do to help you right now? [closed question]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online calls and social hang outs with other young people (group conversations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Dinami youth session (e.g. one hour long, led by one person)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide online links to free online activities and opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide items to help me stay clean (e.g. soap, hand sanitiser)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide items to help me have something to do (e.g. notebook, pens, art materials)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide data for my mobile phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question asked: Which of the following topics would you like information or online videos on? [closed question]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT AND EXERCISE SESSIONS</td>
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<td>STORYTELLING</td>
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<td>MEDITATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSIC PLAYLISTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASYLUM PROCESS IN GREECE</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
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<td>YOGA</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEARNING PLATFORMS</td>
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The aim of this assessment was to gain a better understanding of the needs, assets, and priorities of refugee and local youth in Greece. Key findings are summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings: What Young People Said</th>
<th>RTI Commitment: with our partners, we will...</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Music and creativity** | - Include more music aspects into all Dinami projects  
- Collaborate with local musicians on a music project  
- Continue to offer creative projects like arts and crafts, theatre, etc. |
| **Being with friends and belonging to a community** | - Create more social events and ongoing activities  
- Set up an Alumni network for previous Dinami participants to meet and to create these events together -- helping to build organising skills. |
| **Sports, dancing, and movement** | - Include more movement activities in all projects  
- Through local partnerships we will continue to offer activities like football and dancing  
- Continue to consult with movement & body therapists to explore trauma-sensitive psychosocial movement exercises |
| **Reading and writing** | - Offer writing projects, to foster self-expression  
- Provide platforms for youth & Dinami alumni to share their writings. |
| **Being outside and in nature** | - Organise more projects outdoors, including day trips  
- Explore opportunities to work on ecological and gardening projects. |

- **Practise and learn languages, particularly Greek and English** | - Host ongoing language exchange events to practise speaking. We launched this in July, in collaboration with Balkan Hearts.  
- Continue to invite in a mixture of languages into Dinami projects and provide facilitation in English, Greek, and other languages spoken by trainees from the community (e.g. Arabic, Farsi, and Kurmanji). |
| **Gain practical work skills, and support finding work** | - Create more work and professional development opportunities, particularly for Dinami alumni.  
- Hire trainees from the refugee community to co-facilitate projects.  
- Continue to ensure projects are co-led with professionals  
- Link participants to organisations which support CV writing and job applications |
| **Support education and learning** | - Share relevant and free learning resources  
- Consider educational components of all projects |
| **Understand the asylum process in Greece** | - Refer participants to local organisations that provide advice, information, or support |
| **Be creative and expressive** | - Continue to provide and create opportunities for creativity, expression, and emotional processing in all projects |
| **Take place 2-3 afternoons a week, for 2 hours, lasting 2-3 months and support transportation** | - Follow these recommendations when possible  
- Continue to cover any travel costs to Thessaloniki  
- Partner and train other organisations around Greece, including in refugee camps, so they can run their own Dinami projects and increase the number of projects and participants. |
THE FUTURE OF DINAMI: DINAMI HUBS

A key barrier to participation was the location of Dinami in the city centre of Thessaloniki, which is often inaccessible to people living in camps and other parts of Greece. Going forward, RTI aims to scale up the Dinami programme by training and building the capacity of partner organisations in a variety of locations in camp and urban settings.

The intention is that these partner organisations will create Dinami projects, allowing for more psychosocial, trauma- and identity-informed youth projects, and therefore reaching more young people.

Additionally, this allows RTI to test and refine the Dinami model, expanding it beyond our reach as an organisation. We will work with the Dinami alumni community to co-develop and co-create these projects together in a way that inspires ownership and leadership. Future projects will be informed by these findings, and reflect the range of needs, assets and priorities of Greek and refugee youth.

FINDINGS: WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

WHAT DO REFUGEE AND GREEK YOUTH WANT?
Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI) was founded in 2016 to address the psychosocial needs of refugees affected by violence and forced displacement in Northern Greece. Our mission is to support refugee children, youth and families to heal and rebuild their lives. Our vision is a world where trauma-sensitive & identity informed practices sit at the heart of all humanitarian work.