



humanitycrew

Annual Report 2017



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MISSION

Humanity Crew is an international aid organization specializing in the provision of first response mental health interventions and psychological aid to refugees and people in crises. Humanity Crew works to deploy mental health and psychosocial support to displaced populations in order to improve their mental health and wellbeing, to restore order in their lives, and to prevent further psychological escalation. Humanity Crew seeks to create a world in which mental health support is a fundamental component in all emergency efforts for victims of humanitarian crises.



OVERVIEW

Humanity Crew's second full active year yielded a learning and effective year with some programmatic and institutional changes. This year formulated a lot of improvement and advancement as a young new and growing organization; we've formed new partners, piloted new locations, closed down old ones, and hired more professional personnel. Following our strategic plan, we've continued to raise awareness on both the local and international level, while prioritizing program assessment and funding.

The refugee situation, especially in regards to mental health support, remained a catastrophe. In particular after the EU-Turkey deal, where people remained stuck in camps and shelters. The need for MHPSS programs and knowledge for mental health support was proven to be as necessary as ever, if not more than previous years, since we are seeing an increase in despair because of the unchanging situation.





THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN EUROPE IN 2017

6

[The refugee situation in Europe in 2017](#)

was defined by a further lack of mental health support to those stuck in the country and those who were still arriving, and included many obstacles including closed borders, racism, rejected

applications, and very little improvement on their overall wellbeing and safety. The forcibly displaced population increased by 2.9 million in 2017. By the end of the year, 68.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result



60,000 refugees trapped in Greece due to the March 2016 borders closing as a result of the EU-Turkey deal. UNHCR's statistics claim that more than 178,000 people made the dangerous voyage through sea, and more than 3,000 people have been proclaimed dead - a lower figure from 2016 yet a tragically high number.

The Syrian people continued to bear the brunt of the civil war, and at the end of 2017, Syria remained the main country of origin of refugees worldwide. There was a 14% increase in the total number of Syrian refugees in 2017.

of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. As a result, the world's forcibly displaced population remained yet again at a record high.

By the end of 2017 there were more than

Arrivals in Europe



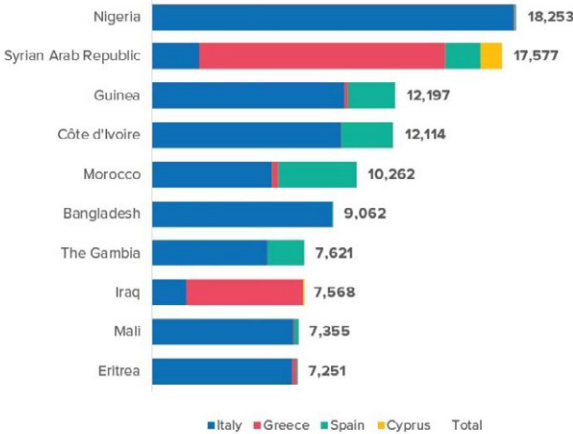
Arrivals



Dead and Missing



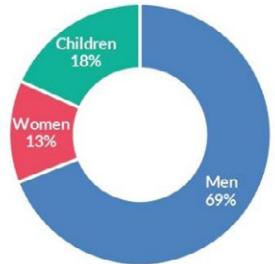
Top 10 nationalities of Mediterranean sea arrivals in 2017



Distribution per country of arrivals



Demography of Arrivals



*Infographics: UNHCR KEYDATA of 2017



OUR WORK IN GREECE

At the end of 2017, with many long days, weeks, and months of hard work, and after many difficult staff meetings and discussions, we decided to leave our working stations in Mytilene and Thessaloniki. Our goal was to temporarily focus on raising more funds to be able to sustain our work, assess all our work so far, and build a strong program in a new and urban location, Athens. It was a very difficult decision to make since Lesvos, in

particular, was the birthplace of Humanity Crew, and there was a strong emotional attachment to the island and its people. We recognized that there was still a massive need for MHPSS programs there, and since there were no organizations dedicated to exclusively support mental health on the island, it made it difficult to take the decision to leave. However, we felt it necessary for our growth and

so from October to December, we took the decision to re-assess our program and form new partnerships in a new community, build a new program, and relocate our fieldwork.

As way of background, since November 2015 Humanity Crew have worked in camps, shorelines, ports, and the local hospital in the city of Mytilene, and mainly at Lesvos Solidarity - PIKPA Camp, which was the core of our fieldwork activity in 2016 and 2017. Later, as a response to the EU-Turkey deal, we expanded our work to the north to Diavata Camp, Elpída Center, and Floxenia Housing Project on the outskirts of Thessaloniki in mainland Greece. In addition to our work at the camps, we ran significant emergency work during the height of the refugee crisis. We also initiated several emergency operations. These included work on-board rescue boats of our partners Proactiva Open Arms, mental health mobile clinics on shores and ports, and our work with hospital staff once refugees were referred there.

to the resilience of the refugees, prevent the deterioration of their mental health, and enhance the communal empathy and support mechanisms. The activities, implemented by a team of native Arabic speaking mental health professionals and qualified volunteers, support the refugees' recovery by empowering them with tools and skills to cope with the traumas they have endured. They conducted daily activities for children that included recreational activities and non-formal educational activities. We led weekly activities for adults that included crisis intervention for individuals and families in need, as well as support group sessions which included gender and age sensitive groups for men, women and teenagers. From these group sessions, we were then able to earmark particularly vulnerable cases which we later treated on an individual case by case basis. We also conducted dyadic activities for infants and their primary caregivers. Furthermore, our team often assisted with translation and interpretation between other professionals and the refugees since our culture and language gave us an added benefit.

Our work in Greece included activities we held for children and adults. We tailored detailed activities to contribute

Locations

Lesvos Solidarity – PIKPA Camp

PIKPA is an open refugee camp in Mytilene, Lesvos. It is a self-organised, autonomous space run by volunteers and is built on the principle of solidarity. PIKPA houses special vulnerable cases and seemed especially suitable for our work due to its nature and the fact that it is an independent camp rather than a governmental one. The camp had a real need for mental health professionals. After initial Psychological First Aid (PFA) at the shore, port or rescue boat, we referred the most vulnerable individuals or families to PIKPA. Our mental health professionals supported the refugees to alleviate their pain and suffering and provide them with real tools to help them recover and regain the ability to resume and function normally. As of the end of 2017 we have terminated our operations in Lesvos.

Mytilene Hospital

Very much like our previous work on the shores, ports and rescue boats, many of the worst cases arrive to Lesvos's main hospital in the capital, Mytilene.

We worked with medical and support staff there to identify vulnerable cases that require urgent psychological intervention. In many cases we help people by simply speaking their language and assuaging their fears, or connecting them to relatives or missing family members. Our main aim was to reassure patients and induce in them a feeling of control, and reduce their feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. We also assisted in translating and in cultural mediation between the patients and the staff members at the hospital. We also accompanied patients to medical tests, and provided psychosocial support to hospitalized refugees and outpatient referrals.

Flozenia Housing Project

Flozenia is a housing project in Thessaloniki that at the time of our work in 2017 was made up of 64 individuals, mostly women and children. We worked there for two months where our professional volunteers offered psycho-education and psychosocial support to adults and children in the building. Flozenia was our last working project in Thessaloniki in 2017, and we terminated our operations at the start of the year.

Athens

In July, we sent a returning qualified volunteer to Athens to run a pilot program and assessment. Our volunteer's job was to assess different centers and projects in Athens, as well as provide MHPSS in Welcommon as a pilot for our future work. Our volunteer returned after a long and fruitful month placed daily in Welcommon with significant feedback. Our volunteer's job, on top of providing MHPSS, was to assess the needs in community centers and shelters like Welcommon as part of our program building for the year to follow in Athens. This was our first time officially offering our services in Athens and our first partnership with a shelter in an urban setting. It was a trying yet successful month, where we gained a lot of insight and mapped out potential partners for 2018. Throughout this mission, and in the months afterwards, we took to planning a new MHPSS program for each center. We created new partnerships with four new centers and shelters in Athens as a start, with the goal to move our fieldwork to a more urban setting in 2018 to implement our services.

Welcommon

Welcommon, implemented by the social enterprise "Wind of Renewal", is an innovative, model community center and accommodation shelter for refugees, especially for people in need of long-term care. Housing around 400 refugees at a time, Welcommon promotes social inclusion and job integration.

OUR WORK WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Part of our 2017 activities was aimed at other professionals and volunteers. We provided enrichment workshops in Greece. Open for all the volunteers in our vicinity, our mental health experts implemented educational workshops in mental health related issues and

identification of vulnerable cases, as well as cultural mediated tips on working with Syrian and other Arabic speaking people. The workshops we offered in 2017 as part of our “helping the helpers” program:

1. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Grief

Prevention, early intervention, and treatment

2. Cultural Aspects in Death, Grief, and Bereavement

Understanding the role of cultural background on the recovery process

3. Children and Traumatic Stress

Guidelines and tips for mental health professionals

4. Narrative Exposure Therapy Basic Training

Exposure therapy-based treatment for trauma, basic elements, and understanding

5. Expert Workshop

Discussion of case studies

6. EMDR Basic Training

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy basic elements for trauma interventions

7. Anxiety, Histrionic, and Panic Attacks

Steps for the appropriate reaction and intervention

8. Sexual Harassment Training Workshop

Integrating theories and exploring treatment options

9. Building a New Community

The role of cultural factors: How to work through them and not against them

10. Trauma and Disorganized Attachment in Refugee Children

Integrating theories and exploring treatment options

A group of approximately 20 people are sitting in a circle on a grassy lawn outdoors. They are engaged in a training session. In the background, there is a banner that says "humanitycrew". The text "TRAININGS AND OUR VOLUNTEERS" is overlaid in large yellow letters at the bottom of the image.

TRAININGS AND OUR VOLUNTEERS

In 2017, our volunteer training program was a continued success. Run by a team of mental health professionals, we led 5 trainings, each involving 20-30 participants and covering 20 hours of material. All the participants came from diverse backgrounds and age groups. The trainings offered background information about the camps, hospitals, centers, shelters, and shorelines we work at, the current refugee situation, intensive Psychological First Aid (PFA), resilience tools, appropriate recreational

activities, psycho-educational activities, intervention tools, EMDR elements, cultural mediation tools, scenario simulations, focus group activation, and the code of conduct of volunteering. The trainings deemed very successful. While the majority of our participants do not get the chance to volunteer with us because of limited space and funding, the training is fruitful nevertheless as a general learning experience and is always commended by them.



By 2017, **we have completed over 205 missions with over 167 qualified volunteers** and mental health professionals. Our volunteers build programs for the refugees within their own line of work, hobbies, and skills, which they propose to the mental health coordinator once they arrive in Greece in order to better adapt it before implementation. In addition, our volunteers assist us locally where we often hold events, trainings, lectures, workshops, and exhibitions for the local

community to raise awareness.

Humanity Crew continues to value its volunteers. Their work and their constant support both internationally and locally are invaluable to Humanity Crew and the organization's success.

In 2017, we had 43 volunteers join us and served 4,516 hours of volunteering, both locally and in Greece. 21% of our volunteers were therapists.

"I volunteered for two months in Mytilene and my experience with Humanity Crew is one to be remembered. My role as a volunteer, and particularly my goals which I and the organization planned together, resulted in utilizing my time there as best as possible. Moreover, the coordinators are competent to sustain their goals and mission, not only through compassion, but with skill and hard work."

– Ward Arraf, Humanity Crew Volunteer

"This experience is the most influential experience I have been through in my whole life. Our special trait was our ability to speak Arabic and this by itself was a strong factor that can facilitate breaking boundaries between volunteers and refugees. Although many other organizations worked in the camp, Humanity Crew was the most important one and refugees themselves trusted us the most, which made me happy and proud. One of the most fruitful and successful experiences I had was being able to guide parents to participate in workshops, and provide lessons to their children. This provided the parents with tools to help reclaim responsibility toward their children and helped keep them busy and active, instead of being depressed and stressed all the time."

– Samar Abul Heija, Humanity Crew Volunteer

NEWSLETTER

At the end of September 2017, we launched our first newsletter. Our newsletter is a way for us to connect to our friends, supporters, donors, and people who are generally interested in our work and want to receive updates.

Our newsletter email is comprised of a short publication which includes updates, photos, videos, of our recent work. Since its start, we have consistently published a newsletter every three months.

FUNDING

All of Humanity Crew's funding in 2017 continued to come from community-based support. All our operations ran on private funding and community led support from our volunteers and friends of the organization. Volunteers, trainees, and friends were handed donation books and were then freely responsible to raise money for our work. **We are infinitely thankful and appreciative of the continued support shown for the organization by the community.**

Since Humanity Crew's start, the team had not had the time to focus on fundraising in a serious manner since we

were working in a state of emergency. However, by the second half of 2017, we deemed it necessary for our growth and sustainability. We hired a passionate volunteer fundraiser and resource development coordinator who took over the responsibilities of fundraising for the organization. As a team, we also focused most of our energy to assist the new fundraiser in applying to funds, trusts, grants, and other applications in an official and professional manner, ceasing our fieldwork temporarily, with the aim to receive an urgent and more sustainable source of income and stabilize our presence.



RAISING AWARENESS

Humanity Crew staff has been active in raising awareness both locally and abroad in regards to the current mental health status of the refugees and the importance of mental health in that context. In 2017, we held over 40 talks in conferences, forums, universities, schools, embassies, and private NGOs on the importance of mental health aid

for refugees. Some of the initiatives that we took part in in 2017 included the Gaza Mental Health Conference with Physicians for Human Rights, WHO Mental Health Conference in Brussels, EU Policy Forum on Development, Civil Society Forum, and the DOC Rhodes Forum.

Humanity Crew continues to be the leading grassroots source for refugee mental health information.

ATHENS MARATHON RUN

In November, Fergal O’Gara, a compassionate supporter, ran the Athens Marathon to raise money and awareness for Humanity Crew. O’Gara’s initiative was completely self-sought, and his entire planning, go-fund-me page, and money raised was done through his own accord, having never met us before but believing in our mission. O’Gara ran and completed the marathon (and got a tattoo to commemorate the event), raising funds for Humanity Crew, and representing us in the marathon.

PROACTIVA OPEN ARMS TOUR

In April, Oscar Camps and Gerard Canals Bartolome, our partners from [Proactiva Open Arms](#), alongside filmmakers David Fontesca and Arantza Diez, were invited for a joint tour in Nazareth, Haifa, and

Ramallah with Humanity Crew. Several events were held with the aim to raise awareness of the Syrian refugee crisis, as well as the importance of mental health aid. The tour included lectures, film screenings, art exhibitions, and media appearances.

During the tour’s events, several screenings of [“To Kyma: A Rescue in the Aegean Sea”](#), a film which follows Proactivia lifeguards during one of their rescue missions took place. The screenings had a huge impact on the audience and received constant positive and passionate feedback.

Moreover, the screenings were held alongside Humanity Crew’s volunteer Aladin Samara’s photographic exhibition, **“B51, The Address of Disappointment,”** as well as Humanity Crew’s volunteer Murad Sughair’s art exhibition, **“Balam.”** Samara’s work sheds light on the life of Middle East refugees in Greek refugee camps through an examination of the refugee and his interaction with his new home, his past, and his future. “Balam,” which Sughair describes as “a means of transport of hope between the two sides of death,” is a realist, expressionist

piece which illustrates the moments of the refugee's initial arrival on the shore. Both Samara and Sughair were Humanity Crew trained volunteers who travelled with us on a mission to Greece where they produced their work.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Omprakash

In May, we became partners with [Omprakash](#), an online platform which dedicates itself to building mutually beneficial relationships between grassroots social impact organizations and volunteers, other organizations, and potential donors. Being an Omprakash partner provides us with access to a global network of organizations linking us with potential volunteers, employees, partners, and forums. It also gave us the ability to receive U.S. tax-exempt donations which is beneficial and encouraging for all our American donors.

Since our partnership with Omprakash, we've been involved in several webinars hosted by them regarding refugees and migrants, have been vocal through

writing on their website, and have received many volunteer applications and donations through their online platform.

A4ID

Humanity Crew is a development partner of [A4ID](#). They have been assisting us with legal aid in regards to registering Humanity Crew in different countries, among other things. A4ID helps its development partners to access free legal support for their work. by partnering with leading law firms, barristers, in-house lawyers and legal academics, who offer their skills free of charge to support development organisations in need of legal assistance.

Qumrahouse

[Qumrahouse](#) is a production company which aims to "lead a new entertainment movement in the Middle East by connecting artists together and becoming a platform where ideas can flourish into world class projects". They develop content in Arabic for different platforms and produce films, commercials, music videos and digital content.

Qumrahouse became partners with Humanity Crew in September, assisting

them in creating media content free of charge. They have offered their equipment, space, crew, time, and production skills multiple times and have continuously helped us develop a better public platform. On World Mental Health Day, they [helped produce a short film](#) about the importance of mental health for refugees in their studios. During Christmas, they travelled to Greece and [produced a short video entitled "Shrink Santa"](#) for a project we ran for the holidays at the end of the year. Our continued partnership is a great example of community support and successful connections.

RESEARCH

In addition to our field work and expert trainings and workshops, our research department conducts and leads several field and clinical research, and shares published reports in academic journals, international conferences, and the media about our findings. We aim to produce more knowledge for ourselves and for other organizations in the field of the mental health of refugees, stressing the role of culture and language in the psychosocial support process.

Our research is ongoing and is conducted both by our local team and our Athens team. It is also often done in cooperation with other organizations like Cornell University.

Cornell University

Humanity Crew was approached by [The Cornell Institute for Public Affairs \(CIPA\)](#) in order to cooperate with students as part of their studies during their MPA and Capstone project at Cornell University. Our organization was chosen by two different classes as a case study and was part of their project research. They delivered two reports addressing different subjects, with another one being completed in early 2018.

Our partnership formulated two reports for the publication of Humanity Crew in conjunction with CIPA. The first report addressed the difficulties of fundraising for an organization like Humanity Crew who functions on different fields and in different countries. The second was a Capstone report consisting of two parts; the first completed in 2017 and the second to be finished early 2018. The Capstone report covered MHPSS guidelines within camps and centres in Greece, and if/how the employees of different organizations benefit from them. The 2018 report will

be the result of their fieldwork in Greece, done specifically for this study and led by Humanity Crew.

The partnership with Cornell University was very successful despite it being conducted online. Having meetings on a daily basis and good communication created a healthy partnership that we hope will prosper and continue.

IN THE NEWS

Humanity Crew continued to receive a lot of attention in the media in 2017. We were featured in over 19 news stories including a [BBC article](#), the [Harvard Political Review](#), and [Al Jazeera](#). For more news coverage please [click here](#).

Saint Lucas 5, P.O.Box 4193, Haifa 31041

Tel: (+972) 52-309- 2982

Fax: (+972) 49806589

Email: info@humanitycrew.org

Website: www.humanitycrew.org

Facebook: facebook.com/humanitycrew

Twitter: @humanitycrew