



2019 End of Year Report

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members, Volunteers and Friends,

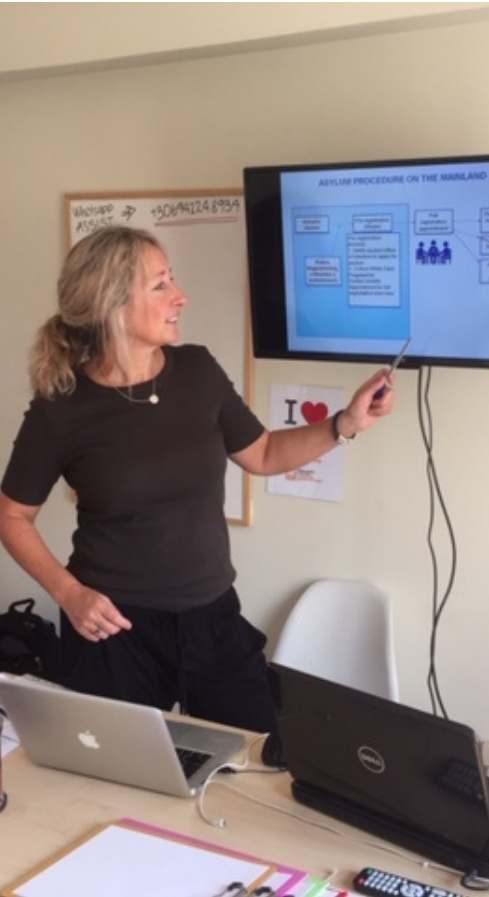
In July 2018, Ms Sonya Harmer, a lawyer with experience working with asylum seekers in Greece and Ms Mary Wenker, President of Choosehumanity-CH decided to establish a non-profit civil association to provide services to asylum seekers. In September 2018, the Association was registered as Choosehumanity-Greece. My sincere gratitude to our Founders.

The period from June 2018 to July 2019 was spent in planning and development and the establishment of what is now 'A.Ss.I.S.T.'. Funded by Choosehumanity-CH, a pilot program was implemented from July to October 2018. Lessons learned and insights gained from the pilot were applied in the development of current services.

November 2018 to June 2019 saw the development of a plan of action to meet the legal requirements of setting up a non-profit civil association in Chios, Greece. Setting up the office took longer than anticipated. Guided by two Greek lawyers experienced in migration law and practice and with whom Choosehumanity-CH has a long-term relationship, policies, protocols, information materials and guidelines for interview preparation were developed. The Greek lawyers supported the Association throughout 2019: interviewing prospective Volunteer Legal Advisors (VLA) and providing training to them and to our interpreters. My deepest gratitude to both lawyers for their guidance, patience and invaluable advice.

In June 2019, at the first Annual General Meeting, the Board was elected. We have been very fortunate to have two lawyers join the Board whose support and advice has been instrumental in our success to date.





Many challenges and also many achievements are outlined in this Report. In mid-2019 Choosehumanity-Greece became the Asylum Seekers Information Services Team, 'A.Ss.I.S.T.' a new name that better reflects the services offered.

Late June 2019, services to asylum seekers commenced. . Over the next six months, daily Information Sessions were offered to groups of 12 participants registered by language group and VLAs prepared clients for interview and responded to legal questions. Both information and legal services were delivered working with volunteer interpreters/translators covering 6 major languages of the asylum seekers communities: Amharic, Arabic, Farsi/Dari, French, Somali and Tigrinya. The Team members' combined knowledge, skills and competence underpinned by a shared commitment to A.Ss.I.S.T.'s mission, gave rise to solidarity in the Team. The Team spirit has been inspiring. Without volunteers of their calibre, our operations and services could not have developed or succeeded.

Last, and far from least, A.Ss.I.S.T. has benefited greatly from the services of our remote volunteers. They too made significant contributions to the Team. Our longest serving remote volunteer, Mariusz Chyżyński deserves special mention for the design, maintenance and management of our website and his commitment to awareness- and fund-raising, which he has continued in 2020.

Serving as President has been a challenging, rewarding and an incredible learning experience. To observe committed, caring, talented and responsible people, each bringing their expertise to serve others, is nothing short of inspiring. My thanks to each and every one of you.

Sincerely yours,

Sheila A.B. Cross

Chios, 29 July 2020

THE BOARD

Senior Executive in Local Government and Non-Government Organisations. Retired, resident Chios since June 2017. Sheila has worked for extended periods of time in Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand with short term missions in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Senegal with government, non-government and human rights activist organisations. English is her mother tongue and she is fluent in French.



SHEILA CROSS
PRESIDENT

Proactive human rights lawyer and professional with long experience and accomplishments in volunteer coordination and training, particularly in refugee camps. Has successfully managed several human rights cases and provided legal services in the framework of both the administrative sector and volunteer fieldwork. Fluent in six foreign languages such as English, French, Spanish, Greek, Turkish and Arabic.



MARY STRATIGOU
SECRETARY

Jo is a qualified solicitor in both England & Wales and Hong Kong SAR. In 2016 Jo started volunteering in Greece for the displaced population. As an advocate of simple and accessible information, her interests align well with the main mission of A.Ss.I.S.T. in ensuring that asylum seekers are empowered with consistent, simple information in their own language, and to have the right of fair access to information and legal aid.



JOSEPHINE CHAN
TREASURER

ACHIEVEMENTS

After an AGM, Board Meeting and a members' vote (June 2019), the Organisation changed its name to that of A.Ss.I.S.T. in September 2019. This was so that our name described better of our activities.

Operations

- Office leased and equipped.
- Volunteer recruitment procedures in place.
- Remote counselling service available.
- Tax statements for 2018 and 2019 submitted.

Policies and Protocols prepared

- Code of Conduct,
- Social Media Policy,
- Occupational Health & Safety,
- Induction Manual,
- Volunteer Declaration and
- Confidentiality Agreement.

Reporting

Our monthly reports which record the statistics for each month are also available on our website. The graphs below show these statistics for the period June to December 2020.

Training

VLA's receive training from Greek associate lawyers by attending interview preparation sessions: 2 led by the Greek lawyers and a further 2 led by the VLA under the supervision of the Greek lawyers. An assessment is then made of the volunteers' performance and decision made as to whether they are competent to proceed with clients or if further training is required.





Interpreter/Translator Skills Assessments

- Every applicant for interpreter/translator volunteers must sit a skills assessment tests which are examined by skilled language experts outside of Greece.

Workshops led by associate Greek lawyers

- Law 4636/2020.
- Family Reunion and
- Interpreting for lawyers: “Do’s and Don’ts working with lawyers”.

Services

Daily Information Sessions

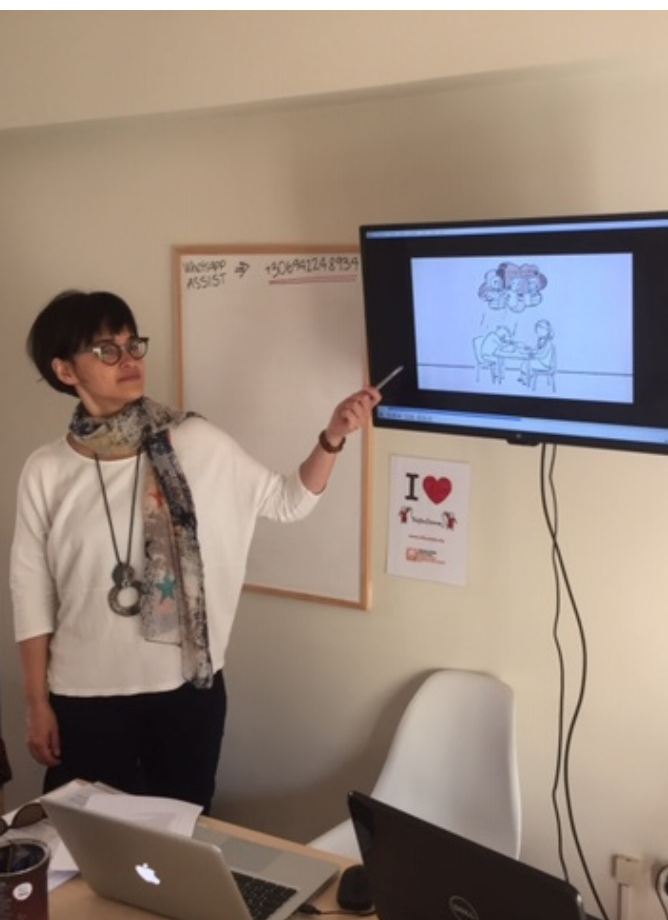
- Part A: Legal procedures and process;
- Part B: Documents, government and NGO services available to asylum seekers on Chios.

A dedicated WhatsApp number available for clients to ask questions by voice and text messages in their own languages and to make appointments for legal aid with our Volunteer Advisors (qualified lawyers). Volunteers respond to general questions only and refer legal questions to our VLAs.

WhatsApp broadcast groups, five groups: Arabic, Dari/Farsi, English, French and Somali permit most clients who are registered with us to receive up-dates on changes to information previously provided and any news relevant to their applications and/or services available to them.

Consultations with lawyers: interview preparation and legal questions

Referrals to external/partner agencies for social, accommodation, financial, disability services and educational/training courses.



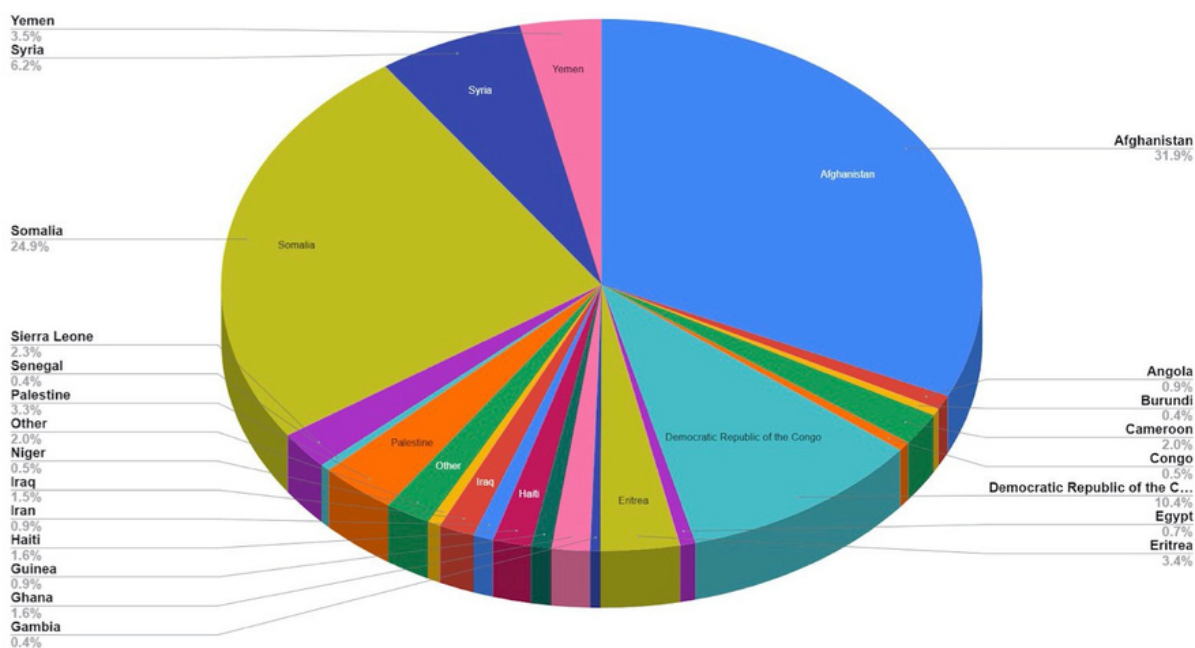
STATISTICS

Infosession participants

June - December 2019

923 people

33 countries



What these statistics do not reflect is the often encouraging feedback and appreciation expressed by the asylum seekers, our clients. We cannot measure the impact of the information provided or of our legal services. This depends on the clients themselves: how they use the information and legal advice provided. We are not always informed of the outcome of their interviews.

It is, in the end, the clients who are agents of their own futures. If the information proves useful and the legal aid contributes to the decisions they make, then they have valued and benefitted from our services.

All our efforts are directed towards providing accurate information and sound advice on legal aspects of the asylum procedures. This, together with a safe, clean, professional environment which assures confidentiality, privacy and respite, if only for some hours, from the rigours and hardship of life in an overcrowded and often insecure environment of Vial 'camp,' is the value of our services.

Our operations and services are constantly reviewed to improve quality and adjust to clients' needs and changing circumstances. They have improved over time. Statistics cannot capture the quality of, or attention given to, training, research and long hours of work invested by our volunteers to assure a professional service: lawyers, interpreters/translators and administrators working seamlessly together with the goal of serving the asylum seekers to the best of our abilities and resources available.

CHALLENGES

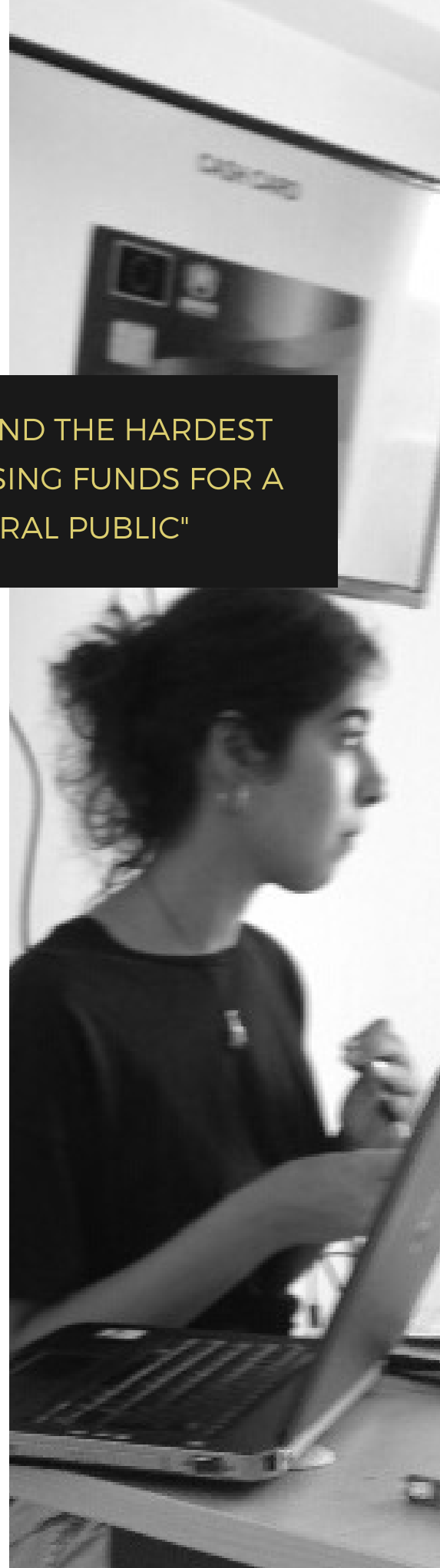
Various delays prevented the opening of our office in Chios before April 2019 and services commenced in mid-June 2019.

"PERHAPS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE – AND THE HARDEST TO OVERCOME - WAS AND REMAINS RAISING FUNDS FOR A SERVICE LESS RECOGNISED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC"

We faced many operational challenges to meet the legal and administrative requirements of founding and operating an Association. Many, but not all, have been overcome. Recruitment of volunteers to an 'unknown' Association was an initial challenge. Gaining the confidence of clients was also a challenge. Registration as an NGO with the Ministry of Migration is still pending.

Perhaps the greatest challenge – and the hardest to overcome – was and remains raising funds for a service less recognised by the general public and donors as critical to the asylum seekers. Our services are not more important than those providing for other needs: clothes, blankets and recreational and non-formal education services.

It is, nonetheless, critical for applicants for international protection to be well informed so they can understand the asylum procedure, meet their obligations and exercise their rights. A.Ss.I.S.T. struggles on a monthly basis to ensure sufficient funds are available to cover the costs of service delivery. Here the cooperation of our local supporters and the support of other NGOs and of donors who placed their trust in us has been essential and on occasions, permitted our very survival.



PARTNERS & DONORS

The support and warm cooperation that A.Ss.I.S.T. enjoyed from the very beginning with NGOs working on Chios and in the United Kingdom remain critical.



Action for Education (AFE) - gifted goods in kind for our office and with whom A.Ss.I.S.T. share a bus service permitting our clients to come to town and return to Vial RIC free of charge.



Chios People's Kitchen - provided lunches for asylum seekers attending Information Sessions or legal appointments.



Choosehumanity-CH - raised funds and provided volunteers in the early stages of our operations and service development.



INDIGO UK - our partners in recruitment of volunteers. Many of our volunteers were referred to A.Ss.I.S.T. through their good services.



Offene Arme e.V. whose generosity to both A.Ss.I.S.T. and clients with special needs have consistently supported us and provided goods in kind for our clients' refreshment and for the office. On several occasion their volunteers came to our office to supervise children while their parents attended Information Sessions or legal appointments. On occasion too, their volunteers have stepped in to provide interpreter services in French and Portuguese.



Refucomm.com have supported our efforts and generously shared their expertise and resources as well as donating office equipment.



Our key financial donors to date include **Donate4Refugees** – their support through direct grants and fund-raising initiatives - contributed enormously this year.

So too **Charity Pot U.K** - their grants have also been critical in the continuation and sustainability of our services to date. Many private donors have been extremely generous and are too many to name individually.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Financial Statement (unaudited)

2019

Income Euros

Individual Donations	€ 3,862.69	€3,862.69
Corporate Donations	€ 0.00	€ 0.00

Grants

LUSH Charity Pot UK	€ 7,119.97
LUSH Charity Pot UK	€ 7,856.06
Donate4Refugees	€ 2,814.05
Donate4Refugees	€ 1,273.88
Boundless Projects	€ 600.00
Grants Total	€ 19,663.96
Events and Fundraising	€ 2,701.23
Membership Fees	€ 0.00
Interest Earned	€ 0.00
Total Donations	€ 26,227.88

Expenses Euros

Programmatic Activities	
Legal advice	€ 2,382.11
Training	€ 1,588.83
Interpreter services	€ 5,242.18

Overheads

Assets	€ 2,301.69
Office Running Costs	€ 6,664.68
Office Supplies	€ 1,972.46
Other	
Transport - clients	€ 912.49
Management	€ 302.63
Total Expenses	€ 21,367.07
	€ 4,860.81

Cash balance held as at 31 December 2019	€ 4,865.65
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**THANK
YOU**

ASYLUM
SEEKERS
INFORMATION
SERVICES
TEAM

www.assistchios.info