

GREECE SITE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

KEYWORDS:

REFUGEES, COMMUNAL, SET-UP, CARE AND MAINTENANCE, SITE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT, CAPACITY BUILDING, REFERRAL PATHWAYS, SERVICE MAPPING

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT

Influx/outflux of persons of diverse nationalities in search of international protection

DATE OF EVENT CAUSING DISPLACEMENT

2015 to present

PEOPLE DISPLACED

Total: 150,000¹

PROJECT LOCATION

Greece: Attica / Thessaloniki Region / Lesvos Island

PROJECT DURATION

October 2015 – December 2017

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT

In Camps:
2015: 250,000+
2016: 13,000
2017: 9,000

CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM

No cluster activated. Remote Camp Management from early 2016.²



SUMMARY:

From 2015-2017, the implementing agency engaged in site management support across Greece. The goal was to uphold dignity and strengthen access to basic rights for persons on the move in Greece. This goal was pursued through a range of interventions across sectors, both in and outside of sites.

The implementing agency's approach to Site Management Support (SMS) included a holistic multi-sector service provision. In Greece there was a heavy focus on protection, legal aid, food security, shelter, non-food items, WASH and education, capacity building of local actors and volunteer groups.



Elleniko site 2016: For a long period in 2015 and early 2016 the Elleniko site in the old Athens airport was unmanaged and unsafe



Elleniko site May 2016: Organizing large-scale food distributions were part of the multi-sector approach taken by DRC in SMS.

© Danish Refugee Council

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

The Government of Greece established a set of geographical restrictions to practically implement the EU - Turkey Agreement of March 2016. According to these geographical restrictions, Reception and Identification Centers (also known as Hot Spots) existed on the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean Sea for the reception of displaced and migrant populations. Upon decision by the Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP), asylum seekers were transported through official means to Open Accommodation Centers in mainland Greece. From early 2016 the Refugee Coordination Model was activated in the form of a site management support sector working group.

Improvements in 2017 were observed resulting in more common language between authorities and international actors and therefore more agreed processes. This improvement was helped by ECHO's initiative on establishing a monthly videoconference with all relevant actors including MoMP and occasionally other duty bearers.

CONTEXT

Between November 2015 and the time of the EU - Turkey Agreement of March 2016, the implementing agency's intervention in Greece aimed to improve the access to dignified reception conditions in Moria emergency reception site. It started its operations in Greece immediately following the peak of the Mediterranean refugee and migrant influx in Moria on the island of Lesbos (Oct 2015 averaged well over 6,000 new arrivals per day). The aim was to support the relevant Greek

government authorities, namely the Ministry of Migration Policy, to strengthen their footing and managing the large influx of refugees and migrants arriving on Greek shores. The Site Management Support (SMS) term was coined to emphasize the leading role of the Greek government in managing the reception sites. The high number of arrivals had put extreme pressure on the island, with regularly more than 10,000 refugees and migrants staying on the island against a reception capacity of roughly 2,800 between Moria, the Kara Tepe reception site, and the assembly points on the northern shore. At the time, Lesbos was seeing nearly 70% of all arrivals in Greece, and in addition to being an emergency reception site, Moria became the only registration center on the island (hotspot).

Overall in the Greek context, the implementing agency understood its role as a Site Management Support agency and as having the ability to fill gaps within its areas of expertise, particularly providing last resort solutions should these gaps not be filled through coordination and mobilization of resources. As such, the implementing agency's interventions also covered (alongside coordination efforts) shelter and infrastructure, WASH, CRI distributions, food security and protection.

Furthermore, with the opening of activities on mainland Greece, the National Site Management Support Sector Working Group was established and reorganized to fit the change in context. The implementing agency played a key role in this process and took over the lead role of the Sub-national SMS SWG in Attica.

PROJECT

CCCM ACTIVITIES

The implementing agency's integrated approach to SMS also included shelter, site maintenance, protection, Communicating with Communities (CwC) and food distribution of three meals per day (in coordination with partners). Under its shelter component, the implementing agency managed the existing shelter facilities - Refugee Housing Units, dormitories and communal shelter for single men. Shelter management consisted of shelter allocation based on set criteria for each type of accommodation available, according to vulnerability as well as daily cleaning, maintenance (plumbing and electrical works) and repairs of the shelter facilities. Standard Operating Procedures for shelter allocation were developed and implementation was done using mostly volunteer labour, under supervision of staff on duty. The implementing agency was also part of a project of recycling used blankets, by washing them at hospital standards and reusing/redistributing to beneficiaries. Additionally, it implemented infrastructure improvement projects in the site, with the aim of making it more accessible and generally improving living conditions for all refugees and migrants transiting through Moria.

CwC activities focused on coordinating with relevant actors to provide adequate information to the beneficiaries (availability of services, registration process, ferry schedules, etc.) in a language they understood. To aid these activities, Arabic, Farsi and Pashto speaking staff from other country programs were seconded, in addition to improving on site communication infrastructure (PA system, information booths) and installing notice boards for information to be made available to people, in their language. Frequent vulnerability assessments identified needs and helped to tailor assistance, especially under Protection.

From the beginning of its operations in Greece, the implementing agency had an active protection presence in Moria. Its protection activities during that phase included protection monitoring and support for the development and implementation of an adequate referral system for vulnerable cases. The key challenge in delivering protection services in Moria was the speed with which refugees and migrants transited through the site. It was rare for

Persons of Concern (PoCs) to remain in Moria for longer than 24 hours, and was in sharp contrast to a conventional "camp-like" environment where individuals might remain for months, perhaps even years, and have numerous opportunities to seek counselling and assistance from protection staff.

An additional protection challenge was the uncontrolled access to the Moria site. MoMP was supported in implementing a system where access to the site was only granted to visitors and volunteers carrying ID cards issued by the MoMP, and the establishment of a population flow system that ensured all refugees and migrants were guided through and able to follow the different steps of the process from arrival to registration and onward movement from the site.

Following the closure of the Balkan routes, the implementing agency adjusted its programming to the new context requirements. Therefore, protection needs identified in open accommodation centres on the mainland included new elements, directed more towards durable solutions. This development resulted in new challenges such as saturation of the already overwhelmed and under resourced Greek social services. Thus, asylum seekers and recognized refugees remained within Refugee Sites for prolonged periods, resulting in overcrowded Sites.

Coordination between government actors and international organizations was challenging and did not always align in approach. Improvements in 2017 were observed resulting in more common language between authorities and international actors and therefore more agreed processes. This improvement was helped by ECHO's initiative on establishing a monthly video conference with all relevant actors including MoMP and occasionally other duty bearers. Another element that supported this improvement was the better understanding by international actors on the importance of working with local authorities. The implementing agency took a lead in working with local authorities and promoted a similar approach vis-à-vis other international actors.



The Elleniko II site was established as a tented site. Located next to the old Athens airport it was set up in the former baseball stadium from the 2004 Olympic games.



Moria 2015 - : Having the right language and cultural competencies present in the SMS team 24/7 was a top priority for DRC as an SMS actor. In the photo a dedicated staff-member, normally working with DRC in Afghanistan, talks to a group of people on the move from Afghanistan outside the Moria site.



Moria 2015 - : The 24/7 management and maintenance of both RHUs, dormitories and safe spaces was a core part of DRC's protection centered multi-sector approach in SMS.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project was implemented directly with local implementing partners and in close coordination with relevant authorities, such as MoMP. With the agreement of and in collaboration with MoMP and other relevant actors, the approach was to understand and tap into the capacities existing within the independent volunteers and volunteer groups, by implementing a process of screening, training and designating roles and responsibilities to volunteers. Subsequently these volunteers supported the implementation of activities in Moria. The challenge of this arrangement was the high turnover rate among volunteers, and overall lack of experience. With new arrivals landing around the clock, the implementing agency instituted a 24/7 presence on the site, starting December 2015.

The risks faced by people on the move in Moria ranged from exploitation to unequal access to basic services. In addition, there were several instances of stampedes occurring in the context of massive and poorly managed queues. To address risks, the implementing agency invited crowd-management and security experts. A major component of meeting the objective of human rights protection of persons on the move was strengthening the rights of transient people and improving the protective environment around them, including through improved and new ways of communicating, increased transparency, access to information and better queue management. Following the EU – Turkey agreement, activities were cut down to “protection by presence” to prevent the mistreatment of refugees and migrants on the site and to encourage the authorities to ensure full and equal access to all elements of basic social services provision, and their continued and meaningful access to asylum rights. Additionally, the implementing agency continued providing individual assistance to PoCs with pressing protection needs, including referral for acute medical care, family reunification services, etc. As a result of the closure of the FYROM border

following the agreement, over 50,000 refugees and migrants became stranded on mainland Greece, with some 12,000 trapped at the northern border. Based on the cooperation model established in Moria between the implementing agency and the MoMP, the start of implementation of SMS activities was requested, starting in Attica region with the Elliniko sites.

In Elliniko and Skaramangas sites in Attica, the implementing agency supported the Greek authorities with undertaking the day-to-day management of the sites, coordinating and monitoring the delivery of assistance ensuring care and maintenance of site infrastructure, and providing capacity building to staff from partner organisations and volunteers in coordination with UNHCR.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The activities in SMS generally impacted positively on the protective environment in the targeted sites. In particular, they reduced the vulnerabilities of the most vulnerable persons on the move by providing equal access to dignified conditions and basic rights, in particular in terms of shelter.

In addition, SMS activities have had a positive impact on the capacity of national duty bearers and civil society organisations to assume their responsibilities in the site-context vis-à-vis persons on the move as well as persons applying for asylum in Greece.

Finally, in terms of the large and diverse group of volunteers in Greece, the implementing agency's activities positively impacted their capacity to contribute to the humanitarian response in a protection-sensitive manner and in respect of humanitarian principles.



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Creation of high-quality and sustainable site infrastructure through sharing of best practice and experience
- Enabled displaced population to more effectively interact with public authorities and agencies through establishing nation-wide procedures and documents
- Information Management efficiency and improvement of data quality by standardizing data collection across SMS actors, creating compatible database, and exchanging technical expertise.

CHALLENGES

- Community mobilization has been limited as accommodation sites are comprised of various displaced communities and the relevant duty bearers have not promoted the organization of displaced populations along community lines
- Living standards vary between sites as well as within sites due to the reactive, rather than proactive character of the overall coordination and planning, generating localized push and pull factors.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In this type of context it was imperative to clarify roles and responsibilities among the different actors so expectations between local authorities and international/national actors were better managed. Furthermore, the element of capacity building from specialized actors to duty bearers and other stakeholders (such as local NGOs and SCOs) was critical for an efficient and effective handing over / transition to local authorities. Such issues should be clearly listed in agreements (i.e MoU) between all relevant actors, including the funding management mechanisms.

¹ Source

² Site management support sector working group active. No cluster approach is used within EU. There are sectoral working groups, which however do not have the leverage for coordination or decisions on approving tools or standards (mainly information exchange and some suggested guidelines to Government). Considering the lack of HCT or similar forum, WGs have basically nowhere to suggest guidelines.



Moria 2015 - : Working with a range of volunteers DRC organized several weekly full-day induction trainings for new and old volunteers. Focus on humanitarian principles, basic site management, basic protection and code of conduct