

Empowering youth refugees and asylum-seekers through arts in refugee sites in mainland Greece: the example of YouCreate



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Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) half of the world population of forcibly displaced people is constituted by children. Additionally, adolescents and youth are also facing, in large proportions, increased risks for their physical and mental health. A recent meta-analysis (Scharpf, Kaltenbach, Nickerson & Hecker, 2021) argues that there are significant post-migration risk factors that directly impact the mental health of children and adolescents. Specifically, two levels of risk factors are identified; (a) family risk factors and (b) community risk factors. Both involve protracted waiting times that impact parents' mental health, poor hygiene, detention settings, acculturation stress, discrimination etc. It is thus important to capitalize on interventions that are resilience-oriented and focus in mobilizing community resources.



YouCreate methodology

YouCreate is a Youth-led Participatory Action Research (PAR) Project aimed to train Youth Leaders, with the support of Adult Allies and the 'Art-kit', to lead their peers in implementing participatory arts-based research projects and 'Art Actions' - arts-based activities designed to address issues of significance to

youth in their community. Funded by Alta Mane in Greece with the goal of strengthening the well-being, resilience and leadership of young people, YouCreate has had a positive impact on youth in countries where it has been implemented. This PAR project has broken down barriers between young people, their families and communities who come together with the common goal of strengthening the well-being through the arts. It has been implemented by Terre des hommes (Tdh) Hellas and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IIRCD).

Objectives

To create a space for youth affected by migration and adversity and strengthen their skills in order to be able to

lead their peers in arts-based activities that support wellbeing, resilience and social cohesion. *International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) is a Canadian Non-Governmental Organization focusing on social innovation with and for children and youth.*

PAR Process

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a process where the researchers (the Youth Leaders) and the participants (the Youth Participants) work together to understand the strengths and challenges in young people's daily lives, and then plan and implement projects that promote positive social change. *Terre des hommes is a swiss-based international organization for children's aid. It has been active in Greece since 2016 as Tdh Hellas.*

There are 5 phases in the YouCreate PAR:

1. Map: Youth leaders and their Adult Allies use arts-based activities to map out a baseline for their project, to set our roles and to create a vision.
2. Explore: Youth leaders lead their peers through a series of art-based activities to explore their wellbeing and involvement in their communities and the arts.
3. Plan: Youth leaders guide their peers to confirm and adjust the findings. They select a specific challenge to address, analyze root causes, and develop an arts-based project to address it.
4. Art-Action: Young people implement, monitor and evaluate their arts-based project with the support of youth leaders and adult allies.
5. Reflect & Share: Youth leaders guide young people to reflect on any changes that have occurred as a result of YouCreate.

Capitalization Report (2019 – 2020)

The Capitalization Report draws on outcomes monitoring findings and learning from piloting YouCreate methodology in a mixed migration context in Epirus, Greece. More specifically, the project activities took place at the Community Centre Mikri Poli at Ioannina, run by Terre des hommes Hellas, between July 2019 and March 2020 with the active participation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees residing in the region, as well as the host population. The Capitalization Report is intended to inform future programming making use of YouCreate methodology across similar migration contexts.

The methodology used in the capitalization process was largely based on the IICRD YouCreate Project Guide (Pilot Version 2019) while a baseline/end line survey was piloted based on the newly available Tdh Psychosocial Resilience M&E Toolkit (November 2019). More specifically the methodology included:

- a. A self-completion questionnaire based on Tdh's Psychosocial Resilience M&E Toolkit. In total, 22 participants completed both the baseline and the end line questionnaire.
- b. Youth Focus Group Discussions: In total, 10 Youth Leaders and 8 Youth Participants participated in the FGDs.
- c. Adult Allies Focus Group Discussion: 4 Adult Allies participated.
- d. Tdh Hellas Project Staff Group Interview with two Psychosocial Support Workers who supported the project's implementation.

Overall between July 2019 – March 2020, the project pilot demonstrated that the YouCreate methodology is highly relevant in the current mixed migration context, particularly with regards to connecting communities as well as strengthening young people's confidence and life skills. Even in urban settings, opportunities for accessing youth-focused recreational activities and participating meaningfully in the community remain lim-

ited for children and youth on the move. YouCreate provided a safe, inclusive and supportive space for youth to express themselves and be heard, make friends from diverse cultural backgrounds and connect to the city, address common challenges and lead art action-based projects.

Regarding the period between March 2020 and August 2020 the project has been successful in bringing together asylum seeker young people residing in Open Accommodation Sites across Greece, especially following a long period of restrictions caused by the pandemic of Covid 19. We have seen that there are many people who are enthusiastic and keen to be included into a participatory and arts-based project, ensuring the continuation of the project. The increase and strengthening of resilience will be measured at the end of the project, however we have already experienced that many young people have been positively affected by their participation and the methodology of YouCreate.

Main recommendations

Outreach & Key messaging: Staff training and adequate planning are necessary so that those involved in outreach and messaging own the methodology and are able to clearly communicate the objectives of the project and expected outcomes to different stakeholders from the outset.

Supporting meaningful participation relies on good facilitator's skills and ethical practice. The training of youth leaders and adult allies should include experiential learning, as well as the understanding of the concepts of child protection and child safeguarding, gender and diversity.

Methodology adjustments: There should be room for flexibility and adaptation of the methodology, according to the needs of the youth groups. Suggestions include enriching the methodology with teaching of specific skills, different art modalities and outdoor activities.

Transferability in similar contexts requires at minimum: An accessible, safe space for the activities; adequate interpretation resources; involvement of stakeholders, and careful consideration of needs and capacities of the target population.

Overall data (July 2019 – March 2020)

Overall, 108 youth (aged 14- 24) signed up to the project either as youth leaders or participants (31% Female; 69% Male). No participant self-reported having a disability.

20 Youth Leaders were initially recruited, following Tdh's recruitment procedures: 13 of them received training on You Create Methodology and completed the PAR cycle (7 Greek nationals and 6 refugees/asylum seekers; 5 Female and 8 Male).

8 Adult Allies and 3 Tdh Protection staff were recruited and trained (8 Female, 3 Male): Five of the Adult Allies were staff members of protection organizations in second line reception of asylum seekers in Greece. There was also a good balance between host and refugee population (6 Greek nationals, 5 refugees/ asylum seekers).

Youth Participants spoke more than 8 different languages (Arabic, French, Farsi/Dari, Greek, Kurmanji, Pashto, Sorani, Urdu/Pajabi), and came from the following countries of origin: Afghanistan 27%, Syria 22%, Pakistan 20%, Greece 13%, Kurdish 5%, Guinea 4%, Iraq 4%, Bangladesh 2%, Congo 2%.

Youth Projects in YouCreate



Due to constraints outside the control of the project, such as lack of stability in housing, communication barriers, distress due to asylum procedures, and/or transportation issues, young people's capacity to engage with the wider community was limited. Participants felt safer to share their ideas in a familiar context and thus it was commonly decided that presentation and communication of their Art Actions would take place at the Community Centre with family members and social networks. During the Open Day, 100 people visited the Community Center: family members and friends, as well as staff

from protection organizations (NGOs), had the opportunity to learn about the YouCreate journey through 5 Art-Stations that had been installed, presenting youth groups' Art- Actions, exchanging ideas and discussing. The art projects addressed the following themes, strengths and challenges: Themes: Leisure & recreation; Self-expression; Communication; Learning; Home Strengths: Group connection; feeling safe and comfortable in a multicultural environment; learning new things. Challenges: Difficulties in communication in everyday life; language barriers; everyday problems, traumatic past experiences and loneliness, feeling bored; no participation; lack of hope.

1. Video creation

The group filmed two short video stories, based on the challenge of language communication in everyday life. The scenario was based on two children who meet for the first time but cannot communicate; they decide to join the community centre and take language lessons in Greek and thus overcome language barriers, and form friendships.

2. Movie days

The group organized three movie days, screening two Greek and one Pakistan movie in the Community Centre of Ioannina "Mikri Poli", based on the challenge of language barriers and need for intercultural familiarisation. The activity was advertised with posters created and shared by the team via e-mail, social media and their social networks and schools.

3. Bracelet workshop

The group organized a craft workshop on the technique of macramé that lasted 6 meetings. Youth Participants had the chance to learn the technique by one Youth Leader, who was the volunteer-instructor, as the challenge was boredom and lack of activities.

4. Story Telling – The beauty of our life

The group created a mural story representing the life of a young refugee boy in the past, present and future and the changes resulting from his involvement in learning activities.

5. Giving life to paintings

The group created two paintings, which represented the daily life challenges due to language barriers. Inspired by these two paintings, the group also presented a short theatrical improvisation action, giving life to

the paintings.

Evaluation & Learning Methodology

This section provides an overview of the quantitative and qualitative methods used in the evaluation and learning phase post PAR cycle. The methodology is largely based on the IICRD YouCreate Project Guide (Pilot Version 2019) in relation to activities led by M&E programme staff, with minor adjustments, while a baseline/end line survey was piloted based on the newly available Tdh Psychosocial Resilience M&E Toolkit (November 2019).

Baseline/ End line Survey

Design: Following outcome mapping, a self-completion questionnaire was designed based on Tdh's Psychosocial Resilience M&E Toolkit (Please see Annex 1). In total, 11 indicators were selected to measure the selected outcomes, corresponding to 30 survey items, largely measured on a 5 item Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree)¹.

Limitations: The questionnaire was only available in English, as this was the working language of Youth Groups. However, it is acknowledged that this may have presented challenges for respondents in fully understanding the concepts included, and as such limiting the reliability of the findings. The limitation was mitigated to an extent through the provision of instructions, explanations, and translation of terms as and when requested by participants during the process by present project staff. Project staff had been adequately instructed to ensure they did not lead participants to a certain answer in supporting the process. It was reported that participants felt generally comfortable with completing most of the questions, asking for some clarifications where needed. Challenges in conceptual understanding of certain items tended to be mostly a matter of limited cultural adaptation of the survey items, rather than language per se (please see Section on Findings for more details).

Data collection: In total, 22 participants completed both the baseline (December 2019)² and the end line questionnaire (February 2020)³. This largely reflected reduced participation by difficulties. In general, the data quality of the responses was good in terms of completion rate, while internal consistency of responses was overall observed, with one minor exception being the indicator on self-rating of confidence (please see Section on Findings for more details).

Data analysis had a two-fold aim: a. to identify important aspects of the state of psychosocial well-being of the target group, and b. identify the ways in which the project may contribute to improved well-being of the target population in the current context.

Youth FGDs (Tree Mural)

Focus Group Discussions with Youth Leaders (YL) and Youth Participants (YP) took place at the beginning of March 2020, as part of the evaluation & learning phase (post PAR cycle), facilitated by Tdh Hellas M&E Coordinator (in English). The composition of the groups generally reflected those of YouCreate youth groups (age range 15-17), albeit with reduced participation of youth participants, which subsequently affected gender balance within groups⁴ (but not across):

Group A: 11 Participants (5 YL, 6 YP) 2 Female, 9 Male Group B: 7 Participants (5 YL, 2 YP) 6 Female, 1 Male

The focus group discussions were based on the Tree Mural Activity (as per the IICRD YouCreate Project Guide (Pilot Version 2019)). The use of creative material (drawing, pre-cuts, poster, etc.) was particularly

conducive to accessible and inclusive participation, despite limited language capacity of youth. The qualitative nature of the method enabled exploration of people, resources and processes that lead to enhanced well-being, and how it is defined by youth participants.

The findings from the Tree Mural activity were triangulated with the baseline/end line survey in understanding in more depth Psychosocial Resilience outcomes for Youth (Please see section on Findings below).

Adult Allies FGD

A Focus Group Discussion was further scheduled with the Adult Allies (AA), based on the suggested topic guide, where 4 female AA participated (3 Greek, 1 Syrian). The group discussed initial motivation and expectations, the role of the AA, challenges and highlights, as well as perceived positive changes for young participants. AA were further invited to share their reflections on participation levels throughout the project activities, including gender and diversity considerations, skills required to support meaningful participation and recommendations for adjustments.

The findings from the Adult Allies FGDs were triangulated with youth perspectives (survey/ FGD) particularly with respect to positive changes in feeling connected, feeling worthy and feeling hopeful, as well as feeding into lessons learning and recommendations for optimizing youth participation.

Project Staff Group Interview

Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted with project field staff (two PSS workers) who directly and consistently supported adult allies and youth groups throughout implementation. Project staff discussed how they perceived their role in facilitating youth led activities, the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology, challenges & highlights of the project, and examples of positive changes observed in youths' behavior, relationships, well-being.

The findings from the Project Staff Group Interview were triangulated with AA and youth perspectives, particularly with respect to psychosocial resilience outcomes for youth, as well as feeding into lessons learning and recommendations for optimizing project management.

Psychosocial Resilience Outcomes for Youth: Findings

This section outlines the thematic outcomes of the YouCreate Pilot in Greece (July 2019 - March 2020) emerging as most significant from qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and triangulation of findings within and across stakeholders' groups, in relation to enhanced well-being and psychosocial resilience of Youth Leaders and Participants.

Increased engagement in transformative peer support actions⁵

The project helped build young people's capacity to participate by creating a safe and inclusive space for them to express their thoughts and ideas freely and share their stories. The participants listened and supported each other and were equally involved in choosing and taking a course of action each time. They were excited to join a communal space in the city, do something different, have fun, meet new people, and make friends.

Information- sharing, ongoing encouragement and practical support offered by the YouCreate network of project staff, Adult Allies and Youth Leaders made it possible to reach out to asylum seeking youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, some of whom reported a degree of social isolation before joining: some had

lived in a shelter for unaccompanied minors, others in a refugee camp, others had newly arrived in the city. Personal motivation and encouragement from the family environment were also important factors in maintaining participation and enabling youth's wellbeing grow through the process.

"My curiosity and willingness for multicultural and art projects made me come and start". (Female, Greek national, Youth Leader)

"Hope of meeting friends and hope to communicate with them" (Male, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

"My mother encouraged me to go to this program and not feel alone in this new city" (Female, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

"I felt bored before, I didn't know this place (the Tdh Community Centre)"

(Male, unaccompanied minor, Youth Participant)

"Project staff were very helpful, they made me feel safe" (Male, asylum seeker, Youth Leader)

Youth reported the following experiences and highlights as direct results of their participation in You Create Group activities:

"Playing games, talking, taking action"

"We felt free to express ourselves in our team; we talked about the main problem and shared stories and feelings"

"We learned how to make macramé and how to support each other" "We talk about youth problems- we felt hopeful, free and connected" "We came closer as a team. We learned one form of art, and we had fun" "Cinema movies, meetings, art crafts, games and funny moments, dancing "Story - telling and drawing"

"Leading a group"

"Sharing our ideas with others"

"Making friends"

"Sharing experience about YouCreate with friends, family, people from the community."

The changes reported by youth, were similarly observed by adult allies.

When asked about the highlights of the project for them, adult allies pointed to youth's increased levels of participation in common activities with common objectives with their peers.

"When youth participants knew what to do, they chose what to do"

(Female, Asylum seeker, Adult Ally)

"When everyone was involved in working on a common project, making the poster".

(Female, Greek national, Adult Ally)

They also mentioned specific examples of positive changes on individuals: "I have a specific person in mind. In the beginning, he didn't talk much, he only spoke in his language. I can say by the end he was another person. He showed his feelings, talked in English, participated in activities. It was a big change for him, he said he was happy and asked if we would be staying in the city." (Female, Greek national, Adult Ally)

"I also have in mind a similar story of a young man who did not talk much. He would just be with the people he already knew, didn't participate much. Midway through, he was more connected and more sociable. In the end, he acted more like an Adult Ally, he was very motivated, listened and gave instructions. He said if YouCreate started again, he would like to be an Adult Ally."

(Female, Greek national, Adult Ally)

Survey Findings

It is worth noting that 82% of Youth Participants acknowledged the importance of their engagement in transformative support actions at baseline and end line. It is understood that participants who had responded to the open call, joined on their own initiative and maintained their participation until the end of the project, were more likely to have been and/or have felt more engaged in peer activities in the first place. Neverthe-

less, higher scores (level of agreement) were statistically noticeable at the end of the project in the following survey items more specifically: I have a responsibility to help others in my neighborhood. (11.1% increase) I have a responsibility to improve my community. (9.3% increase)

Increased trust and connectedness across communities⁶

communicate and bond with people of different nationalities, building trust and mutual respect among team members. They learned about different cultures and traditions, and for some girls and boys their experience of participation involved overcoming gender norms, such as doing activities that require proximity, shaking hands or girls leading groups with male Participants (Youth & Adult Allies).

Importantly, these young people commonly expressed that they learned from each other by sharing common difficult situations and ideas about how to resolve them. Some created lasting friendships; some felt more connected to the wider city and the people there. For some, feeling connected meant sharing common thoughts and plans and gaining sense of hope and purpose through that process.

Theory of Change (2019)

“I was feeling good that every time I came here to spend time with my team and new friends”

(Male, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

“To know that they are always there when you need them... It’s so satisfying”

(Male, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

“In our team there were different people, with different ideas and I made friends and learned a lot. I feel more connected in the city”

(Female, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

“We shared our dreams. Young participants have a lot of plans... Someone told me she wants to be a dance teacher. I didn’t think so before, but yes, it is possible!”

(Male, asylum seeker, Youth Leader).

“To be strong means to understand problems are shared and take responsibility (to find solutions).” (Female, asylum seeker, Youth Participant)

Adult Allies repeatedly observed about participants having formed trusting and respectful relationships through the project. The description offered below by one Adult Ally (of what they considered a highlight of the project) provides a fitting way to picture this connectedness:

“The last time we were together as a team, just before the celebration; everyone was actively doing something, they were all very calm, felt comfortable and connected with each other; they were sharing photos, and expressing to one another that it was very nice to have met them”. (Female, Greek national, Adult Ally).

Survey Findings

Results from the baseline/end line analysis with respect to this outcome showed some positive, albeit subtle changes in the extent to which young people were able to identify family/peer or community members who they can trust or turn to when facing shocks/stresses/risk. In particular, 18% of respondents identified “someone from the service/activity I attend” as the person they would turn to, at end line (noting a 4% increase from baseline); interestingly, there was a noticeable increase in young people seeking support from family members, from 27% at baseline to 41% at end line, supporting the case that project outcomes extend to the close environment of the youngsters and thus having lasting results.

Furthermore, it should be noted that there were only marginal differences between baseline and end line survey findings with respect to ability to engage in and influence over community actions (Pillar 2: Bonds and Networks, Medium - term Outcome). That is primarily explained by the fact that the project did not overall reach that level of community action. As already noted, the young people felt safer to engage with closer networks and environments. Nevertheless, relevant outcome indicators have been useful for learning:

- a. Based on youth open-ended responses, young people's ability to actively participate in discussions and activities affecting them within the community, has been one of their existing strengths. More specifically, problem solving seems to be part of their daily life: they are in the position to identify issues - "I know very well what my problems are" - and tend to consult trusted adults and/or peers for solving problems and overcoming difficulties. 73% of youth participants positively responded to this indicator at end line.
- b. Extent to which CYP have developed community participation skills: Overall, 62% of young people positively responded to this indicator at end line. Marginally negative scores in comparison to baseline were mostly observed in variables related to language capacities, which were indeed identified as major challenge in the project (please see Section on Recommendations below).

More specifically, the variables were the following: "I can put my feelings and thoughts about my safety/security into words". "Listening to conflicting views and identify where they agree and disagree".

Interestingly, at the end of the project more young participants (95% vs. 86%) reported feeling able to talk to people in authority. Out of those, 71% strongly agreed with that statement at the end of the project, in comparison to 37% in the beginning.

Increased Self-efficacy and Confidence [1]

The participants used a variety of means to express themselves creatively: through movement, painting, crafts, storytelling, video making, jewellery making, and discussions in groups. For many young asylum-seekers, reflecting on their state of well-being and expressing their thoughts and feelings was a novel experience as such. Even if youth familiarized themselves with concepts such as feeling safe, connected, worthy, respected and hopeful, and were able to identify associated situations and emotions. Through their participation, the participants felt more confident in terms of skills gained, but also in "showing (their) skills" as well as acknowledging that "it is ok to make mistakes". Apart from art and language (English & Greek) skills actively practised, the participants reported acquiring key life skills such as:

- Communication skills: approaching others and making friends more easily; having a good discussion; sharing my thoughts with others
- Working in a team: cooperating, being more open, actively listening, empowering and motivating others, problem solving.
- Facilitation and leadership skills: guiding a group, resolving problems, explaining/ giving instructions.
- Cultural awareness: being open minded, aware of traditions and cultural differences.

Adult Allies and Project Staff similarly identified positive change in participants: in confidently expressing their views, turning negative feelings into positive, showing increased motivation, opening up to people and exhibiting their talents. That experience seemed directly connected with enhanced sense of identity and self-worth, as one of the project staff, reported:

"I specifically remember a girl that said to me: "When I arrived in Greece, I was not myself anymore. Now through this project I found resources and knowledge and finding myself again".

(Female, Tdh YouCreate PSS Worker)

For some of the female participants, increased sense of confidence and self-efficacy meant overcoming gender norms. In the case described below, one girl had stopped coming for some time – as project staff explained this may have had partly to do with mixed gender activities. She returned however and stayed until the final phase:

“There was a girl in our group, she was very confident and happy when it was decided that drawing would be part of the art action... She spoke to everyone, instructed them how to do things”

(Female, asylum seeker, Adult Ally)

Survey Findings

- a. 59% of the participants reported having acquired communication and interaction skills, such as self-expression, communicating to diverse audiences and in different environments, noting a slight increase by 4% compared to the baseline survey. Most notably, there was 29.7% increase in the level of agreement on the variable: “When facing a problem, I identify options”.
- b. 86% of participants reported an enhanced sense of self-efficacy: i.e. belief in their ability to pursue goals, face trials and implement strategies to achieve their goals, compared to 73% at baseline. It is worth mentioning that this 13% increase was the most significant percentage difference in the baseline/ end line survey.

It is important to note that inconsistencies are observed between reported levels of self-efficacy outlined above and self-rating of confidence, where marginal differences were noted at the end of activities. More specifically, even though higher scores (level of agreement) were observed in relevant variables in comparison to baseline, there was a slight decrease in the number of people positively rating their confidence.

In certain cases, people reported for instance that even though they may feel confident about their abilities, they would not describe themselves as confident overall. In total, 77% of young people positively responded to this indicator (self-rating of confidence) at end line.

c. It should be noted that longer term outcomes assessed under Pillar 3 included concepts that were reported as difficult to conceive for participants. More specifically these included statements such as “perceiving my role as meaningful”, “having a clear sense of purpose”, and/or “I feel like I belong”. Indeed, baseline/end line results were consistent for the following indicators:

68% of young people perceive themselves as having meaningful roles within their family, peer group and community

82% of young people reported positive sense of belonging (increased group cohesion)

For some of the female Participants, increased sense of confidence and self-efficacy meant overcoming gender norms. In the case described below, one girl had stopped coming for some time – as project staff explained this may have had partly to do with mixed gender activities. She returned however and stayed until the final phase.

Key recommendations

This section draws upon observations, reflections and learning by project staff and adult allies post PAR cycle, aiming to inform future project management and transferability/ scalability of the project, as well as suggestions for adjustment of the YouCreate methodology and participatory processes across settings.

Project Management

Outreach & Key messaging: It is important to acknowledge that especially in a piloting phase, allowing suf-

efficient time for preparation and training of project staff is necessary for them not only to familiarize with, but own the methodology, be able to clearly communicate the objectives of the project, and explain the link between the activities and expected outcomes in ongoing, face to face interactions with interested youth participants and adult allies.

Furthermore, preparing a short induction/ presentation for stakeholders is recommended as the starting point of the communications strategy. Good coordination of outreach activities to different audiences (agencies, Adult Allies, youth), considering each stakeholder's capacities and limitations in their availability and readiness to respond and participate, is key to maintaining interest during set up.

Interpretation Resources: Compared to other refugee contexts, Greece hosts an extremely diverse group of nationalities: In this project alone, participants spoke 8 different languages. With limited resources for interpretation, participants needed to be matched carefully with others with similar linguistic capacities. However, it was sometimes very difficult to explain core resilience concepts and/or for participants to discuss themes, experiences and feelings in depth. It is strongly recommended that adequate interpretation resources are built in project budgeting, including at the least translation of the core resilience concepts into other languages.

Supporting Meaningful participation

Roles & competences: Adult Allies (AA), and project staff supporting AA, played a critical role in facilitating youth participation: providing guidance and support as and when needed, especially with translating and clarifying concepts and objectives of activities, structure and timeframe, assisting note-taking, but more importantly creating space for youth to lead. AA reported that, as the project progressed, Youth Leaders (YL) were able to take on more responsibilities, and felt more comfortable with the group, thus AA in some cases would entirely step back.

Project staff observed nevertheless that reaching higher levels of participation is a process that requires time and effort as youth participants are often not involved in taking decisions in their wider environment. At the same time, the methodology is as such quite demanding in terms of facilitation skills, understanding concepts and planning. It was recommended that during training, AA and YL should have more opportunities to practice facilitation (not just experience it as participants). They should have enough time to prepare before forming groups and potentially be coached on a more regular basis by project staff on key facilitation techniques.

Showing patience and perseverance, allowing time, discussing issues, using facilitation techniques and having realistic expectations were identified as key lessons learnt in supporting meaningful participation. Creating a safe space for youth who may share personal and sensitive issues is crucial:

"It was challenging when a participant responded there was "no one" there to help; as Adult Ally you need to know how to respond appropriately, and make them feel comfortable; on that occasion I continued the conversation and guided the person to think of other individuals, which he did"

(Female, Asylum Seeker, Adult Ally)

Gender and diversity: Supporting meaningful participation involves furthermore creating an inclusive space for youth from diverse backgrounds, different gender and age groups. In the specific context, it was particularly important to take into consideration youth's living conditions and access to support.

For instance, for young people living in a shelter, assistance was available in terms of information and transport, but also encouragement from professionals supporting them, which practically supported their partici-



Nevertheless, in cases of self-accommodation, staff found it more difficult to engage young people. It is important for groups to maintain gender balance and ensure equal level of participation between male and female participants. It is equally important to be aware of cultural norms related to gender roles: for instance, it was observed that being in close proximity to the other gender by participating in various games or by doing handshakes, made some participants uncomfortable.

Another lesson learnt from the pilot was that some adolescents and young adults perceived the activities to be for younger children (i.e. not age appropriate or not appealing), e.g. drawing or movement-based games. This may have partly explained their withdrawal at an early stage, especially when coupled with limited interpretation available (i.e. language barriers). Overall, both Adult Allies and project staff reported that participants enjoyed the fact that everyone was equally receiving attention and felt their views were respected. It was also reported that having youth leaders from the refugee community was a clear strength in supporting meaningful participation.

Strengths and possible adaptations of the YouCreate Methodology

Art-kit: Art-based activities were identified as the strongest element of the YouCreate Methodology. Nevertheless, Adult Allies and project staff reported that concepts related to wellbeing were rather abstract and difficult to grasp especially for the specific target population. Participants did not always relate to symbols such as the river journey, rose buds, or planning trees, while activities related to monitoring e.g. identifying progress markers, were very difficult for participants to understand.

It was suggested that guidance and/or adjustments to make related concepts more intelligible would be very helpful, for instance through visualization and/or vignettes, as those are still perceived to be strengths of the methodology.

“I believe it is an advantage that these concepts are included, even if difficult; because children have never thought about them, they start processing things they hadn’t before, it involves developing critical thinking. It is also nice to connect a challenge with taking action about it and raising your voice in the community about it. This is a really great basis to work with” (Female, Tdh YouCreate PSS worker)

Suggestions for adjustments: Adult Allies and Project Staff highlighted that there should be room for flexibility and adaptation of the methodology, according to the needs of the youth groups. Suggestions included:

Teaching artistic skills as such (e.g. invite external people to demonstrate a painting technique for instance). That would mean expanding the cycle in terms of time.

Include a variety of modalities in conducting the activities as those were mostly based on flipcharts/drawing; include modalities such as painting, constructions, or musical instruments.

More activities outdoors for team bonding but also for gaining new knowledge

Transferability and Scale up

Integration Settings: The project pilot in Greece demonstrated that the YouCreate methodology is highly relevant in the refugee context in Greece, particularly with regards to connecting communities as well as strengthening youth's confidence and life skills. To ensure project sustainability and impact, national and local level stakeholders supporting integration and social inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be actively involved in applying the YouCreate methodology in mainstream settings and curricula, including primary and secondary education and/or municipal psychosocial activities.

Reception Settings: There is similarly great potential for using the YouCreate methodology in open temporary accommodation sites for asylum seekers. Field experience shows that there are limited age appropriate opportunities for recreation and skills development for adolescents and youth, especially activities that are empowering youth to lead and develop community participation skills.

Key considerations for transferability would be:

- Identify an accessible, safe space for the activities
- Identify existing information channels
- Consider demographics of the target population such as age, gender, nationality, languages spoken, vulnerabilities and risk factors, needs and capacities.

Involve parents and caregivers, and other stakeholders on and off site

Secure adequate interpretation resources

References

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Terre des hommes Hellas (2020). Capitalization report. July.

Footnotes:

^[1]Additionally: There was one open-ended question (i.e. example of using skills to solve problems in real life); one question to identify people participants would turn to, if they felt threatened; and one yes/no question (having worked with a group/someone to solve a problem in the community).

^[2]34 participants had completed the baseline survey in December 2019

^[3]Please note that 30 youth (leaders & participants) completed the full PAR cycle; the sample size is therefore considered adequate for generalization of baseline/ end line findings

^[4]Please note however that male and female Participants felt comfortable to participate as they have known and worked with each other during the project.

^[5]Short-term Outcome – Pillar 5 Hope and Meaning, Tdh Psychosocial Resilience Theory of Change (2019)

^[6]Medium-term Outcome – Pillar 2: Bonds and Networks, Tdh Psychosocial Resilience