

Mia Hansen

Education in Emergencies: Supporting Refugee Children on  
Lesvos through Education and Learning

**OSLOMET**

Master's thesis in International Education and Development

August 2022

Faculty of Education and International Studies

OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Berit Aasen at Oslo Metropolitan University. Thank you for your engagement in my thesis. For always being available and guiding me through the fieldwork and the writing process.

Thank you to REAL international, who welcomed me to join their volunteer team in Mytilini, Lesvos. Without this opportunity, this research would not have become a reality. Thank you to all colleagues and friends on Lesvos, who allowed me to use their network to reach out to those who became informants in this research. Special thanks to Alan and Michele.

I would also like to extend a great thank you to my informants. Your engagement and dedication are inspiring. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me, and for giving me your time.

Thank you to colleagues and management at my workplace for always being flexible and supporting me. To my roommate, Maria, thank you for letting me use our living room as my office for the past years. Last, I would like to extend a great thank you to friends and family who have cheered on me and supported me through three years of graduate studies. I would not have been able to finish this study without all your support.

## Abstract

Millions of children are deprived their right to education. Refugee children are specifically vulnerable for being out of school, as statistics show that refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children. In the case of Lesbos, Greece, only 9% of school age refugee children are enrolled to public school, with estimates suggesting only 0.3% attend. Refugee education and Education in Emergencies are a well-established field. Educations' status as emergency response and its unique potential of being lifesaving, protecting, and providing people with better futures are well acknowledged. Yet, education seems to be de-prioritized. In the case of Lesbos, refugee children have had no real access to public education in seven years.

From interviews with teachers and coordinators at various non-formal programs, this research shows how different actors work to support refugee children on Lesbos with educational activities. It shows that education providers on Lesbos face many challenges in their work, most of which are related to the temporal nature of a refugee situation. This research describes and analyzes different elements to refugee education on Lesbos, showing how agents often tend to focus on educations ability to support and protect children in crises.

Keywords: Refugee education, education in emergencies, non-formal education, Greece, Lesbos, temporality.

## Abbreviations

CCAIC	Closed Controlled Access Centers of Islands
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
DYEP	Reception Facilities for Refugee Education
EFA	Education for All
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
GEC	Global Education Cluster
IDP	Internally Displaced People
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISOP	International School of Peace
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NSD	National Center for Research Data
REC	Refugee Education Coordinator
RHU	Refugee Housing Unit
RIC	Reception and Identification Center
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZEP	Zones of Educational Priority



## Table of contents

<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Table of contents .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. <i>Rationale and objectives</i> .....	1
1.2. <i>Structure</i> .....	2
<b>2. Background .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. <i>Refugees</i> .....	3
2.2. <i>European Refugee Crisis</i> .....	4
2.2.1. <i>Common European Asylum System and Dublin Regulation</i> .....	5
2.2.2. <i>EU-Turkey statement</i> .....	5
2.3. <i>Refugees and the Greek asylum-system</i> .....	6
2.3.1. <i>The Greek Asylum-system from 2015</i> .....	7
2.3.2. <i>Refugees in Greece</i> .....	8
2.4. <i>The refugee crisis on Lesvos</i> .....	9
2.4.1. <i>Refugee camps on Lesvos</i> .....	10
2.4.2. <i>Spring 2020: Riots and Covid 19</i> .....	11
2.4.3. <i>Fall 2020: Fire</i> .....	12
2.4.4. <i>Mavrovouni Camp</i> .....	13
2.4.5. <i>Construction and openings of new closed refugee facilities</i> .....	16
2.5. <i>Refugee education in Greece</i> .....	16
2.5.1. <i>Framework</i> .....	16
2.5.2. <i>Refugee children left behind</i> .....	17
2.5.3. <i>Refugee education on Lesvos</i> .....	18
2.6. <i>Chapter summary</i> .....	19
<b>3. Theoretical framework and literature .....</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1. <i>Education in Emergencies</i> .....	20
3.1.2 <i>Refugee education and education in emergencies</i> .....	22
3.2. <i>Approaches to EiE</i> .....	23
3.3. <i>Core concepts and components in EiE</i> .....	25
3.3.1. <i>Human Rights</i> .....	25
3.3.2. <i>Protection and well-being</i> .....	25
3.3.3. <i>Access</i> .....	27
3.3.4. <i>Quality</i> .....	28
3.4. <i>Temporality</i> .....	29
3.4.1. <i>Waiting and uncertainties</i> .....	29
3.4.2. <i>Active waiting</i> .....	30
3.4.3. <i>Humanitarian aid and the temporal dilemma</i> .....	31
3.5. <i>NGOs and non-formal education</i> .....	32
3.6. <i>Chapter summary</i> .....	35
<b>4. Methodology .....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1. <i>Refugee research</i> .....	37

4.2. Access.....	38
4.2.1. Access to informants .....	39
4.2.2. Doing research in a refugee camp situation .....	40
4.2.3. Doing research during a pandemic.....	40
4.3. Sampling.....	41
4.3.1. Sampling method.....	41
4.3.2. Sample size.....	43
4.3.3. Limitations.....	43
4.4. Methods .....	44
4.4.1. Interviews .....	45
4.4.2. The interview situation.....	45
4.5. Data analysis.....	47
4.6. Ethical considerations.....	47
4.6.1. Validity and reliability.....	48
4.7. Chapter summary.....	49
<b>5. Findings.....</b>	<b>50</b>
5.1. Refugee education on Lesbos .....	50
5.1.1. Structure and subjects.....	53
5.1.2. Teachers and language .....	57
5.1.3. UNICEF, education working group, and common learning hub .....	61
5.1.4. “Filling the gap” .....	63
5.1.5. Consequences of Covid 19.....	65
5.2. Approaches to refugee education.....	67
5.2.1. Protection, normality, and well-being.....	68
5.2.2. Soft skills and personal development.....	71
5.3. Challenges.....	73
5.3.1. Lack of stability.....	73
5.3.2. Space .....	75
5.3.3. Organization and cooperation .....	76
5.3.4. Psychological challenges.....	77
5.4. Chapter summary.....	78
<b>6. Discussion.....</b>	<b>79</b>
6.1. Non-formal education – supporting refugee children through education and learning.....	80
6.2. Humanitarian approach.....	82
6.2.1. Teachers.....	85
6.3. Developmental approach and long-time perspectives .....	88
6.3.1. Soft skills.....	89
6.4. The effects of temporality.....	90
6.4.1. Active waiting and finding ‘agency.’ .....	92
6.5. Chapter summary.....	94
<b>7. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>98</b>
7.1. Refugees in Europe .....	99
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>106</b>

## 1. Introduction

The right to education is a fundamental human right, anchored in international law such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. However, in cases of crisis and emergencies, the right to education is often violated. Nearly half of all school-aged refugee children are out of school, and refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children (UNHCR, 2016b). In crises and emergencies, non-state actors have shown to play a significant role in providing refugees with education. This research will explore refugee education in the context of Lesbos, Greece.

### 1.1. Rationale and objectives

This master's research project will contribute to the field of education in emergencies and refugee education. While refugee education is a well-research field, this research appears to apply to an area of research that has not yet received too much attention. In refugee education research, much research tends to focus on how to include refugee children in the public education system and factors restricting refugee children's access to formal education and integration in a country of asylum. In the field of education in emergencies, there exist extensive research on education in crisis and conflict-affected states, including both non-formal and formal education. However, there seems to be a shortage of research on education in refugee camps. When this has been done, the research site is often established educational models in camps that have become larger refugee settlements over the years.

This research will add to already existing research on education in refugee camps. However, as research is conducted in a European setting, this research will expand the field. As I will argue in this research, the characteristics of the Greek refugee crisis have led to a situation where refugees and aid workers are stuck between a future in Europe and their past life. The refugee situation on Lesbos is characterized by people being on the move, where neither the Greek government nor the refugees want to settle. This affects how services, such as education, are planned and executed.

This research will combine theories on migration, education in emergencies, and refugee education to describe, explain, and discuss the characteristics of refugee education on Lesbos. There are three objectives to this research. First, this research aims to explore what type of

education refugee children on Lesvos have access to. The research also seeks to investigate the form of the education refugee children on Lesvos are receiving, meaning what the content of the education is, who the teachers are, and what is the purpose of the education or learning program. Last, this research seeks to explore and analyze challenges in refugee education on Lesvos and how these challenges may affect the work of the different providers of education and learning. In this thesis, the term *children* are used for school-aged children and adolescents, ages 6 to 18.

The following research questions guide the research:

- 1: What is the current situation for refugee children's access to education on Lesvos?  
- Who are the leading providers of education and learning programs, and why?
- 2: How do different agents approach education and learning for children on Lesvos?
- 3: What are the challenges in providing education for refugee children on Lesvos?

## 1.2. Structure

This master's thesis is structured into seven chapters. In chapter 1, the rationale and objectives of the research are presented. Chapter 2 is designed to provide the reader with relevant background information and give context to the study. This chapter presents the legal framework that refugees and education providers navigate. It also offers a brief historical context to the refugee crisis on Lesvos and introduces Lesvos and Mavrovouni refugee camp as a research site.

Chapter three presents a theoretical framework for migration and education in emergencies. This chapter also presents relevant existing research. In chapter four, I will explain the methodological choices for this research, including methods and sampling. This chapter also presents ethical considerations, as well as methodological limitations.

In chapter five, I will present empirical findings from this research. The results presented are selected to best give insight into this research topic and answer the research questions. In chapter six, I will discuss these findings using literature and theories from chapter three. Chapter six will also discuss the results of the research questions. Chapter seven will give a brief conclusion to tie this research together.

## 2. Background

This research was conducted in the context of the migration crisis in Europe in 2015. Millions of migrants have entered the EU borders since then, and many have found their way to Greece and the Greek islands. In this chapter, I will first present a selection of policies and legislative frameworks set by the EU and Greece. This is to give an understanding as to why so many refugees and asylum-seekers ended up in limbo on the Greek islands for years. Then I will present Lesbos as a research site before I give a brief overview of refugee education policy and practice in Greece.

### 2.1. Refugees

A refugee is a person recognized under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of refugees and its protocols. A refugee is defined as someone:

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UN General Assembly, 1951)

There are 20,8 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate worldwide (UNHCR, 2021b). Included in this number are persons in *refugee-like situations*, meaning persons outside of their home country and facing the same or similar risks as refugees. However, their status has yet to be ascertained. There are also 4.4 million asylum-seekers waiting to have their claim processed (UNHCR, 2021b)

The number of refugees and asylum-seekers grows higher every year, reflecting a global situation with increased armed conflict, natural disasters, and poverty. Although not a new term, *protracted displacement*, is more relevant than ever. Conflicts are getting more protracted in nature, making return unsafe. When a person cannot return, resettlement or local integration are options. However, resettlement numbers are low, and many find it challenging to integrate into their country of asylum (UNHCR, 2021b). As the numbers of displaced people increase, fewer returns or resettle, and local integration are complex, more and more

people find themselves in a protracted displacement situation, not able to return home but without citizen rights in another state.

In this research, I will use the term refugee to include all migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and people in refugee-like situations on Lesbos. This is because, in the case of Lesbos, the term refugee is widely used by news media, aid workers, and organizations. Greek authorities will use terms such as migrants and asylum-seeker to stress that refugees on Lesbos have not yet been granted international protection and refugee status. However, as every person living in the Mavrovouni refugee camp on Lesbos find themselves in a refugee-like situation, I will address them as refugees in this thesis.

## 2.2. European Refugee Crisis

In 2015, the European Union (EU) saw a great influx in the number of refugees arriving at its borders. This is often referred to as the “European Migration Crisis” or “The European refugee crisis.” Wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, as well as on the African continent, had forced millions of people to flee their homes and many found their way to Europe. During this year alone, more than 1.2 million people applied for asylum in Europe, double the number of first-time asylum-seekers the year before. The number stayed somewhat stable with additional 1.16 million first-time asylum seekers in 2016 before it dropped to 650 000 in 2017. More than 50% of the asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Europe in 2015 originated from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq (Eurostat, 2016).

The refugee crisis led to discussions and discord among EU member states. The migrant flows were unevenly distributed, and some states were left dealing with most refugee arrivals. This put them under severe pressure. A frequently used migration route in 2015 and the beginning of 2016 was the Western-Balkan route. Refugees using this route traveled via Greece, crossing the land border or crossing the Mediterranean Sea to one of the Aegean islands. From there, they would use the Balkan states to re-enter the EU through Hungary or Croatia (FRONTEX, n.d.) The popularity of this route led to Greece experiencing a severe strain on its registration and asylum system.

In 2015, Greece was mainly a transit country. Only 11 370 first-time asylum applicants were registered in Greece, even though more than 850 000 people were registered as arrived by sea

to one of the Greek islands (Eurostat, 2021; UNHCR, 2016a). There are many reasons why Greece went from being a transit country to a state confining thousands of refugees for years in months. In the following sections, I will present three EU legislative frameworks on migration. These frameworks have directly impacted the situation for refugees in Greece and on the Greek islands.

### 2.2.1. Common European Asylum System and Dublin Regulation

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) exists to address the unevenly distributed flow of refugees and asylum seekers arriving at the EU border. It has been operating since 1999 and has been under redevelopment since 2015. The system was designed to make a fair and effective system that cannot be misused by member states or migrants (European Commission, n.d.). One regulation under this system, The Dublin Regulation, was created to allocate responsibility for asylum applications. Under normal conditions, it is the state where a third country national first arrived who is responsible. This means that a third country national is not free to seek asylum in an EU country of choice and is likely to be sent back to the country of first entrance if he or she applies for asylum in another Dublin Regulation member state (EU, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Iceland, and Norway) (European Commission, n.d.).

The Dublin regulation has been subject to critique. The regulation assumes that all EU-member states have the same standards and systems for processing asylum applications. This is not the case, and practices and legislations vary (UNHCR, 2009). There is also the issue concerning the uneven distribution of asylum-seekers. Relocation and allocation systems have been set up. However, there have been challenging to get these systems to function to the point that they benefit the refugees (European Commission, n.d.).

### 2.2.2. EU-Turkey statement

As the tension in Europe grew due to the high flows of migrants and refugees to Europe, EU member states and states within the Schengen border started implementing practices and passing legislative bills to control the flow of people. In March 2016, the EU issued the EU-Turkey statement. This statement has severely impacted refugees arriving at the European border, especially the Greek borders.

The main principle of the EU-Turkey statement is an agreement stating that Turkey should close its borders to Europe and accept the return of all migrants who are not applicable to international protection in the EU. Through this deal, the EU would participate in a relocation program, where they would relocate one Syrian national from Turkey to an EU-member state for every Syrian national who was returned from the EU due to inadmissibility (European Commission, 2016). Due to a “safe third country” policy, where Greece gave Turkey status as safe for Syrian nationals, this deal would, in theory mean that the majority of Syrian refugees registered on one of the Aegean islands would be returned to Turkey because they would be seen as inadmissible for asylum in Greece.

Further, the EU-Turkey agreement included a financial arrangement where the EU provided Turkey with financial assistance to help manage its refugee situation as the host of millions of refugees (European Council, 2016). With Turkey closing its borders and popular migrant routes through the Balkans made less accessible due to stricter border controls and border fences, the number of refugees crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands decreased substantially (Terry, 2021). However, the situation in Greece worsened, as the Greek asylum services did not manage to deal with the numbers of refugees who now had to apply for asylum in Greece and found themselves confined in Greece and the Greek islands.

The EU-Turkey agreement led to fewer refugees crossing the ocean to the Aegean islands. There have been reports on Syrian refugees being returned. However, as the number of refugees dropped, the numbers were not huge. The EU has relocated Syrian refugees from Turkey to other European countries, yet not in the numbers anticipated (International Rescue Committee, 2022). Since March 2020, Turkey has not accepted returns from Greece, partly due to Covid 19 and partly due to disagreements regarding the EU’s compliance with the agreement.

### 2.3. Refugees and the Greek asylum-system

Greece has a long tradition of hosting refugees and an equally long tradition of being criticized for its insufficient systems. Refugees arriving in Greece before 2015 often found themselves detained due to strict policies on *irregular migration*. Those who managed to apply for asylum reported on terrible conditions and only a few were granted protection in Greece (Human Rights Watch, 2008). In 2008, UNHCR published a report where they



recommended suspending returns to Greece in accordance with the Dublin regulation due to problematic reception conditions, lack of accommodation meeting minimum requirements, the quality of the refugee status determination procedures, and concerns of whether returnees would have their claim reevaluated (UNHCR, 2008). Several states suspended returns, and in 2011, the European Court of Human Rights ruled Greece an unsafe country of asylum (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Since then, Greece has passed several new laws to restructure its asylum system and meet international and EU regulations. Many will argue that the Greek asylum system is still inadequate and does not benefit refugees and asylum-seekers.

### 2.3.1. The Greek Asylum-system from 2015

To manage the increasing number of refugees arriving at the borders in 2015, Greece adopted a “hotspot”-approach. Initially introduced by the European Commission to support Greece and Italy due to the high pressure of refugees and asylum-seekers, these countries faced (Asylum Information Database, 2021). In Greece, five hotspots, called Reception and Identification Centers (RICs), were set up on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Leros, Kos, Chios, and Samos between October 2015 and June 2016. According to Greek officials, the purpose of the RICs was to provide temporary residency while migrants undergo the identification process and apply for asylum. Within 25 days, asylum seekers should be moved to facilities on the mainland while they await their response (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, n.d.). However, a combination of the EU-Turkey agreement, ineffective systems, and bureaucracy left people confined to the island for months and sometimes years.

Due to the EU-Turkey agreement, the nature of the RICs changed. Initially serving as reception centers, the RICs now became detention centers (Asylum Information Database, 2021). The nature of the EU-Turkey agreement led to all refugees arriving at the island in practice being detained until their application had been accepted and they were granted international protection. The ones not granted asylum were going to be sent back to Turkey, either on a rejection claim or because they were deemed inadmissible to apply for asylum in Greece (Asylum Information Database, 2021). In addition, Greek authorities also implemented what they call a fast-track procedure. The purpose of this procedure was to review admissibility and asylum claims as quickly as possible for a particular group of people. The fast-track procedure was often applied to groups of people who had been identified to be often rejected or deemed inadmissible. Syrian nationals were subject to this

fast-track procedure due to the “safe-third country” practice (Asylum Information Database, 2021). Once identified as Syrian nationals, these persons would have their admissibility evaluated. If deemed inadmissible, refugees should be returned to Turkey. However, only 2,140 people have been returned in the last six years, according to a report from International Rescue Committee (2022). As more people have been deemed inadmissible than returned to Turkey, many refugees find themselves in detention centers in camps, without the right to housing, cash assistance, or services in the camp they reside in.

In December 2016, European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) published a report evaluating the hot-spot system. The report stated that “the limited capacity of the Greek Asylum Service to process asylum applications in the hotspots leads to excessive delays and prolonged stay, both of which contribute to the deteriorating situation” and “prolonged stay in facilities that were foreseen for a period of a few days, is problematic and inappropriate, and one of the factors behind the deteriorating situation and the constant tensions” They also found that while Syrian nationals were prioritized due to the EU-Turkey agreement, asylum-seekers with other nationalities had to wait for an extended period (Papadopoulou, 2016, p. 34-35). Already in 2016, the RICs started to become more and more overcrowded.

### 2.3.2. Refugees in Greece

According to UNHCR reports, there were 103 000 refugees and 60 800 asylum seekers in Greece by the end of September 2021. The most represented nationalities are Afghans and Syrians, with Afghans representing 1/3 of all people still awaiting their asylum decision (UNHCR, 2021c). Many refugees in Greece are in protracted displacement situations. Unable to return or resettle, and not integrated into Greek society. On the Greek islands, thousands of people are still awaiting their asylum claim.

The opportunities, rights, and ability to integrate for refugees in Greece varies. Greece has many times been criticized for not doing enough to integrate refugees into the Greek society (Schmitz, 2022; Skleparis, 2017). The conditions in reception facilities and camps on the mainland and the islands have been subjected to heavy criticism due to living conditions, overcrowding, and lack of services such as education (Grant, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2018). Due to the limited possibility of resettling to other European countries, many refugees find themselves homeless and without a safety net after getting their refugee status approved

and a restricted residence permit to stay in Greece (France24, 2022; Refugees International, 2020).

The Greek government currently operates three types of refugee accommodation. On the mainland, refugees are mainly staying in facilities. Facilities can vary from camps, like Ritsona and Nea Kavala, to apartment buildings in urban settings. Facilities should provide residents with essential needs, but there are significant differences to how they operate. On the Aegean islands, there are currently two types of accommodation sites. RICs still operate on Lesbos and Chios, while new Closed Controlled Access Centers of Islands (CCACI) have replaced the RICs on Samos, Kos, and Leros. Planning and construction of new camps are in place on Lesbos and Chios as well (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, n.d.; MoMA, n.d.). There has been strong resistance from humanitarian organizations about the Closed Controlled Access Centers, stating that closed facilities are against human rights principles of freedom of movement.

#### 2.4. The refugee crisis on Lesbos

The island of Lesbos is the third largest Greek island and the largest of the five Aegean islands. It is located east in the Aegean Ocean, only about 10-12km from the Turkish mainland. Lesbos already saw a great influx of migrants arriving on the borders from Turkey in the first half of 2015. UNHCR was asked to increase their presence to help manage identification and registration procedures, as the great number of arrivals led to a bottle-neck effect, where refugees found themselves waiting in the two camps Kara Tepe and Moria (Divers, 2015). As the summer went by, hundreds of thousands of refugees crossed the ocean from Turkey to Lesbos, all with the hope of gaining a better future in Europe (Trian, 2015). The number of refugees completely overwhelmed authorities and locals and gained considerable international attention during the summer and fall. Individuals and organizations, both international and Greek, came together to provide humanitarian assistance and rescue to those in need (Barnets, 2015; Kingsley, 2015). Refugees were taken to the Moria and Kara Tepe refugee camps, close to the island's municipality, Mytilini. At these camps they went through an identification and registration process in which they achieved a temporary residence permit to Greece (Hernandez, 2015). From there, the journey continued to the Greek mainland and towards northern Europe.

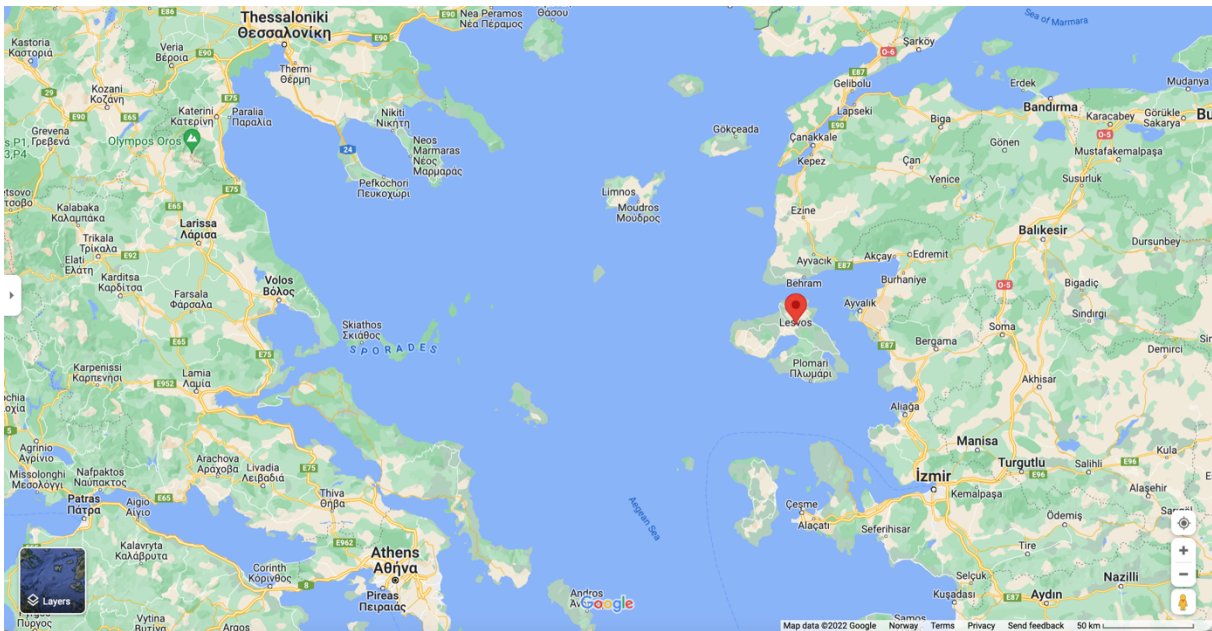


Figure 1: Map showing the location of Lesbos in the Aegean Ocean (Source: Google maps)

#### 2.4.1. Refugee camps on Lesbos

During the fall of 2015, the first Reception and Identification Center was set up on the Aegean islands. Formally known as RIC Mytilene, the Moria camp was created to accommodate 2,840 people. However, with the changes that followed the EU-Turkey agreement, Moria grew to exceed its maximum capacity by nearly seven times, hosting more than 20,000 refugees in January 2020 (MoMA, 2021). In five years, Moria camp outgrew its fences, extending into the surrounding olive groves. Nicknamed “prison camp” and “the worst refugee camp in the world,” Moria was infamous for its terrible living conditions (Masri, 2018; Nye, 2018b). It was reported that refugees living in Moria had limited access to nearly all basic humanitarian needs. Food lines would continue for hours, and there was little access to clean water. There were shortages of facilities such as showers and toilets (Nye, 2018a; Saleem, 2019). Residents also reported high crime rates and feared for their safety in the camp. There would be regular gang violence, and women feared for their safety as harassment was not unusual. The makeshift camp in the olive groves provided no protection for women, children, or unaccompanied minors. The crime rate in the camp was high, and gang violence, protests, and fires happened regularly (Grant, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Wollaston, 2020).

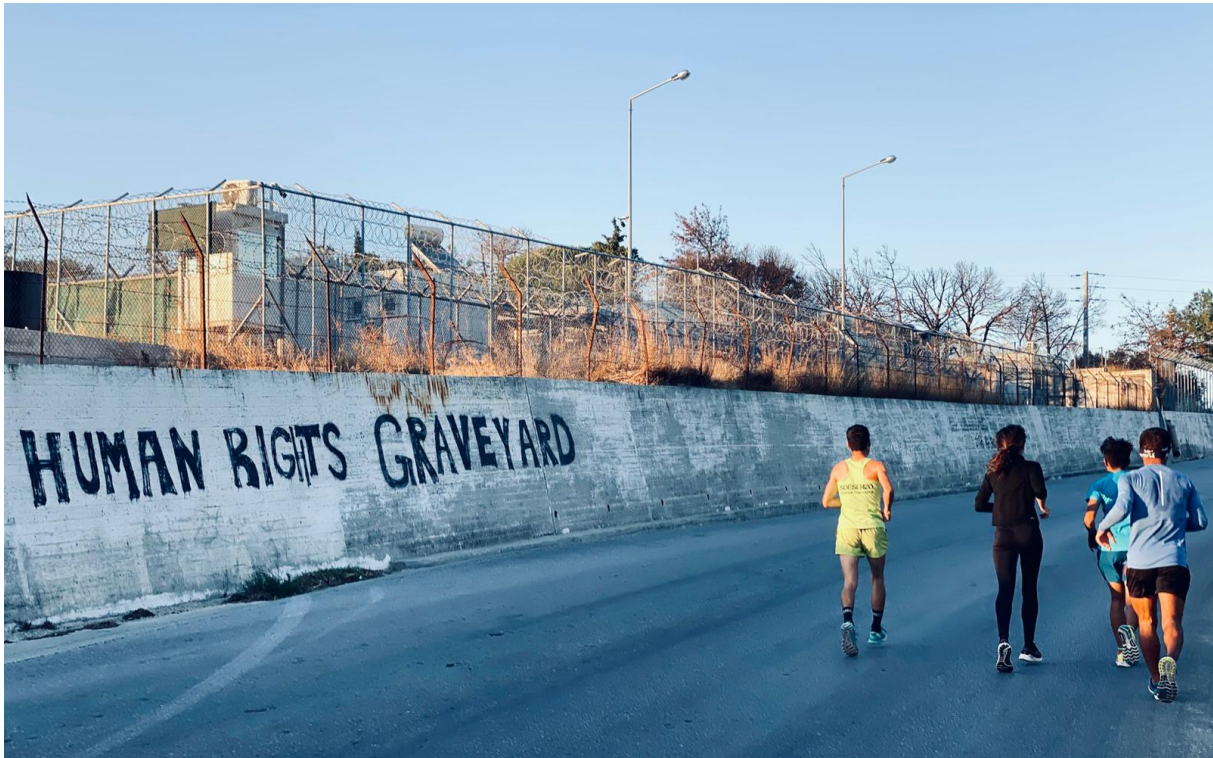


Figure 2: Walls of Moria Camp. Photo: Nadine Mellem

In addition to Moria, two more camps operated in the period of 2016-2020. The camp of Kara Tepe was a municipality-run refugee camp supported by UNHCR, with a capacity of housing approximately 1000 refugees. Residents in Kara Tepe were mostly single women, women with children, families, or other persons regarded as particularly vulnerable (UNHCR, 2021a). Pikpa, a private camp run by NGO Lesvos Solidarity, had the capacity to house around 120-150 refugees. However, in times of need, they housed many more. (Lesvos Solidarity, n.d.).

#### 2.4.2. Spring 2020: Riots and Covid 19

At the beginning of 2020, the situation on the island escalated. Several homicides in Moria camp sparked protests and unrest between different communities inside the camp. The Greek government was accused of not doing enough to ensure the camp was safe for its residents and not providing enough services to secure basic humanitarian needs. The camp's residents protested in and outside of the camp but protests also moved towards the city of Mytilini. These protests were met by riot police, often using brutal measures. At the same time, plans to construct a new camp on the island were set in place. This led to additional protests targeting the government, this time by locals. In the months of January, February and March, locals and refugees clashed with riot police in and around Mytilini and Moria (InfoMigrants, 2020). At



the same time, NGOs and humanitarian workers faced growing hostility from locals, and were targeted by right-winged extremists (Are You Syrious?, 2020; Bell, 2020; Gash, 2020). Right before Covid-19 regulations struck Greece, the situation was unpredictable and tense.

During the spring of 2020, the tense situation between refugees, locals, and government officials continued, with the consequences of Covid 19 added on top. To a large extent, all NGO activity on the island stopped. Residents in Moria camp were put under strict curfew regulations from March 19th, meaning they would only be allowed to exit the camp with permission. Many NGOs had already suspended their work on the island due to the tensions. The ones still operating were now faced with the reality of being refused access to camp and the safety of their staff in a pandemic. This led to many NGOs shutting down operations or completely restructuring their operations (Farrell, 2020). The restrictions relating to the refugee camps on Lesbos were extended several times during the spring and summer of 2020, even though Greece reopened for everyday life and tourism. These restrictions meant that refugees in the camp were deprived of their freedom of movement, and NGOs still could not resume their work either inside or outside of camp (Cossé, 2020). Even though thousands of refugees were moved to the mainland during this period, the conditions in the camp remained critical, as the government could not provide the essential services NGOs had previously offered.

#### 2.4.3. Fall 2020: Fire

Late evening on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Moria camp was set on fire. During the night, several fires destroyed the camp, including the surrounding “jungle”, where olive trees as well as tents caught fire. During this night, as the sky turned bright orange from the inferno, 12 000 people were left homeless, leaving behind the little belongings they had. The residents of Moria fled towards Mytilini, however, they were stopped by police and locals, blocking the roads to the city. For several days, people camped by the road without food, shelter, and medical attention (Kingsley, 2020; Markham, 2022). The fire in Moria was said to be a disaster just waiting to happen.

A week after the fire in Moria, the refugees were relocated to a new, temporary camp site at a closed shooting range. The camp is located by the seaside, close to the old Kara Tepe camp, and closer to Mytilene than Moria. Mavrovouni camp was supposed to be a short time

solution to the imminent emergency that arose after the fire. However, 1,5 years later, the camp still exists.

#### 2.4.4. Mavrovouni Camp

Mavrovouni camp had existed for one year at the time of this research. There is no official record of the number of people living in the camp, but humanitarian aid organizations estimate somewhere between 2500 and 3000 during the fall of 2021. The camp consists of four different zones, each with different housing options. Depending on their profile as vulnerable, family, or single men, people are housed in different sections. There are also some differences depending on where a person is in the asylum process (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2021).

When entering the camp, you arrive at the blue zone. This zone has residential tents and two isolation areas to deal with new arrivals and Covid 19 isolation. Next is the yellow zone. In this zone, large rub halls are accommodating single men in shared rooms. The red zone accommodates families in UNHCR tents or Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) which are small plastic huts. In October 2021, iso boxes, which can be described as barracks, were under construction in the Green Zone. In addition, families who have had a negative response to their asylum applications are hosted in rub-halls in the Green Zone (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2021). At the far end of the camp's green zone, a learning hub is located. Consisting of two remodeled buses and tarps. During the fall of 2021, this learning zone was used by two different NGOs and at least one community school. In January 2022, NGO EuroRelief announced that all tents had been replaced by RHUs or iso boxes one year and four months after the camp was established (Eurorelief, 2022). However, neither RHUs nor iso boxes are suitable for the long-term stay that most refugees in Mavrovouni are facing.



Figure 3: Aerial overview of Mavrovouni refugee camp, showing the different camp zones (Source: Google maps, markings: author)

The conditions in Mavrovouni have been heavily criticized by residents and humanitarian workers (Legal Centre Lesbos, 2021; Papadimitriou, 2021). Being on a beach, the camp site offers no protection from the weather, though some measurements have been taken to secure tents from flooding, such as building ditches. Hygiene facilities are not good, as there is little access to clean water. Residents report problems with power and electricity, as the generators often stop working, and small or more significant fires frequently happen (Moria White Helmets, 2022). As the camp is under constant construction, families are being moved around through the different housing options and areas in the camp, leaving the situation even more unpredictable than necessary (Legal Centre Lesbos, 2021). As there are no official reports on what is happening inside the camp, social media pages of self-organized groups from the community inside camps are often the best source of information. Moria White Helmets and Moria Corona Awareness Team are such groups. Also, organizations such as Stand By Me Lesbos and EuroRelief frequently update their social media with updates from inside the camp.

Entry and exit regulations are strictly limited in the Mavrovouni camp. These regulations change frequently and are imposed for public health reasons due to Covid19. Residents have been allowed to exit the camp a restricted number of times during the week. To leave the



camp, residents must have a permission slip or a valid reason to exit camp. These can be medical or legal appointments, and some people are also allowed to leave camp to attend classes in Mytilini or at nearby community centers (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2021). Even though a camp resident is registered at an NGO learning program in Mytilini, camp security may deny them exiting the camp. This happened to students in one of my classes on a couple of occasions during my four weeks stay.

There is also strict government regulation for entering the camp. NGOs working inside the camp need permission, and all volunteers must be registered with camp management to enter. This contrasts with Moria, where people could enter and exit almost as they pleased. A few NGOs support refugees from inside the camp, providing social services, laundry services, infrastructure such as electricity, housing, and hygiene facilities, and learning programs for children and adults. There are also some self-organized groups of residents that work together with NGOs and camp management. NGOs not registered in the camp are left to provide services on the outside, but exit restrictions make it hard for the refugees to utilize these programs and services.



Figure 4: Mavrovouni camp. Showing the yellow, red, and green sections of camp. October 2021. (Photo: author)



Figure 6: Red zone, Mavrovouni camp. (Photo: author)



Figure 5: Red zone, Mavrovouni camp. (Photo: author)

#### 2.4.5. Construction and openings of new closed refugee facilities

As mentioned in an earlier section, the plans to construct and open a new refugee facility on Lesbos sparked unrest and disagreement in the local community and the refugee community on Lesbos. In late March 2020, the EU announced that they would help fund five new refugee facilities on the islands of Lesbos, Samos, Kos, Leros, and Chios (Fallon, 2021). Human rights organizations have warned that these facilities, the Closed Controlled Access Centers, in practice, will be prisons. Keeping refugees in facilities like this will be against the right to free movement. In addition, it is feared that these facilities will hinder integration and make access to health services, legal assistance, and education even more difficult (Panayotatos, 2021; Smith, 2021). There is also fear that residents in the camp will not have access to services to meet their basic needs, as there will be restricted access for NGOs to operate inside the camp.

In September 2021, the first camp opened on the island of Samos, followed by Kos and Leros later the same year. Reports from the camp state that even though these camps provide more facilities, such as playgrounds, basketball courts, and safe zones for vulnerable people, than the camps they are succeeding, barb-wire fences, strict control, guards, and surveillance cameras give these camps a prison-like appearance (Psaropoulos, 2021). The camps are also located in remote areas, far from local towns and cities, which makes it hard to access services. On Lesbos, construction is still ongoing, more than 1,5 years after the Moria fire. The camp is now said to open in mid to late 2022.

## 2.5. Refugee education in Greece

### 2.5.1. Framework

By Greek law and the Constitution of the Right of the Child, Greece is obliged to ensure access to the public education system for refugee and asylum-seeking children on similar conditions as Greek children. Refugee and asylum-seeking children should have that access no later than three months after their identification process is completed (Asylum, Information Database, 2021, p. 166). Meaning that all children registered as refugees or asylum-seekers in Greece should be provided public education.

Various measures have been taken to include refugee and asylum-seeking children in Greek public schools. Several education programs targeting refugee children have been introduced to the school system. Some programs predate the 2015 refugee crisis, while others were introduced to respond to the current situation. *Intercultural schools* have been supporting refugee children since 1996. These schools target refugee children and have teachers trained in teaching Greek as a foreign language as well as differentiated education. *Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP)* was introduced in 2010. ZEP includes reception classes at Greek primary and secondary schools, targeting children without sufficient knowledge of Greek language to enter Greek public schools fully. ZEP reception classes are held in the morning, and students will otherwise follow the Greek curriculum in regular classes at the school. *Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP)* is an intensive learning program in Greek, mathematics, English, computer science, physical education, and art. These classes target children living in RICs on the islands or in facilities on the mainland (Jalbout, 2020, p. 37-38). DYEP classes are morning or evening classes held at public schools or refugee facilities. All education programs targeting refugees in Greece have been accused of creating a rift between locals and refugees and have a maintaining role in segregating refugees from the local communities.

From the 2016/2017 school year, Greek authorities introduced Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs). A REC is appointed for one year and serves the purpose of coordinator between refugee families and children and the public school system. RECs should help families navigate the public school system and help with formalities such as registration, vaccines, and organizing documents (Jalbout, 2020; Save the Children, 2021). RECs are appointed to RICs and urban areas where refugees are believed to attend public schools. A 2021 study from Save the Children found that RECs proved extremely important during Covid19, as they provided children with learning materials and managed to solve issues regarding testing and transportation (Save the Children, 2021).

### 2.5.2. Refugee children left behind

Reports by several organizations have concluded that even though Greece has established a framework to accommodate refugee children in the public school system, refugee children are left behind. There is a lack of official, broken-down data on the number of school-aged children enrolled in the public education system. Official numbers also tend to vary from

those of NGOs and UN-organizations (Asylum Information Database, 2021; Refugee Support Aegean, 2021). In a joint Save the Children and Greek Council for Refugees report published in September 2021, it is stated that 60% of all school-aged children living in facilities on the mainland are enrolled in public education. This is a low number by itself, but the big problem is that only 14% attend school physically (Save the Children, 2021). The report does not state why children do not attend school even though they are enrolled; however, as I will elaborate on further in chapter 5, refugees might face issues related to transportation, health issues, such as vaccines, or restrictions associated with Covid 19. Findings in this research will also show aid-workers theories on this issue.

Even though conducted during the height of Covid 19, the Safe the Children Reports identifies several factors leading to the low enrollment rates in public schools in Greece regardless of Covid 19. First, the lack of staff to teach the DYEP and reception classes are critical. These classes tend to operate unregularly due to scheduling and staffing issues. Second, there is little to non will to provide refugee children with transportation to morning and evening classes. For children living in facilities and RICs, transportation is crucial to have access to education. Third, there are cases where refugee children face hostility from locals. Many locals oppose the creation of reception and DYEP classes at their schools. Last, the Covid 19 pandemic has made it even harder for refugee children to access public education. In camps, many children lack the necessary items to follow remote classes. Space is limited, and wifi-services inadequate (Save the Children, 2021).

### 2.5.3. Refugee education on Lesbos

Children on the island have largely been out of school since 2015. There have been some attempts at DYEP classes. However, both enrollment and attendance rates are low. The latest numbers suggest that of the children living in RICs on the islands, only 9% are enrolled to public school, while 0.3% attend (Save the Children, 2021). For children on Lesbos, there have been differences in what type of education they have access to depending on their accommodation situation. Children living in Pikpa Camp were either enrolled in Greek public school or took part in non-formal learning activities inside camp (Lesvos Solidarity, n.d.), while children in Kara Tepe attended non-formal education programs organized by a local NGO supported by UNHCR, Save the Children and the Greek government (UNHCR, 2021a). For children living in Moria, there were fewer opportunities and no system to make sure every

child had access to some kind of non-formal learning. According to the 2020 Theirworld Report, Greek NGOs and UN Agencies only reached 28% of the school-aged children living on the Aegean islands as of October 2019 (Jalbout, 2020). It is difficult to say whether these numbers include all community initiatives inside and outside Moria camp.

In Mavrovouni, education and learning opportunities are scarcer than in Moria. Even though there are fewer children, it is harder to access out-of-camp alternatives due to the strict exit restrictions. The conditions inside the camp have been described as difficult, as there has been restricted space for teaching and learning activities. Covid 19 also made it difficult for NGOs to run their programs, and some makeshift solutions for distributing worksheets were established. Some organizations also tried online classes (Refugee Support Aegean, 2021). Since the summer of 2021, activities have started to improve. UNHCR has a presence, supporting selected NGOs in camp (Refugee Support Aegean, 2021). There are also learning initiatives provided by other NGOs inside the camp, in addition to some self-organized community schools.

## 2.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has presented background information relevant to this research paper. European and Greek migration laws and policies have led to a problematic situation for aid workers, refugees, and locals on the Aegean islands, and Lesbos in particular. Lesbos have been on the front line, receiving and hosting thousands of refugees since 2015. De facto containment on the island and lack of control and structure led to overcrowding in the camps, characterized by a lack of services and unsafe and violent environments. Covid19 further worsened the situation, with strict lockdowns and restrictions of movement for residents in Moria. The fire led to thousands of refugees being moved to the temporary Mavrovouni camp. Restriction of movement and poor access to services still applies.

Greek authorities have tried to secure access to public education for refugee children, implementing several policies and frameworks. However, statistics show there is still a long way to go, as registration numbers and access numbers differ significantly. NGOs have an essential role as non-formal education providers in Greece, especially on the Aegean islands.



### 3. Theoretical framework and literature

This chapter will present a theoretical framework relevant to this thesis. The field of education in emergencies has a broad scope, where theories on mental health, education, development, migration, and humanitarian assistance are applied. Education in emergencies is a thoroughly researched field. There have been many reports published on the effect of crisis on education and the effect education has on children in crisis. The refugee situation in Greece is unique in a European context. Therefore, the theories and concepts used in developing this thesis draw on concepts and content from research on refugee education and education in crises from different geographical areas and contexts.

This chapter will define concepts used in Education in Emergencies and refugee education. This chapter will also present key elements to non-formal education and how NGOs work to provide education and learning in a humanitarian context.

#### 3.1. Education in Emergencies

The field of Education in Emergencies (EiE) evolved from an enhanced focus on education as a humanitarian response in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, various researchers and UN organizations published studies on the impact crisis may have on children's access to education.

Since EiE was put on the global agenda 20 years ago, there have been many changes to how states and agencies approach this field. The establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in 2000 and the Global Education Cluster (GEC) in 2007 has led to cooperation and development in the field. In 2010, the UN General assembly adopted what they described as a "landmark resolution" to secure the right to education in all phases of emergencies. In this resolution, the UN General Assembly

urges member states to implement strategies and policies to ensure and support the realization of the right to education as an integral element of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian response, to the maximum of their available resources, with the support of the international community, the United Nations system, donors, multilateral agencies, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations (UN General Assembly, 2010, p. 3).

With this resolution, the UN General Assembly acknowledges and emphasize that education should be included in humanitarian emergency response and that the right to education should also be recognized in times of crisis. According to INEE, Education in Emergencies includes crises like natural disasters, conflicts, public health emergencies, protracted crises and, forced displacement. According to INEE policies, the humanitarian response part is only one part of EiE, what they would call emergency education. EiE includes actions for both short-time and long-time involvement.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) defines education in emergencies as:

Quality, inclusive learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher, and adult education. Education in emergencies provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that saves and sustains lives (INEE, 2019)

The field of EiE operates within the human rights perspective and recognizes the personal and collective social benefits of providing education to children in emergency situations. EiE refers to quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis. The objective of EiE is to provide “physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives” (INEE, 2020).

Nicolai (2003) defines EiE as a “set of linked project activities that enable structured learning to continue in times of acute crisis or long-term instability” (p. 11). This definition accepts a broad understanding of the term education. Nicolai (2003) defines education as a process of learning, both in and out of school, meaning that education is all activities where a child learns (p.). According to Sinclair (2001), the term “education in emergencies” includes schooling, organized learning programs, and structured activities. Using Sinclair's definition, EiE covers both formal education as well as non-formal and informal education and learning activities. In this research, I have applied a broad understanding like the ones used by Nicolai and Sinclair. I will use the term *formal education* as schooling, meaning the education that happens in a formal school setting, and *non-formal education* as all the education and learning activities that take place outside the formal school system.

### 3.1.2 Refugee education and education in emergencies

Refugee education gained increased focus after World War II. From being primarily a field of practice, it evolved into a field of policy in the 1980s. As the field of EiE has developed, refugee education research has found a place within this broader field. Frameworks and movements such as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) put education on the global agenda. Both programs were set in motion in 2000 and lasted until 2015. By proclaiming goals such as “ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality” (EFA goal #2) and “achieve universal primary education” (MDG goal #2), these frameworks put a global emphasis on education. As the field of education in emergencies has developed in the contexts of these frameworks, access to and quality in education have shown to be a focal point for researchers in this field.

Refugee children often find themselves in situations without education. Dryden-Peterson (2015) found in a study that refugees often have limited or disrupted educational opportunities. Some refugee children may not have had any form of formal or non-formal education. These children are not only deprived of their right to education as stated in international framework (Convention of the right of the Child, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights), but they are also deprived of an arena for social and emotional development and an arena for safety and protection. Jalbout (2020) states that education is “an essential missing component to help them survive the unacceptable humanitarian conditions they are forced to endure and to begin to heal and build a better future for themselves” (p. 63). Education, of course, will not solve all problems but has the potential to be both protective and empowering.

Nicolai (2003) lists what she calls three phases of EiE. Phase 1 is a recreational phase, focusing on establishing safe areas where routines can be established. Phase 2, she calls the phase of non-formal schooling, a period between the first emergency response and formal schooling. In the third phase, Nicolai (2003) states that there should be a reintroduction of curriculum. She says that in refugee situations, the curriculum should be based on the curriculum in the country of origin (p. 32). Nicolai’s view of what curriculum should be taught shows an understanding of EiE as short-time education and of crisis as temporal. Even



though her third phase might not be accurate in EiE today, her model shows an understanding of EiE as a combination of meeting immediate needs and building for the future.

Refugee education is not only one thing, and the approach to refugee education will vary according to a specific situation. However, research tends to agree on some key elements of refugee education. First, refugee education has the potential to provide a safe place for children during and after conflict. Second, refugee education has the potential to provide something consistent. Schools can help keep a structure and sense of normality in times of crisis. Third, refugee education should contribute to educating children in basic life skills that will help them in their immediate future or later in their life (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). This research recognizes refugee education as one part of EiE, and the theories and literature presented are chosen accordingly.

### 3.2. Approaches to EiE

Burde (2005) recognizes what she calls three conceptional approaches to EiE. She calls these approaches *the developmental approach*, *the humanitarian approach*, and *the human rights approach* (p. 10.). These approaches reflect how organizations and UN Agencies traditionally have organized and delivered their aid work and assistance. The developmental approach acknowledges that crisis situations are holding development back and recognizes education as a long-term investment. When organizations apply a developmental approach to EiE, they value collaboration with the government as soon as possible. Community engagement is highly valued in creating a sustainable program. This approach emphasizes educational content (Burde, 2005, p. 9). In a humanitarian approach, education is seen as an instrument to provide immediate protection to a child. Safe spaces and educational activities are set up as something temporary when waiting for regular services to resume or until the child has access to public education. This approach acknowledges that education should be applied immediately in times of crisis and values the place of education in the broader humanitarian relief context (Burde. 2005, p. 9).

The last approach Burde calls the human rights approach. This approach also emphasizes education as a human right in times of crisis. It acknowledges that a crisis is an obstacle in the quest to fulfill a child's right to education. This approach also recognizes that education has the potential to promote human rights, peace, and tolerance and is a key to developing

democratic societies (Burde, 2005, p. 9). In EiE, these approaches complement each other. If an organization designs its education or learning program emphasizing the humanitarian aspects, it does not mean they do not acknowledge and value a long-term perspective. However, traditionally, EiE has had a solid rights-based and humanitarian perspective.

In its UNHCR 2030 Refugee Education strategy report, UNHCR advocates for an approach that combines a developmental approach and a humanitarian approach (UNHCR, 2019, p. 11). As stated in chapter 2, modern-day crises are long-lasting, leading to refugees and displaced people finding themselves in situations of protracted displacement. In refugee education, there have been assumptions that crisis and conflict are short-term situations in need of short-term solutions. This has led to a field that has viewed refugee education and EiE as temporary education (UNHCR, 2019). Education responses to crises have been led by an assumption that people will return to their home states soon. As a result, few education programs have taught curriculum and subjects recognized and certified by the country of asylum. Instead, these programs have been relying on a mix of subjects from the country of origin and country of asylum, not giving any credentials or certifications in either (UNHCR, 2019). In the last decade, there has been a clear shift in UN policies on refugee education. UN agencies strongly advocate for integration into the public education system in countries of asylum. This is a direct result of the shifting nature of emergencies as long-lasting. UNHCR advocates for a medium to long-term approach to refugee education and EiE, stating that short-term approaches are both “insufficient and inappropriate to displacement realities” (UNHCR, 2019, p. 10). A hybrid approach focusing on both humanitarian aid and development will be the most suitable response to current and future crises.

Current refugee education policies are by many criticized for not being sustainable in terms of not having a long-term perspective. A UNHCR report stated that refugee education finds itself in a crisis, unable to support refugee children with quality education as stated by international laws and frameworks (UNHCR, 2017). The same report states that for refugee education to be successful, it must be “woven into planning and funding for refugee emergencies at international and international levels” (p. 13). There seem to be large discrepancies in how EiE is organized and delivered. While there are successful programs, a common issue highlighted in research is the nature of humanitarian assistance and lack of funding, policy, and planning from authorities (Brun, 2016; Vandevordt & Fleischmann, 2021). In the next

section, I will present some core components in EiE research and policies. These components can be identified in all three approaches.

### 3.3. Core concepts and components in EiE

#### 3.3.1. Human Rights

The human rights aspect is leading in all approaches to EiE. Education as a right is outlined in The Convention of the Right of the Child and the Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the 1951 Convention Relating to the status of refugees. The same international framework states that children have the right to have their basic needs met. Education is both a right and an instrument in meeting other basic needs, such as protection, safety, and the right to a childhood. Advocacy work by international organizations and UN Agencies has a strong right-based anchoring. Policies and framework such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which serves as a leading blueprint in development work, emphasize that children have the right to free, quality primary education. In times of crisis, making these frameworks into action **face** challenges. Access and temporality significantly impact the content and quality of education and learning programs.

#### 3.3.2. Protection and well-being

In EiE, the human rights aspect serves as an umbrella for all agencies and researchers working in the humanitarian sector. Well-being (Nicolai, 2003; Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008) and the potential protective aspect (Aguilar & Retamal; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003) are other components. Nicolai (2003) also includes a cope and hope aspect to EiE, meaning that education has the potential to both help in the current situation and also give aspirations for future life.

The protective potential of EiE is twofold. The education itself protects the child's right to education and has the potential to protect other rights of the child as well. Education does also have the potential to protect children from risks (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). The protective element of EiE has an essential role in humanitarian work. It is acknowledged that in crisis, children need safety and protection, as they are exposed to risks such as exploitation, human trafficking, and military recruitment (Nicolai, 2003). Safe spaces are required for education to live up to its protective potential. According to Aguilar and Retamal (2009), "the practical

establishment of protective environments is imperative in crises to meet the special needs created by displacement, localized conflict, and natural disasters” (p. 4). Nicolai (2003) stress the importance of a safe space in education in emergency.

It is possible to learn anywhere and in any environment. Structured education activities, however, require a safe space for groups of children to gather. Whether in the midst of or following a crisis, identifying and securing a place is one of the first steps toward establishing education opportunities for children (p. 84).

In refugee camps, can be a designated area for learning and play. To create such an area, some minimums must be available. This can be space, such as a container or a tent, basic learning materials such as pencils and paper, or desks and chairs. According to Nicolai (2003), a safe space is a space designated for education and recreational activities. A safe space addresses needs such as health and food, facilitates protection from harm and contains facilities such as clean water and toilets (p. 84). Facilities encouraging recreational activities such as music, dance, and sports are also essential parts of EiE.

For many agents working with EiE, children’s well-being is highly prioritized. A study found that education that positively impacts children’s well-being typically includes a school environment that restores normality and a place where children can socially interact with peers as well as adult role models. It also facilitates academic and social learning. The study found that refugee children value learning for their well-being and see learning as important for their future (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008, p. 646). Winthrop and Kirk use this research to argue that education has a unique role in children’s well-being in crises. Where normality and socialization can be found in a religious group or sports, learning skills seen as essential to have a bright future requires education.

Protection and stability are factors believed to have a positive impact on refugee children’s well-being. Using a model centered around a child's well-being, Nicolai (2003) highlights several components which together serve to address children's protection needs. First, schools or learning centers may give children a supervised environment. Recreational activities and sports may serve the same benefit. Second, engagement in supervised activities may provide children with a sense of structure and normality, as well as give children a place where they can interact with other children and develop their social and personal skills. Education and

structured activities also offer an arena where children can be educated on how to cope with risks, such as hygiene or personal safety, all of which are important to well-being.

Research conducted on one of the NGO education programs at Lesbos found that children and youth loved having a physical school, despite lacking physical amenities such as books. The students valued that they have a place to go to and a place they had a connection to. Students also emphasized the positive impact the ‘change of environment’ from camp to the community center had on their well-being, as well as making friends and playing games and sports (Huss, Asher, Shahar, Walden, & Sagy, 2020). This research supports the claim that education can serve as a uniting, protective, and safe environment for refugee children and youth. For refugees, education can be seen as a hope, a way out, something normal. When researching refugees’ mental health in Lesbos, researchers found that many refugees had concerns about their children's education. They acknowledged the fact that they were experiencing disruptive lives. The research concludes that education and recreational activities are crucial for the mental health of refugees (Bjertrup et al., 2018).

### 3.3.3. Access

Access to education in times of crisis is limited and uneven. A joint UNHCR/UNICEF/IOM report from 2019 stated that whether or not a migrant child has access to education and what type of education that child has access to, depends on where they are in their asylum process rather than their actual educational needs (UNHCR, 2019). Access to education for refugee children and children in refugee-like situations depends on factors such as supply, meaning the availability of schools and teachers; discrimination in policies, such as excluding refugees due to language or vaccines; laws and practices regarding refugees and asylum-seekers; and the security situation (Nicolai, 2003, p. 26). Many refugees and asylum-seekers are experiencing discrimination in the public education system, and the available classrooms, teachers, and supplies are limited in camps, making it challenging to attend both formal and non-formal education and learning activities.

Susan Banki (2013) draws on research from African refugee camps and camps in South-East Asia when she states that in cases where refugees are meant to leave or expected to leave, states are reluctant to invest in education (p. 134). The common denominator is that many people living in refugee camps or reception centers are expected to be there temporarily, often

for a short time. However, as the nature of crisis and conflicts becomes more protracted, many refugees and people in refugee-like situations find themselves stuck in limbo. The research shows that children living in these situations are more likely to be left behind in education. Providing education to refugees in these situations comes with great difficulty and challenges (Banki, 2013). Many refugees and asylum-seekers in Greece see Greece as a transit country, and many will continue to other European countries as soon as their situation allows it. In the case of the Greek islands, all asylum-seekers should either be relocated to the mainland, returned to their country of origin or Turkey, or move as soon as they get their refugee status.

#### 3.3.4. Quality

Measuring quality in refugee education and EiE is complex. As much research on EiE and refugee education, research on this topic also tends to have an overweight of focus on established educational institutions. There are, however, some common features that can be transferred to camp settings where non-formal and community-based education is the normal. Quality in EiE and refugee education is often measured by access to schools, qualified teachers, and learning materials. The link between quality and access is strong in EiE. States, NGOs, and communities must first solve the issue of access before addressing the issue of quality of the content.

In emergency education, quality education must be viewed as something different than it would in a 'normal' situation. After reviewing different practices in humanitarian education, Aguilar and Retamal (2009) found that quality is not measured by simply cognitive outputs but that education is also an instrument in dealing with trauma (p. 9). They also found that using a "standard" where quality education is measured by cognitive aspects is inadequate and ineffective. They further state that education in emergencies should acknowledge education's protective and stabilizing aspect. For example, can quality emergency education be concerned with a recreation of habits, play, and humor, reestablishing relational behavior, and giving access to creative expression (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009). For children who have faced traumas, quality education is just as much about learning to deal with emotions and cope in life as it is learning how to read and write.

Even though there is little research measuring the quality of refugee education in a camp setting, there are research stating elements that would contribute to quality education.

Educated teachers are one factor; however, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the lack of a long-term, sustainable plan might affect the quality of EiE in a negative matter. As stated in a UNHCR report, children have the right to an education that will help them reach their potential. In order to do so, education must be recognized and provide doors to the future, as well as being taught by trained teachers and providing children with appropriate school facilities and learning materials (UNHCR, 2017, p. 14).

### 3.4. Temporality

In refugee studies, theories on temporality are used to study the temporal nature of displacement and what effects temporality has on refugee communities, host states, host communities, policies, and planning. Displacement indicates “in-betweenness,” according to Brun (2015, p. 21). Displaced people, whether it is internally displaced people (IDP), or asylum-seekers and refugees, are in a state of waiting. Horst and Grabska (2015) state that the violent nature of a crisis or conflict leads refugees to “long for a before,” as well as longing for an “elsewhere” (p. 21). Displacement is temporal, and so are the facilities established to cater to displaced people. However, as displacement becomes more and more protracted, the nature of temporality changes, and the temporality becomes a more permanent state. People in protracted crises are often described as being stuck. For refugees on Lesbos, the term “limbo” is frequently used to describe their situation.

#### 3.4.1. Waiting and uncertainties

Temporality can be seen as a form of waiting. For many refugees, this waiting is characterized by uncertainties and unpredictability, as there is no way of knowing how long the wait will be. Waiting, however, is not merely a passive action. As argued by many researchers, waiting involves various elements of activity. This will be explained in the next section. This section will give insight into waiting and well-being. Hage (2009) uses the terms *existential mobility* and its opposite *existential immobility* when he discusses the effects of waiting. He states that to live a viable life, there must be an understanding of “going somewhere,” what he calls existential mobility. He further argues that surviving a crisis has become an endurance test, where the goal is to “wait it out” (p. 74). The ones who are better at waiting it out are the ones who better cope with the crisis.

Brun (2015) argues that protracted displacement can be “framed as protracted uncertainty” (p. 20). Studies show a clear connection between temporality, uncertainty, and well-being among refugees and asylum-seekers (El-Shaarawi, 2015; Griffiths, 2013). In these studies, the researchers concluded that uncertainty is one of the consequences of temporariness in a refugee context. Refugees and asylum-seekers express that uncertainty about the future affects their well-being in a harmful matter. El-Shaarawi (2015) also found that for refugees in Egypt, the present situation was characterized by instability and a lack of knowledge and control of their future. This lack of control was also transferable to their current situation. Research on the effects of waiting conducted in refugee camps in Greece concluded that there is a relationship between dependency and passivity. Refugee camps are, to a large extent, designed to foster passivity, as all services are provided by external organizations, this includes education. The research found that dependency had negative connotations and that refugees expressed concerns for their and their family’s mental health because there was nothing for them to do in camp (Bjertrup et al., 2021).

Researchers have found that for refugees living in protracted situations, the temporality of the present becomes a stable fixture. In daily life, people will focus on food, shelter, and care for their families, concerns that become part of a daily routine. While trying to survive their present, most refugees will also attempt to make plans for their future. The attempt to survive and cope while hoping and making plans for the future will often clash with the temporary nature of a refugee situation. Many refugees will experience long-term uncertainty for the future and, at the same time, deal with everyday concerns (Horst & Grabska, 2015, p. 8).

#### 3.4.2. Active waiting

Brun (2015) uses the phrase “stuck in the present.” While she recognizes that many refugees feel stuck, she argues that there also is movement in a person’s life (p. 393). Drawing on a study from Georgia, Brun (2015) explains how people in protracted crises will go on to create “normal” lives while displaced. While Brun’s study is on IDPs living in rural areas, studies of refugees living in refugee camps also show how protracted situations will lead to the establishment of an “every-day-life” (Oesch, 2019). Even when “stuck,” there will be some movement. It might be personal development, finding new ways to deal and cope with the situation, or there might be movement in policies and structure on a governing level.



Both Brun (2015) and Hage (2009) have studied the effects of waiting on refugees and asylum seekers. Both studies found that people often get into a state of “active waiting.” Brun (2015) draws connections between active waiting and hope, arguing that to be able to cope with the period of waiting, the waiting must be seen as purposeful. It can either be that the waiting is filled with purposeful activities or that what comes after the wait is seen as purposeful and important. In her research on IDPs in protracted situations, she found that hope serves as a coping mechanism, making waiting and uncertainty meaningful. Hope had a significant role in people’s ability to have a future-oriented perspective (p. 31-32). The felt experience of being “stuck” that many refugees experience may lead to passivity. The absence of choices and alternatives often characterizes refugee camps. Hage (2009) argues that the endurance test that is waiting involves being able to find agency in every small thing (Hage, 2009, p.76). Finding agency in waiting is not the same as having a say in decisions about their future; however, it is a way to cope with the present.

#### 3.4.3. Humanitarian aid and *the temporal dilemma*

Because the temporary nature of a displacement has become more prolonged and, in some cases, permanent, Brun (2016) argues that to best assist people in protracted crisis, agencies must review their understanding of temporality. Humanitarian assistance tends to focus on the present and not on the future. Drawing on a study on humanitarian assistance in Jordan, Brun (2016) states that the focus of humanitarian aid must change. She states that applying emergency to humanitarianism may decontextualize the lives and futures of the refugees (p. 406). When the nature of temporality changes, so must the focus of politics and aid. Oesch (2019) states that conflicting understandings of what temporariness means will affect the politics of a refugee camp (p. 230). If the view is that the situation is temporary, it is less likely that authorities will spend funds on permanent fixtures and infrastructure. Oesch’s view on temporariness and political resistance to establishing long-term solutions coincides with Banki’s statement on states’ reluctance to invest in education, as previously mentioned in this thesis.

The temporality in a refugee camp affects social structures; it affects where and in what people find meaning in life and hope for the future (Turner, 2016, p. 144-145). This temporary nature puts a strain on people, both refugees, locals, and aid workers. The emergency aspect of a refugee camp might challenge what humanitarian organizations *want*

to do, compared to what they are *able* to do. In research on humanitarian aid in Belgium and Germany in light of the refugee crisis in 2015, Vandevordt and Fleischmann (2021) found that while humanitarian organizations wanted to advocate for long-time, structural solutions to the refugee situation, they were forced to spend their time providing emergency support in the form of temporal shelters and food (p. 188). The study found that aid-workers found themselves in an emergency mode for an extended period, where the structural issues remained the same. Vandevordt and Fleischmann (2021) refer to this as a *temporal dilemma*, stating that humanitarian organizations often try to work for long-time solutions. However, because structural challenges are maintained for more extended periods, the period of immediate emergency never ends.

As previously mentioned, the facilities created to cater to refugees are temporal. When establishing services to assist refugees, these are only meant to be present and active as long as there is a need. Refugee camps are not meant to exist for an unlimited time. However, Turner (2016) argues that refugee camps will, in many instances, become close to permanent structures and facilities. He further argues that the temporary nature of a refugee camp is undecided, which means that in many cases, it is difficult to estimate a timeframe or make long-time decisions regarding the existence and location of a refugee camp (p. 142). In camps, several actors are involved, including residents, aid organizations, authorities, and landowners. All these actors may have different views on temporariness and what temporariness means (Oesch, 2019). The period a person is displaced is the period between resettlement, integration to the host country, or a return to their home country. As previously stated, the notion of in-between gives ground to view displacement as a temporary fixture. If the approach to displacement becomes an emergency response, facilities and structures to accommodate the needs of refugees become a short-time fix. Temporary protection and temporary housing in refugee camps are evidence of such thoughts (Oesch, 2019).

### 3.5. NGOs and non-formal education

There exist many definitions of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. I will use a definition by Coombs and Ahmed, which researchers in the field frequently use. Coombs and Ahmed (1974) distinguish and defines three types of education and equal the terms ‘education’ and ‘learning.’ *Informal learning* is “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and

exposure to the environment.” *Formal education* is “the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured "education system," spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university.” Non-formal education “is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning” (p. 8). Non-formal education includes but is not limited to youth clubs, literacy programs, religious schools, and community programs.

There is a long tradition of NGOs providing education and basic needs for refugees living in refugee camps. Refugee camps are not a permanent solution but a step toward resettlement. For this reason, governments tend to be reluctant to invest in education for refugees living in camps. Research from refugee hosting states has found that in many cases, NGOs take on the responsibility of providing different services, including education, for refugees when states are unable or unwilling to provide them (Rose, 2009; Skleparis & Armakolas, 2016). According to Rose (2009), NGO education programs often aim to develop an alternative, non-formal, education model to reach those excluded from formal education (p. 221). Although these programs usually exist as alternatives to formal education, NGO programs might also be complementary to formal education, typically filling a gap in what the official system is able to offer.

Rose (2009) draws on research from four different countries when she states that NGO provision of education tends to lean towards being complementary to state provision of education (p. 231). She states that in research and reports, NGO-provided non-formal education is viewed positively. Non-formal education is often referred to as child-centered, flexible, and cost-effective programs using local-recruited teachers. In addition, non-formal education programs are said to be more adaptive than formal education, as they are accountable to the civil community and not governments (Rose, 2009, p. 222). Although viewed positively, non-formal education is also considered the second-best to formal education.

NGOs have been recognized as essential for providing education to vulnerable groups for many years. Programs such as Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and now, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put education on the agenda, recognizing the right to education for every child. These programs recognize that to achieve goals such as the SDG4 “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote

lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 21), non-state actors must be included.

Different UN-agency reports on refugee education seem to acknowledge public education as the goal and NGO-provided alternative education programs as a second-best option (see Refugee Education 2030, UNHCR 2020 refugee education report). Although UN agencies and advocates for EiE and refugee education, such as INEE, value a model and an approach that includes and integrates refugee children into the public school system, it is also acknowledged that non-formal is necessary in cases where states are not able to provide equal education opportunities for all children. The Education 2030 agenda states that to achieve their objective of “promoting equitable and sustainable inclusion in education systems for refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, stateless and internationally displaced persons, " host states should prepare an education policy for children from these groups can be included in the public system. However, the agenda also acknowledge the role of non-formal education, stating:

In situations where the legal framework and policy environment is not yet conducive to inclusion within national systems, non-formal education programming and learning assessment should be harmonized across partners and align with host country curricula and methods to the greatest degree possible. This will facilitate a recognizable pathway to equating the content of studies through ministry of education processes when conditions are favorable (UNHCR, 2019, p. 23).

It is difficult to know to what extent marginalized groups are being reached and if NGO education programs lead to the same opportunities as public education programs (Rose, 2009). Rose (2009) states that there seems to be little knowledge of the benefits and impact on livelihood from NGO education programs (p. 221). However, reports also acknowledge flaws in the public systems. A USAID report from 2007 acknowledges that national education models, in many cases, fail to reach disadvantaged populations (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, & Hartwell, 2007). To reach children in these populations, alternative education models must be valued, and NGO education programs will be the only option available in some cases.

In the context of refugee education and EiE, non-formal education is the organized “out of school” alternatives. Such programs have the potential to meet some educational needs of a group of children who are unable to access formal education for any reason. In a refugee camp, these activities are typically run by organizations or members of the community, or a

combination of both (Nicolai, 2003). Non-formal education programs typically use community teachers, often young adults who have the basic literacy skills needed, or international volunteers. Topics can vary from language classes, basic literacy and numeracy, cultural activities, and sports. Facilitators of non-formal education typically recognize education as a human right and value the potential these programs might have on children's social development, daily routine, and the school's role as a protective and stable environment (Nicolai, 2003, p. 44).

When comparing different models, Nicolai (2003) found that accelerated learning programs are used to facilitate children's return to school. These programs aim to cover core curriculum and subjects that will help refugee children's return and integration into the mainstream classroom (p. 40). Using Nicolai's three phases of EiE, accelerated learning programs show a type of structured, non-formal education that is crucial in getting refugee children back to school. These structured programs come after an initial emergency response. Refugee children have often been out of school for a significant time or have no previous school experience. In addition, they may lack adequate knowledge of the country's language of instruction (0). These accelerated learning programs will complement public education as they prepare children for a future in the public system, often in a country of asylum. Planning and executing non-formal education requires knowledge of the public education system, cooperation between agents, and long-term perspective. In EiE, these factors might not be present.

### 3.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has given an overview of literature and theory on Education in Emergencies and refugee education. EiE is a field in movement, adapting to the changing nature of crises and the needs of those affected by crises. Approaches to EiE will differ and be adapted to the context. However, some core elements will be present in practice and applied to research. Human rights are imperative in EiE, as education is both a right and a means to achieve other rights. Researchers and aid-workers also value the potential protective aspect of EiE. Access, quality, and temporality are concepts often discussed and factors that interest researchers and affect policy work and practice in the field.

In EiE, non-formal education plays a vital role. Non-formal education can be used as a supplement, but in many cases, non-formal education is the only education available for refugee children.

## 4. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how different organizations and civil agents approach refugee education on the island of Lesbos. This study is concerned with how these agents organize their programs and the reasons why they choose this type of organization. In addition, this research will also explore the challenges these education providers face. Choosing a research approach is a process where the researcher selects the approach that will better fit the project's purpose (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 285). A qualitative study would be a good fit to answer my research questions.

A qualitative approach includes many different types of research. Bryman (2012) suggests that qualitative research concerns “words rather than numbers.” The epistemological view of qualitative research is described as interpretivist. This means that research data is based on a participant's interpretation of the social world (p. 380). In the case of this research, the findings are based on my informants' interpretation of the situation on Lesbos and their interpretation of what is good practice in refugee education. The ontological position in qualitative studies is constructionist, meaning that it recognizes that social interactions are creating the situations and the world we are living in (Bryman, 2012). In qualitative research, there is also the view that interpretations are culture and context bound. There can be many “truths” and interpretations of the same phenomena or situation (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). In this research, participants contribute with different personal backgrounds. They are also shaped differently by the environment, which makes their view of reality different.

Like many qualitative studies, the design of this study draws on principles from different approaches. The study has a descriptive character and draws on principles from phenomenology and ethnographic research. The research seeks to describe and explain conditions relating to refugee education on Lesbos.

### 4.1. Refugee research

Refugee research is subjected to impact from many external factors. Voutira and Doná (2007) highlight three factors dictating how research on refugees is conducted. First, state protection seems to work at the expense of refugee protection. The term “illegal immigrant” is a direct consequence of this. Second is the temporary situation of refugees. Many refugees live in

temporary camps or sites, awaiting their asylum response or have temporary approvals, meaning they can be sent back to their country of origin when their approval ends. Third, many actors, such as UN agencies and large NGOs, work on asylum and migration policies (p. 167). When doing research on Lesbos, these were all factors I had to adapt to. The temporality aspect particularly affected my research.

Doing research on refugees is challenging for many reasons. First, getting access to and identifying refugees can be a complex process. According to Harrel-Bond and Voutira (2007), refugees are most visible and easily identified when they stay at refugee camps or detention centers (p. 283). For that reason, most research on refugees is done in a camp setting, excluding many refugees living in other locations. However, even though refugees living in camps or detention centers are easily identified, they are not easily accessible. Security and bureaucracy often create barriers when it comes to getting access.

In refugee research, there is also the question of reliable literature and statistics. Much refugee research literature is reports written by NGOs, intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and its partner organizations such as UNHCR, or human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch. As stated in chapter 3, the refugee situation in Greece is unique in a European context. The refugee situation on the Greek islands is also relatively new, as it only began in 2015, resulting in the fact that there is not a large pool of research to draw from. Organizations such as UNHCR and UNICEF report on their own programs, which makes these reports subject to question when it comes to validity. In addition, Greek reports are hard to access. Most official reports concerning practice, policies, and evaluation of policies and practices are written in Greek. According to Harrel-Bond and Voutira (2007), “any government or agency responsible is unlikely to welcome the exposure of their failings in protecting refugee rights” (p. 284). This means that access to refugees living in camps and detention centers may be limited, but also that reports coming from the Government or the official camp management, usually a local government or an organization such as UNHCR, may be subjected to just showing the good, and not exposing the bad.

#### 4.2. Access

In this research, I experienced several challenges concerning access. Cohen et al. state that access and acceptance are crucial in all research. Early access to a research site, organization,



and informants will offer the best opportunity to a researcher (p. 134). In this research, early access was difficult due to Covid19. Even though this research was thoroughly planned, challenges relating to access and acceptance have impacted the selection of informants and methods in this research.

#### 4.2.1. Access to informants

I started to reach out to NGOs working in the education sector on Lesbos. These NGOs were identified through their social media sites or official web pages. There are many small NGOs providing classes to refugees. However, most of these NGOs offer adult education. In addition, it turned out that many NGOs had not updated their web pages and had ended their program on the island. There was also challenging that many of the NGOs did not reply or replied weeks after my initial contact. I found it particularly difficult to identify NGOs operating learning programs for children. To my understanding, many NGOs changed their focus or ended their programs after the fire in Moria.

In early September 2021, I got in contact with a small American NGO operating an education program, primarily focusing on young adults. This organization ended up being my way in. After discussing my background as an educator and my research project, we agreed that I was to join their team with volunteers on Lesbos the following month. I volunteered as an English teacher, teaching young adults at the beginner level. As this NGO did not run programs targeting children, no volunteer or coordinator directly associated with this NGO participated in this research. However, through people working in this organization, I got introduced to several people working in the education and learning sector on Lesbos. This volunteer position also let me experience the challenges relating to planning and teaching classes and the unpredictable daily life of refugees and volunteers on Lesbos.

I found it challenging to identify and attain access to informants. Identifying potential informants were the easier part, whereas making contact and getting acceptance was more difficult. Access to teachers and coordinators at the different community schools was particularly challenging as the Mavrovouni camp has strict entry and exit policies, meaning that it was difficult for me to get in and for residents to get out. For this reason, most people participating in this research live in Mytilini, not in the camp. I visited the camp only once during my stay due to the lack of an access pass.

#### 4.2.2. Doing research in a refugee camp situation

The situation on Lesbos is tense and unpredictable. This was something I needed to work around and something that made my fieldwork take longer than I anticipated. During my four weeks on Lesbos, several incidents had consequences for many of my informants and indirectly had implications for my research. There were two fires in camp, and both happened in the rubber halls in the single men area of the camp. Even though there were only material damages, these fires affected the residents and volunteers in the camp. In October 2021, the camp manager quit his job. This led to uncertainty and rumors. Both residents in the camp and international volunteers and staff talked about this for many days, expressing their unrest with the whole situation.

There were constantly ongoing and continuing rumors about the building of the new refugee camp. Many people expressed their fear and nervousness about this project, which will, in practice, isolate the refugees from the rest of the island. Rumors were going around that the construction would be finished by the end of the year and that the residents in Mavrovouni would be moved early in the new year. Many representatives from NGOs expressed their concerns about their future on the island, as rumors state that there will be strictly enforced access and operation policies for NGOs in the new camp. In addition, at the end of my stay, the Greek government closed several safe houses for families in the city and moved the residents to the camp. All these factors are just examples of what camp residents and workers must deal with daily. Giving my informants the required space to deal with these problems was essential.

#### 4.2.3. Doing research during a pandemic

This research was conducted during the Covid19 pandemic, which affected my study in many ways. First, Covid19 led to travel restrictions. Therefore, my research was planned with plan A, fieldwork on site, and plan B, which was doing interviews through an online platform. In the summer of 2021, the EU opened its borders, allowing for easier travel; this, in addition to vaccines, allowed me to conduct fieldwork in Greece.

Covid19 was a factor that I had to consider when planning my fieldwork, but also on an everyday basis while conducting my fieldwork. The pandemic has led to many changes in

people's daily life, also for the people living in Mavrouvouni. In addition, the pandemic continuously sets boundaries for how NGOs can operate. This was something I experienced when doing my research. Many things changed significantly from March 2020 to October 2021. Many NGOs have left the island, and those who stayed have been forced to redesign their programs to meet the needs of the current situation. For this reason, most programs operating in the camp were relatively new.

There were also regional restrictions due to the pandemic. Masks needed to be worn, and a valid vaccination pass was required to be allowed access to indoor spaces. Most refugees, employees, and volunteers associated with NGOs were vaccinated, but this still led to some extra considerations when planning meetings and interviews. The pandemic also led to additional restrictions for entering and exiting the camp, making it hard to access informants living in the camp.

### 4.3. Sampling

The suitability of sampling strategy, selection, and size affect the quality of the research. Sampling size, access, representativeness, and sampling strategies are key factors to be discussed in the early phase of a study, as it affects the planning and execution of the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). I found access to be a crucial element in the initial state of this research.

#### 4.3.1. Sampling method

In this research, I have used non-probability sampling methods. In non-probability sampling, the researcher targets a specific group (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 217). The sample group is chosen due to their knowledge of, or association with, a particular topic. A non-probability sampling includes selecting a sample group based on specific criteria. In this research, I set two criteria when choosing my informants: 1, the informant must be a teacher or coordinator working with an NGO or at a community school. 2, the NGO or Community school must provide an education or learning program specifically targeting school-aged refugee children and teenagers.

There are several ways to do non-probability sampling. I have used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling for this research. In purposive sampling, informants are chosen based on relevant characteristics for the research (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 218). In this research, the informants were selected based on their knowledge of the education and learning sector on Lesbos and their knowledge of the refugee situation on the island. When doing purposive sampling, it is also possible to manage the combination in the sampling group. For this research, I tried to get a sample group with a mix of teachers and coordinators. I wanted both genders to be represented and the refugee community to be represented.

To identify potential informants, I used snowball sampling. In snowball sampling, the researcher identifies potential informants who might fit for the research or who can help identify informants for the research. These people will again identify other potential informants (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 220). Snowball sampling proved valuable for me, as the group of foundations and NGOs working with education for children on Lesbos is small. As a volunteer, I got access to a shared office space at a Greek NGO. This office space provided me with access to several well-connected people. These people had been working in the humanitarian field on Lesbos since the start of the migration crisis. Some had also been involved in multiple sectors and projects. I managed to reach out to people at NGOs, foundations, and community schools through these people.

Since 2020, the number of NGOs on Lesbos has decreased. There are not many actors working with education for children. This made it hard to find and identify the organizations, but it also made my pool of potential informants smaller. To some extent, my informants were selected due to their availability and accessibility. Through snowball sampling, I managed to get in contact with several NGOs and Community schools. However, in some cases, representatives from these NGOs and Community schools did not meet my criteria or were not available. This directly affected the sample group and the sample size.

In the selection process, I established relationships with representatives from different organizations. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I set up informal meetings. These meetings allowed me and the potential informant to ask questions and get to know each other in an informal setting. It also allowed me to evaluate if the person would be a good fit for the research. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) state that creating a relationship with the interview subject is crucial for the subject to open up to the interviewer (p. 154). By taking the time to

sit down and talk to most of my informants, I established a relationship before the interview situation. Making this initial contact with many potential informants turned out to be beneficial. After several of the meetings, people offered to reach out to acquaintances and suggested more people for me to contact.

#### 4.3.2. Sample size

Choosing the correct number of participants for any research is challenging. What sample size is right depends on many factors, such as the purpose and design of the study, level of accuracy required, the sample's representativeness, questions, and external variables that must be considered (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 203). Qualitative research tends to have a smaller sample size than quantitative study. In a qualitative study, where the focus often is on a particular group, large sample size is unnecessary because the purpose is not to generalize (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 223). However, in a qualitative study that uses interviews, such as this, it is vital to ensure that the group of informants together gives as much relevant data as possible and that the sample size is big enough to support a conclusion.

The sample size in this research reflects the complicated and unpredictable situation on the island. In the end, 14 informants representing ten different organizations, foundations, and community schools participated. To my knowledge, all international and Greek NGOs operating learning programs for children in camp at the time of the study are represented. Three community schools are represented, either with a representative from the school or through a partner NGO.

Several of my informants had multiple roles within the organization. Two informants had the primary role as teachers, eight had their main role as school directors or coordinators, while four had a role that combined coordinating and teaching. A total of eight nationalities are represented, and the average age group is 25 – 35 years old. In this sample, six participants have an educational background within education, and five have an academic background relating to migration, refugees, or international relations. The length of involvement and knowledge of the humanitarian work in Lesvos range from 7 years (2015) to 6 months.

#### 4.3.3. Limitations

I have identified some limitations to my sample. First, there is an overrepresentation of coordinators and managers. In my approach, I attempted to recruit teachers. However, I found teachers challenging to access. There may be several reasons why that was. To my understanding, it was challenging for teachers in camp to schedule appointments due to the unpredictable situation in the camp. Another reason might be that many refugees were leaving Lesvos during my stay, and community teachers were busy making arrangements for their travels. Second, there is a clear overrepresentation of Greek and international representatives. Only two informants represent the refugee community.

This research focuses solely on education and learning opportunities for children living in the camp. Education and learning programs targeting unaccompanied minors are not included in this research, as this group of people is under the care of a Greek organization providing housing and education. In addition, organizations and community schools organizing activities for children living outside the camp are not included and represented in this study. Some of the organizations represented also do adult-education programs; however, this topic was not included in the interviews.

As I have used snowball sampling, there is a chance that there are organizations and community schools that have not been identified in this research. This is a risk in snowball sampling as this sampling method relies on personal relationships and acquaintances (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 221). There is a risk that I have only been aware of organizations my informants have personal relationships and knowledge of.

#### 4.4. Methods

In this research, I have used interviews as my primary method to collect data. I chose interviews as the primary method because interviews are suitable for acquiring knowledge and understanding of a situation (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 508). As a supplement to the data collected through interviews, I have included observations in the form of field notes. These field notes include, but are not limited to, descriptions of places I visited, such as the camp-learning center and out-of-camp learning center, as well as notes on children's behavior when I visited. Field notes also include notes on personal experiences and feelings. These field notes are used as a supplement to support or challenge findings. The fieldwork for this

research was conducted in October and November 2021, with two follow-up interviews conducted in March 2022.

#### 4.4.1. Interviews

Interviews, like other methods, have their strengths and weaknesses as a research method. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) state that “the quality of the original interview is decisive for the quality of the subsequent analysis, verification, and reporting of the interview findings” (p. 192). To make good use of interviews as a method, the interviewer must be able to be present in the interview situation, ask follow-up questions, and also be able to interpret and verify interpretations during the interview. A quality interview also contains spontaneous, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 192). Some informants might seem like a good fit for the research but are difficult to interview. In these cases, the interviewer needs to motivate and find the right approach to get the desired information.

Interviews in this research were conducted as semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews used to gain knowledge of a specific theme (Bryman, 2012, p. 47). Semi-structured interviews focus on the interviewee’s experiences, feelings, attitudes, and thoughts on a particular topic. This type of interview is characterized by open-ended questions, which allow the informant to speak of their experiences. The interviewer has a great deal of flexibility when following the interview guide. The semi-structured interview allows for changes in the sequence in which the questions are asked. It also opens up to follow-up questions, so the researcher can follow any interesting paths the conversation may take. However, to a large extent, all interviewees will be asked the same questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 471; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 150).

#### 4.4.2. The interview situation

As a preparation for the interviews, I developed an interview guide with a set of themes and suggested questions. An interview guide is a script to structure the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 156). By using an interview guide, I made sure that I covered the same topics in every interview. Yet, it also made it easy to customize each interview according to the situation and the role of the person interviewed. I experienced that I was pretty consistent in

including most questions from the interview guide. However, the sequence of the questions did vary depending on the answers and topics raised by the informants. The interview guide and an information letter were e-mailed to all informants before the interviews.

The interviews were arranged as individual interviews. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. Three interviews were conducted as small group interviews with two participants due to practicalities. These interviews lasted between 75 and 90 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded. I started each interview by explaining the project's purpose and formalities relating to consent and audio taping. In most cases, I had already met with the informant beforehand. In the situations where this was the first meeting, I presented myself and the project and allowed for questions to be asked by the informant. The interviews were conducted at different places according to availability and convenience. Sometimes the informant provided a suitable space, like an office or a private apartment. Other times I would use the garden in my office or apartment. In nearly all interviews, we experienced different types of disturbance. Traffic, people entering the room, or babies needing attention were just some issues. In my experience, meeting in informal spaces, such as private apartments and gardens, made the situation less formal and more relaxed.

I experienced two issues directly related to my choice of method. The first is that interviews are time-consuming for both the researcher and the informant. I had several potential informants expressing concerns about the time and extent of the interview and requesting a questionnaire. The other issue was related to language. Due to my short time on Lesbos, I exclusively recruited informants with adequate proficiency in English. This means that persons who could have added valuable insight to the research were excluded from the study if they could not communicate in English. Also, some potential informants might have been uncertain about their English proficiency and uncomfortable speaking English, and for that reason, not wanting to participate. Some miscommunications did happen due to language barriers during the interviews. This led to some interviews having a more structured form than others.



#### 4.5. Data analysis

Before I started the data analysis, every interview was transcribed. Transcribing interviews may pose challenges if the audio has poor quality or background noises. In the case of this fieldwork, both apply to some of the interviews, but not all. The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. In the first step, I read through all transcripts to acquire an overview of the data materials. In the second step, I coded data and findings. The data material was coded by theme, meaning that findings were sorted and coded according to a specific topic. After coding the data material, I searched for patterns and adjusted the themes accordingly. In the last step, I merged similar theme, creating a list with primary findings to be presented and discussed in the thesis.

#### 4.6. Ethical considerations

When conducting interviews for research purposes, there are several ethical considerations the researcher must make through all phases of the interview. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) list four areas typically discussed in research ethics; informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher (p. 91). When doing this research, I have tried to reflect and act according to these principles.

I developed an information letter containing information about my project. Specifically, I wanted to ensure that the participant was informed of the purpose of the study and how I would strive to secure their anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, every participant was asked to sign an informed consent form. Before each interview, I made sure to read through the information letter. I did this because I wanted to make sure that my participants had knowledge of the project and knew that they had the right to withdraw at any point during the interview or later. Some of my informants chose to sign the informed consent form after the interviews.

Banks and Scheyvens (2014) state that the researcher has two ethical responsibilities regarding anonymity and confidentiality (p. 8). Confidentiality means that personal data will not be disclosed, meaning that data that can identify participants, such as field notes and transcripts, should be stored in a safe place. Protecting a person's anonymity means that the researcher will not disclose any information that might identify the person (Banks &

Scheyvens, 2014; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 95). All interviews were recorded using the Nettskjema-diktafon-app, approved by the Norwegian Research Data Center (NSD). All interviews were coded with a number, which I also used for the transcripts. The identity of my informants was stored in a password-protected document.

In qualitative research is difficult to guarantee complete anonymity. To do so, the research location would need to be kept undisclosed. In this research, the site is highly relevant, as this study explores a situation linked to a specific place. The refugee education community on Lesvos is small, and there is a possibility that organizations and associations will be identified by people who are familiar with the situation. Before conducting the interviews, I emphasized that I would protect the participants' confidentiality and, to a great extent, anonymity. Because of the risk of identifying organizations, I have chosen to present minimal information about my informants. Their nationality and age are not disclosed, nor is their educational background. In this research, it has been a challenge to balance how much information to disclose to the reader and, at the same time, ensure anonymity for my informants. In the findings chapter, participants have been given fictional names and will only be presented as affiliated with an NGO or a community school.

I have strived to work according to the "do no harm" principle in this research. This is connected to the consequences the research might have for the participants. All research should be carried out so it should not harm the participant (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014, p.). When conducting my interviews, I was aware that some of my informants took a risk participating. Teachers and coordinators working inside the camp expressed that their relationship with camp management was important and did not want to be identified with critique targeting camp structures.

#### 4.6.1. Validity and reliability

Concerning trustworthiness, validity, and reliability is two essential terms in qualitative research. Reliability and validity in research refer to the researcher's ability to present a valid image of the field researched (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 281). In this research, I have strived to ensure validity and reliability. Using an interview guide ensured that all informants spoke on the same topics. By doing so, I can make valid arguments on a topic based on answers to the same questions. However, there is always a question about interviewer

reliability as questions may have been worded differently, and the interviewer technique may influence the answers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282). In this research, I asked open-ended questions and followed up on interesting topics that my informants focused on.

When discussing trustworthiness in research, the informants' answers may also be questioned. In Greece and on Lesbos, NGOs and humanitarian workers are subjected to fines and sanctions by authorities. This might affect the responses of my informants, as they do not want to risk losing access or credentials. I did, however, experience that most informants were not afraid to speak the truth; however, to my understanding, some were careful with their wording on certain topics.

I recorded and transcribed all interviews to avoid biases in my findings. When transcribing interviews, it is essential to eliminate threats to the validity. A transcription is a translation from oral to written language, and there is a chance that some elements get “lost in translation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To ensure trustworthiness, I transcribed all interviews word-by-word. I re-listened to all interviews and controlled the transcription. I experienced challenges relating to audio quality, and there are also some challenges relating to language. In some recordings, it was difficult to make out certain words due to accents.

In small-scale research such as this, there is also the issue of generalizing. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) state that it is not about “whether interview findings can be generalized globally.” Instead, it is about how the research can be transferred to other relevant and similar situations (p. 296).

#### 4.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has presented thoughts on the methodology and choice of methods for this research. This research builds on qualitative approaches, using interviews to collect data to answer my research questions. This chapter also presents the approach I used to identify informants, a description of the interview situation, and states limitations to my sampling size and group of informants. This research was conducted during a pandemic, which led to additional considerations; these are also described in this chapter. Last, I have presented ethical considerations applied to qualitative research in general and refugee research specifically.

## 5. Findings

This chapter will present empirical findings from this research. As stated in chapter 4 on methodology and methods used in this research, empirical data have been collected through interviews. The informants are teachers and coordinators working in the refugee education sector on Lesbos. Personal observation notes from the four-week fieldwork are used as a supplement to data from interviews.

As stated in chapter one, this research aims to describe, explain, and discuss the characteristics of refugee education on Lesbos. Findings in this chapter are selected to answer the research questions and give insight into the purpose, content, and structure of different education and learning programs targeting children living in the Mavrovouni camp. In addition, the findings will present challenges expressed by the participants. 5.1. will present finding related to content and structure, including the overall structure of refugee education on Lesbos. 5.2. presents findings on education providers' approach to refugee education, including their objects and targets. In 5.3. results related to challenges will be presented.

### 5.1. Refugee education on Lesbos

When conducting this research, it became clear that there is a lack of an overall agenda and overview of the different actors working on the island. Therefore, it was difficult to identify actors providing education and learning programs for children and teenagers. However, as this section will show: It was possible to identify what types of education and learning programs that were available. When asked to describe the education situation for refugee children on Lesbos, all participants distinguished between “before and after Moria.” This section will present findings on education and learning programs after Moria, starting with what types of education and learning programs are available for refugee children.

Findings in this research showed that there were two primary providers of education and learning programs for refugee children on Lesbos: Non-government Organizations (NGOs) and Community Schools. Both provided non-formal education and learning programs. There were some children enrolled in public education. However, neither official records nor informants participating in this research could provide an exact number. The estimations varied between 10 to 300 children, and teenagers enrolled. When asked about public education enrollment, a typical answer from participants would be that they had heard rumors

of children enrolled but did not know how many or if they actually attended classes. Findings related to access to public education will be presented later in this chapter.

There were several NGOs providing education and learning programs on Lesbos. Typically, these programs offered classes outside the camp. This could be in spaces or classrooms in Mytilini or nearby community centers. Although children and teenagers might attend these programs, the organizations did not target children specifically unless these children did not live in the Mavrovouni camp. Findings in this research indicate that the camp's entry and exit policies were the main reason these NGOs did not target children. While adults were allowed to exit camp under certain conditions, having children exiting the camp was a frugal and complicated procedure. Several informants stated that “children cannot exit the camp,” reflecting their opinion that the process of taking children out of camp was too complicated and bureaucratic for them to engage in.

As of fall 2021, one Greek NGO had permission to transport children by bus to a learning center in Mytilini. John and David, two representatives from this NGO, told how they would need to send in paperwork to Greek authorities every week. “To have our program outside of the camp, we have to have permission. I think it is quite bureaucratic. With approval, even to bring the children out is a challenge”, John stated. David expressed frustration related to the educational system on the island, which makes it difficult for organizations to provide non-formal learning programs. “The system, it is a bit stiff. It is not so flexible to do things. Even for us, who are registered in the NGO registry, we are always looking to collaborate with the authorities. Even for us it is difficult”, he stated.

There were also specific requirements for NGOs to be present in the camp. NGOs in Greece and on Lesbos need to be approved by Greek authorities to provide specific in-camp programs. Participants stated that many NGOs that provided education and learning programs operated without official permission. For that reason, they were not allowed to work in camp. In addition, some NGOs choose not to work inside the camp. Maria, a coordinator at an NGO, explained that by choosing not to be in the camp, they were distancing themselves from the system and structure decided by the government, which they did not want to support.

This research identified two NGOs providing education and learning to children living in the Mavrovouni camp. These NGOs provided two different in-camp programs, in addition to the

learning program in Mytilini. At the time of this research, these programs had been operating for seven months or less. Findings estimate that between 350 and 450 children were attending these learning programs. However, there is no way of knowing if these are all different individuals or if some children are attending more than one program. Mary, a coordinator with one of the NGOs, stated that it would not be uncommon for a child to participate in several different programs due to the lack of an overall system.

In addition to NGO-run programs, community schools were essential providers of education and learning programs for children in Mavrovouni. Community schools are schools managed by people from the refugee community and are, to a large extent, self-organized. Being self-organized involves not relying on support from authorities, NGOs, or UN organizations. At the community schools, managers, teachers, and coordinators typically came from the refugee community inside the camp. Community schools on Lesbos were not usually registered as NGOs or foundations but were often supported by an NGO. Although there were different relationships between NGOs and community schools, findings show that the support was similar. The NGOs often provided materials such as notebooks, pencils, and whiteboards. NGOs also assisted with teacher training and curriculum building and planning. In addition, some NGOs assisted with space. At the time of this research, I identified three different community schools in the Mavrovouni camp.

Community schools were a vital part of the learning programs offered to children on Lesbos. When asked to describe a community school, one participant stated that a community school is a “school coming from the community, and a school based on the needs of the people.” Most informants agreed that community schools are important on Lesbos, as they fill roles NGOs cannot. More specifically, were community schools recognized for their role as providers of mother tongue and literacy classes. Those arguing for the importance of community schools also acknowledged how community schools had a unique position inside the camp, not dependent on camp regulations in the same ways as NGOs. For this reason, community schools were seen as a more stable fixture. As expressed by Paul, a community school coordinator:

You know [name of NGO] they have a school. They have some kind of activity, but it stops, and it starts, and it stops, and it starts. Like when you have some kind of holiday in Greece, they will stop, but we do not have like that. We teach every day, except Sundays.

### 5.1.1. Structure and subjects

One of the objectives of this research was to explore the structure and content of the education available for refugee children in Mavrovouni. While the last section presented what types of education and learning programs are available, this section presents findings on structure and content. All participants in this research were asked to describe the program they were a part of or associated with. While there is no standard way of organizing the programs, some similarities were identified.

One common characteristic was that all learning programs adjust course plans to short-time semesters or periods. There were some differences in how the courses were organized. However, the common goal expressed by participants was to create a course or schedule where as many students as possible could finish ‘something.’ Community school coordinator Paul explained:

People are coming, and they are leaving. But at least we are trying to adjust for an exam. That’s why one semester is 45 days and one level. And in 45 days, they will finish. And in another 45 more days, they will go to level 2, and if they do not finish, they will have at least level 1 and knowledge of level 1.

Community school programs would typically divide their semesters into periods of 2-3 months, each semester with a corresponding level or curriculum. Community school representatives expressed that this way of planning allowed for a long-term perspective for both students and teachers, as it supported a structure where students would advance to the next course if they would stay on Lesbos for an extended time. In addition, a short semester would allow new students to start a program regularly.

Mary explained that to meet the needs of their students, they had decided to structure their program with a spiraling curriculum. “Since the curriculum is spiraling, they [the students] get, you know, if they missed the lesson about colors, we will give a similar lesson in about three or four weeks, and so they catch along,” she explained. This way of structuring the program was seen as beneficial for both new and existing students, and new students could be enrolled at any time.

Findings show that community schools and NGOs planned and designed their programs to provide stability for the children. In all learning programs, the same group of students would meet at the same time of the day on the same days. Consequently, the number of students who could attend the different programs was limited due to space and the number of teachers. Some programs managed to offer one or two hours each day, while others offered one or two hours, two or three times a week. Mary explained the dilemma on whether to include more children in their program as camp numbers continued to decrease or to increase the number of hours spent with the children already in the program:

We have really low class numbers right now, so there will be an argument in saying, well let us increase the amount of time we have with each kid, but then what happens is that if 100 more kids come, then there is not enough room for them in school, because we have increased our hours for those other kids. So, you have to have, kind of like juggle, what you think might be happening with the reality of what is happening.

Some programs tended to have some kind of placement test to place a student in an appropriate group. Paul explained that they used a quiz as part of their registration process, and based on the results, students would be placed at the proper level. Community schools typically run classes for all ages, which could be challenging. Paul stated that many, especially female adult Afghans are illiterate and want to learn basic reading and writing. At his school, they started with just separating students based on level but found that this was unfortunate.

We have tried to find a solution to teach adults and children in different classes. Because it is difficult for both of them to go to the same class. You know, we have to teach adults and children differently (Paul).

Nearly all participants acknowledged the challenge of dividing students into an appropriate class based on level and age. Due to capacity, some schools would have adults and children in the same class. At the two NGO run programs, only children and teenagers were enrolled. One of these programs split its classes into two different age groups, and the other split its program into three different age groups. However, even though classes consisted of same-age children, nationality, school experience, and language proficiency would vary. The diverse groups of children were a factor when considering structure and capacity, as stated by David:

Some of them [students] they do have an educational background, some of them not. But some of them they did participate back in their countries to the school. It is quite a



big mix for differentiated education inside the classes, so we are trying to keep the number very limited.

Findings in this research show that choices on structure and subjects were made based on several factors. First, subjects were chosen based on what the NGO or community school saw as valuable. Second, subjects were chosen based on the capacity and knowledge of the teachers. In addition, for community schools, subjects were selected based on requests from parents and the community. Capacity and knowledge could be both limiting and promoting. Paul said that his students requested German language classes. However, he could not find a teacher to teach German at his school. In this case, the capacity and knowledge of his teacher served as a limiting factor. On the other hand, Mary stated how she managed to recruit a new volunteer with a background in science, starting science classes as a supplement to their regular classes. Mary was thrilled that she was able to add to what she could offer her students.

Another factor that had a significant effect on the different programs was space. The learning center in Mytilini provided students with classrooms, a library, and a small courtyard for activities. However, limited space, in combination with Covid regulations and bus capacity, limited the number of students able to attend these classes. In the Mavrovouni camp, there was a space in the green zone of the camp<sup>1</sup>, designated for teaching and learning activities. This space consisted of two remodeled buses, and extra seating could be set up under a tarp between the buses. These buses had chairs and tables, whiteboards, and basic learning materials. The space was used by one NGO, as well as one community school, regularly. For many schools and learning programs, the lack of adequate space limited what they could offer the children in terms of how many children they could enroll and what subjects they could offer. Limitations and challenges regarding space will be further addressed in chapter 5.3.2.

Even though there was no common curriculum, some similarities between the different programs were identified. One of these was the focus on language learning. However, the similarities seem to reach the end by acknowledging language learning as important. Findings show that there were disagreements relating to which languages should be taught. In the education community on Lesbos, there were discussions on whether teaching English and

---

<sup>1</sup> See map page 14

Greek language is doing the children a disservice. Mary expressed that in their case, they were trying to think about what would be best in the long run:

We are trying to prepare them for a place, like their education in Europe, so they have to at some point, whether or not they know their mother tongue, they still have to be able to speak in English or in another language.

English was a language of high demand, as English was seen as a language that would give opportunities in the future. In a conversation about why English was seen as an important subject to the refugee community, Paul stated: “If you want to have a good life, you need to be able to communicate. The best language, for now, the international language, is English”. He further stated that English is viewed as the language that can “solve your problems.” In addition, an argument in favor of English would typically be that the future is uncertain. English would be beneficial no matter where the refugees would end up.

There was a discussion in the education community on Lesbos on the importance of the Greek language. One NGO was teaching Greek as part of their primary learning program.

Representatives from this NGO argued that it is essential for the children to learn Greek, as the Greek language is a step towards integration and will make the transfer to Greek public school easier. Opponents stated that learning the Greek language would not be prioritized by parents, as few would vision a future in Greece. However, Sarah, a community school teacher, said Greek classes should be viewed as valuable to refugees. She spoke of her own experience:

Every time I wanted to learn Greek, I just avoided it. Because I thought: I am leaving, I am not going to stay here. This is my big mistake. That is why now I realize that the present is important because you have no idea about the future.

Two programs included mathematics in their core program. The two programs that taught mathematics apply different reasons to why they chose to. Paul suggested that mathematics is a subject beneficial for the current and prospective quality of life. “If you do not know mathematics, then your life will be difficult,” he stated. In his school, they taught mathematics because they experienced that many students, young and old, did not know basic numeracy. “Mathematics is a basic thing during your life,” Paul continued, arguing that mathematics would be beneficial in daily chores such as taking the bus or going to the supermarket.

While Paul added a practical reason as to why his school taught mathematics, David explained that as an NGO with the primary goal of preparing students for Greek public school, mathematics was a natural choice. He further explained that their position as a Greek NGO, supported by UNICEF, and recognized by Greek authorities, made them choose subjects based on what Greek authorities wanted them to teach, and mathematics was one of those subjects.

All programs offered different types of creative classes, either as part of their primary program or as an addition to regularly scheduled classes. Arts and music classes were viewed as important for the children because these subjects would create an arena and urge the children to express themselves. One program specifically used arts as part of their trauma-informed learning. Mary described these classes as English classes, but the outcome would not be purely skills in English. “It involves like a lot of like expressing yourself and expressive arts,” she said. She continued by explaining that in her experience, many children with trauma would struggle to express their feelings or even the concept of self.

At the community schools, painting and drawing classes and guitar and music classes were taught. Some community schools also taught computer classes. However, the community school would need the space and materials to teach computer classes, typically requiring collaboration with NGOs who could provide this.

#### 5.1.2. Teachers and language

There were variations in who worked as teachers at the different education and learning programs on the island. There were also variations in opinion amongst my informants as to whom should be teachers. Having qualified, trained staff was emphasized as important by my informants. However, there were disagreements as to who is a qualified teacher. While some argued that teachers should have a university degree in education or a teaching certificate, others argued that cultural understanding and language skills in home languages, such as Farsi or Arabic are more important and outweigh the disadvantages.

As a coordinator with an NGO run program, Mary recruited international volunteers to teach. She explained that her ideal candidate for a teaching position should have a university education within the education sector. She also valued practical experience with teaching,

stating, “I kind of look at both. I think education qualifications and then experience qualifications. But they have to have one of the two, and preferably both”. Paul and David argued that having qualified teachers are important due to the challenges teachers would face in the classrooms. They explained how, in their opinion, qualified teachers would have more competence in planning, differentiated teaching, and choosing methods that would suit a student group consisting of students with different backgrounds, language skills, and ages. In addition, NGOs using paid staff and international volunteers would typically have a process where that teacher has been evaluated. David stated that having so many different actors on the island doing educational programs makes it difficult to ensure the safety of the children and the minimum quality of the program offered. He further expressed his thought on the risks of having uncontrolled and unregistered actors working with education:

Of course, it is important for the children to have access to something, to do something, and not hang around in the camp. But, when you are not meeting specific criteria, it is also dangerous because certain people can have certain criminal activity; it can take place in your activity without anyone realizing.

No participant was directly discrediting university competence. Still, many informants acknowledged how Greek or international teachers, even though they had a university education, would come short in some cases. Especially would communication be brought up by informants. NGOs would have teacher assistants or translators to assist them. Yet, they expressed that not being able to communicate in a common language made it difficult to help the children in different situations, such as a fight or when a child was sad. When asked if she thought language limited her ability to meet the need of her students, a Greek teacher answered: “sometimes yes, I am glad we have interpreters, but sometimes when I am inside the camp, out of the school, I see some students or children. It is difficult for me if they need help because I cannot speak and make conversation”.

Mary stated her view on community schools:

It is somebody from their culture that is teaching them, and like teaching cultural things that I might just not be aware about. You know and like, it is something that is familiar to the students, where everything else is changing, they can at least go to a classroom that is structured the same way that they would see in their home countries.

In addition to the argument on culture and communication, advocates for community schools also stated that children responded better to resident teachers. In addition to the language of

instruction, two factors were highlighted. First, resident teachers were seen as a more stable fixture than international volunteers:

Because a lot of the volunteers would come for like one week or two weeks and then leave, they did not make it through the whole segment. So, students were not as invested if their teachers were changing constantly, and not making it through the segment with them (Maria).

Second, participants acknowledged the benefit of teachers being familiar with the present situation. A resident teacher would have first-hand knowledge of potential traumas and have the same experiences as the students. When Maria's program changed from international volunteers to resident teachers, they found that the children responded better to the language of instruction and stability and had teachers that could support them.

The teacher understood everything that was going on at home. So, if it was freezing in the winter, and you was showing up wet, your teacher was also showing up wet. If you didn't sleep last night because there was gang violence, your teacher understood that (Maria).

In discussions on teachers, language was brought up by nearly all participants. Several informants stated that language barriers would be one of the main challenges education providers would face in their work. Some would call it a challenge, while others would call it a factor they had to work with. In addition to challenges related to language and communication, which have already been covered, one topic would typically be challenges related to the language of instruction. A Greek teacher stated that language would typically be the most challenging part of her work. She explained that not only was it a challenge to teach the children in a language they did not know, but in many cases, they could not use translators either. Children of many different nationalities would attend the same class at this program.

It is not that we have only one language, most of our students are Farsi speaking, but there is also a distance [between students]. And in one classroom, there are like Farsi speakers, French speakers, Arabic speakers, and Somali speakers, this makes it more and more difficult.

Another aspect of language that would be brought up was whether a community teacher, a Greek teacher, or an international teacher would be the best qualified to teach English. It was stated that a Greek teacher would not be better suited to teach English than a resident teacher. In a conversation with Nora, the founder of an NGO that supports community engagement,

competence in English became a subject. She stated that, in her opinion, the English competency of their teachers was more than sufficient because they would teach at a basic level. Sarah, on the other hand, stated that the best solution would be to have both international and community teachers, both for language reasons but also for the cultural aspect

When you know nothing about a language, and you are going to a class with an international teacher, you do not feel more comfortable, and you feel self-confidence, it affects you badly. I'm not good enough, I cannot learn, I have to leave the class. I have seen this. For us [refugee teachers], it is better to be with beginners. For high level, I prefer international.

She continued:

The best schools would be a combination of both community teachers and internationals, because it is more powerful. You have people from all around the world, and they have access, and they have more experience. When you are a European person, it is completely different than I refugee, maybe I don't know the laws here, maybe I don't know how to do something officially, but they know, of course they know better than me. But sometimes, it is opposite, I know how to behave with the refugees, but maybe European people, they don't, and that is important.

Those arguing for this model used the “dual benefit” of community schools and refugee teachers as a key argument. Purpose, meaning, and structure become very important in a refugee context. Community schools support both the students but also the teachers by creating an everyday life. “Refugees are not in a normal situation; they do not have their normal life, their normal routine, and believe me, it is not only a matter of learning but also spending their time,” Sarah expressed. She further explained how many refugees would feel that they were wasting their time, unable to have a job or go to school. Community schools would address both these issues, as many teachers, like Sarah, would teach children and lower-level classes and then attend higher level classes themselves. Sarah also felt supported by her community school, and the NGO that supported this school, stating that creating relationships between internationals and refugees was seen as valuable and important, because it helped refugees navigate their daily life when in camp but also when they moved on to other countries in Europe.

The situation on Lesbos is quite unique in terms of “stuckedness.” Refugees on Lesbos find themselves in a very temporal situation, yet in a situation that is not moving. To be able to cope in such situations, having a purpose is vital to residents of the camp. Community schools

were seen as a measure to give refugees some agency in their own life in a situation where everything was being controlled for them. Refugees and internationals advocating for refugee teachers stated that they believed community schools played an important role in supporting the teachers.

What is special about the community schools, the teachers come also from the community, and they get a sense of meaning. They have a meaning; they are not just a refugee. They are teachers, and they have purpose, and they have something to wake up in the morning and they have responsibility (Emily, community school coordinator).

### 5.1.3. UNICEF, education working group, and common learning hub

My informants described a shift in organization and planning during the spring and summer of 2021. UNICEF became involved in the education sector, and an education working group was established. This education working group consists of members from different NGOs and foundations on Lesvos within the education and learning sector. From this research, the mandate of this group did not become apparent. However, the purpose of the group was described by one of its members:

We try to find all the community schools that we have inside the camp (...) we have been in contact with them to see if to help them if they need some materials or supplies for the schools. We try to speak with them to see how they do their lessons, and what lessons do they have. And right now, we are running some coordinator trainings, because all these community schools they have some coordinators, so we have done some trainings for the coordinator. We speak with them for how they can organize the school, how they can do their registration, different things about education.

Another member of the education working group stated how this mapping of community schools led to a better understanding of these schools' physical and educational needs. As well as an overview of which community schools were supported by NGOs and what their relationships were. At Lesvos, education actors have been working individually. There has been no overall vision, plan, or structure. For that reason, children have been offered variations of education and learning opportunities. Organizations and community schools have typically been doing their things without being cautious of other actors. This has led to a situation where many children have not been able to get any education, while others have attended several programs.



Informants stated that they understood the goal of the UNICEF involvement was to create a common registration system and a learning hub for children living in the camp. The presence of UNICEF was viewed mainly as a positive contribution to the education and learning environment on Lesbos. Mary explained how she believed this presence would benefit NGOs and children:

The education program in general is orchestrated is UNICEF is here and have a presence on the island now, which they didn't always have. So, it has been super helpful because now all the organizations kind of work together. And so that way we can make sure that we are reaching all the kids.

Before UNICEF's presence on the island, NGOs would go door to door to get children to attend their programs. UNICEF has established a common registration system, where children are dispersed to different NGO programs. In addition, there have been talks of establishing a common learning hub for all education actors in the camp. Mary was of the opinion that a common learning hub would benefit both providers of education and the students:

I think if we had like a central learning hub those types of collaborations would become even more natural, and like it would just be okey like you are finished with that school and then you come over here for a bit, see what I mean? It is just more, just structured for the kids, and there is also a safe place for them in camp.

As coordination and a common system were expressed as something that was missing and had been missing on Lesbos for as long as the refugee crisis, people were positive to a system where actors could work together and all children could be reached. However, there were significant discrepancies among my informants regarding their belief in the project. Where some, like Mary, put faith in the project, stating, "I think the idea is phenomenal. Because, like I have already seen drastic improvements with the collaboration of working with other NGOs within the education sector, and like how that could be so beneficial for children". Others, like Maria were more skeptical:

In theory it will be lovely. Practically it will never work. There is lack of organization, there is too many egos. If UNICEF did what UNICEF is there to do, it could work. But UNICEF isn't sitting down with all the organizations to say what is the common curriculum, who is responsible for what age, what demographic, what topic, this is the schedule. That is what they need to do, but instead they're asking what you can do, or when do you need a classroom. With that system, everybody is just going to duplicate the same stuff and fight about the same space, and fight about who is more important.

There was also a fear that this common learning hub would be open only to NGOs, meaning that community schools would not be able to continue what they were doing as part of the learning hub. According to Nora, community schools are being “bossed around” by NGOs. She was skeptical to the learning hub and the effect it possibly could have on community schools and resident teachers.

We are all bossed around by [NGOs] and by UNICEF. They just want to crush down these initiatives. And now actually, we have weekly meetings with UNICEF because they want to make like a really big place with all the schools together, but they don't want our teachers to be teachers anymore. (...) So actually, I think we don't get any support from, let's say, the official NGOs, that are more, yes, let's say, like official (Nora).

#### 5.1.4. “Filling the gap”

On Lesbos, children have relied on non-formal education providers since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015/2016. Refugees on Lesbos today are still struggling with the aftermath of the high increase of refugees in the years after 2016 and the lack of political involvement and structure that followed. Some informants suggested that authorities were in way over their heads, not able to provide any basic services, including education. Before the Moria fire, the number of school-aged children exceeded the capacity of both formal and non-formal education providers. When asked why non-formal actors have ended up being the leading provider of education on Lesbos, David started by stating that in the beginning, there were too many children and not enough spaces at the public schools. As Lesbos is a small island, there were not possible for Greek authorities to enroll all children.

Lesbos is a small island, and in the time of Moria, there was no way that all refugee children on the island could have access to public education, as there were not enough spaces at the schools. In addition, the situation in Moria made it difficult for NGOs to reach out to all children, leading to many children being left without any education or learning opportunities. “All the actors combined, most of the time, since 2015 to today, all the actors combined did not have the capacity for all the children here”, David stated. While capacity would explain why children did not have access to public education at the time of Moria, capacity should not be an issue anymore. Today, existing actors has the capacity to reach out to all children in

Mavrovouni. The current numbers of refugee children in Mavrovouni should also be manageable to enroll in public programs.

There is no clear answer to why children are not enrolled or attending public education today. However, three suggestions were frequently brought up by most informants. First, it was suggested that authorities have no interest in securing refugee children's spaces at local schools. As UNICEF has started coordinating non-formal actors, most, if not all, children were reached by a non-formal program. When asked if non-formal education was needed on the island, David said he believed so. He further stated that, in his opinion, non-formal education should not exist, but as something not covered by the government, it is needed.

There is no willing for those [educational] needs to be covered, I think. It is a discussion however, if, these needs are kind of, they are covered but not in the correct way. You could just confront the people responsible with all the needs and push them to take over. (...) I think that there is a lack of will for specific things and that specially in education. There is a lack of political will, to allocate available spaces to try to get children to the local schools.

In addition to the lack of organization and willingness from authorities to find solutions to the education problem on the island, there has also been resistance from locals. Maria stated that whenever authorities would try to enroll refugees to local schools, there would be “a lot of unrest with the locals due to health concerns, vaccines, or whatever other issues they brought up. So, they stopped, and then they decided to request that NGOs try to take that on” (Maria). While public schools are an important tool for integration, many communities will show hostility towards refugees. In addition, many refugees will not be able to show sufficient health papers or provide the public school system with records that show their previous school experience, which limits their access to schools.

The third suggestion as to why children do not have access to public education today was Covid 19. Since 2020, Moria and then Mavrovouni camp have been under strict entry and exit protocols due to Covid 19. There have been limitations on when, why, and how long a person could exit the camp. The strict control enforced by authorities has been a clear obstacle to refugees' opportunities to participate in public education. Covid 19 will be further addressed in the next chapter.

The role of non-formal education on Lesbos was addressed in similar ways by all informants. All stated that they existed and that there was a need for them because authorities did not cover education. When asked what she saw as the purpose of non-formal education, a teacher said, “a lot of children they don’t have access to formal education, so we through the non-formal education we fill the gap.” My informants were eager to discuss the role of non-formal education on Lesbos. There was a general understanding that non-formal education on Lesbos exists because the government does not secure access to public education for school-aged refugees. There was also an understanding that without non-formal education and the presence of NGOs, children would not have any education and learning opportunities at all.

Even though access to public schools may improve, my informants did not believe that every school-aged child would have access or that formal education would be enough to meet their needs. As expressed by Mary:

I think even if, you know all the kids were somehow able to register with Greek public schools, I think that there will be so many gaps there. Whether it is language gaps, emotional gaps, doing tutoring classes, or catching the kids up to where the Greek students are. I think there is always going to be a need for some type of NGO educational help (Mary)

#### 5.1.5. Consequences of Covid 19

Covid 19 has significantly impacted refugee children’s access to education and learning opportunities on Lesbos. During the outbreak of Covid 19, there were already tensions due to the riots and demonstrations in and around the camp. Maria explained how she experienced this period:

First, there was a conflict between the local people and the government because the government was trying to establish a closed camp on the island, and the local people said no. Then attention turned to the NGOs, and the locals said, out with you as well. And there was a lot of violence from the locals against NGOs.

Due to these tensions, many NGOs pulled their staff, as well as international and local volunteers, because they could not keep them safe. When the outbreak of Covid 19 started in mid-March 2020, many NGOs had already left, and there was a difficult situation for both aid workers and refugees. When Greek authorities enforced a camp lockdown, it made it even harder for NGOs to continue their work.

During the spring of 2020, there was a shift in focus from NGO assistance to the support of self-organized groups. “There was a lot of reasons that NGOs were leaving or were afraid to be here, ehm, and the refugees found that they were alone,” Maria explained. The need for self-organization became prominent, as NGOs were restricted from accessing Moria. In Maria’s experience, Covid 19 led to a restructure in how NGOs approached education and learning on the island.

When covid hit, that changed everything. Everything shut down, and the whole model changed (...) Most of our teachers because they live in camp anyway, decided to continue teaching, we supported that, and we sent materials in to help them continue with that in any way we could.

During the summer of 2020, people from the refugee community continued to teach classes in the camp. Teachers would typically arrange classes in their tents or out in the open air. For NGOs, the focus became to assist teachers with materials. “When people decided they did not want to meet [due to Covid], we supported them with like pdf versions of things, so that they could do text classes if they wanted,” Maria stated. Findings suggest that prior to Covid, most children attending learning programs attended programs run by NGOs, resulting in these children now finding themselves without any learning opportunities. Greek authorities also paused enrollment in public education, even though this did not affect too many children as the enrollment rates were already low.

After the fire in Moria, everything needed to start again. However, as Covid 19 regulations still applied to camp, there was a shortage in education and learning programs. For several months, community schools were the only ones providing classes to children in the Mavrovouni camp. The importance of community schools during this period was addressed by a member of the education working group: “the community schools filled the gap that we had after the fire in Moria, so we cannot ignore all this. It was something that they tried to do”.

Paul addressed the lack of NGO education programs and involvement from authorities:

I know you have to be careful with Covid19, but there are ways you could do it. You can do it online, all the students they have parents, their parents have internet, you can just give them a specific time during the day, and then you can start running programs.

Even though NGOs had started running programs for children in Mavrovouni camp during the fall of 2021, these NGOs were still subjected to Greek covid 19 protocols. These protocols affected capacity and structure of the programs. The learning center in Mytilini was also subjected to the same testing regime as public schools. John explained how they experienced how children did not want to attend the school in the city due to the rapid tests. “I mean for me it is quite understandable, having a child six years old having this huge stick in their nose, of course it is harmful. We try to enroll them to school in the camp. However, it is an issue” (John). It was also suggested that another reason for children not getting Covid-tested was because a positive test would require quarantine. Parents would not let their children get tested because of this, resulting in children not attending public school or the learning center in Mytilini.

Covid 19 also led to restrictions on the number of students in each class. While community schools would try to keep numbers low and use masks in indoor classrooms, NGOs would have to limit the number of students or the number of hours spent with each student. At the learning center in Mytilini, they reduced the number of hours they spent with each student from three to two hours each day.

## 5.2. Approaches to refugee education

How the different education providers approach education in emergencies affects how they choose to structure and plan their programs. The structure was covered in 5.1.1. this section will present findings related to a more overall vision for the programs.

The human rights aspect of education in emergencies was applied to all learning programs investigated in this research. There was a consensus among informants that education is a fundamental human right and that they, through their programs, took part in helping refugee children on Lesbos achieve this right. Education as a human right was also frequently used as an argument when addressing the problems related to refugee education on Lesbos.

Informants agreed that because children on Lesbos did not have access to public education, they were deprived of this right. Their program was just a contribution, and nearly all participants expressed sadness about the fact that they could only do a small thing for the children, and what they did would never be enough for these children to have their right to education met.

Programs explored in this research seem to apply a humanitarian approach to their work. On the question of whether they believed they were contributing primarily to the here and now situation for the children or if they were helping them in their future, all informants, except three, stated that they believed they contributed to the here and now.

#### 5.2.1. Protection, normality, and well-being

The potential protective aspect of education was highly valued by informants in this research. The potential educational outcome was recognized; however, most programs viewed this as a bonus. Even though all programs had a type of plan or curriculum as mentioned in chapter 5.1., teaching children a-b-c was not the top priority, but rather a side effect of children attending classes. When asked to describe the primary purpose of the program they were associated with, the three most frequent responses were stability, structure, and purpose/agency. Mary stated that they strived for every child to feel seen, loved, and heard. “The main purpose is for sure to make sure the kids feel seen, they feel loved, and they know they have a place to belong, they are not just a number in camp, they are not just tent number 742” (Mary).

The conditions in Mavrovouni are poor, and there is not much to do for children. Having a place to go to, even just for an hour or two each day, support the students’ well-being, which seemed to be a goal for all programs. A positive contribution to well-being was seen as contributing to protection from harm, and key factors were seen as structure and support. Some informants believed that having a school to attend would protect children from trauma as they would get support from friends and adults. Mary explained this:

I think our school really benefits the children in the present. Giving them that safe place to go to. They know who you are. They know that they are seen, and they are heard and all those things. I think for their emotional health, and psychological health, that has tremendous value. (...) They are still exposed to so many different things in camp, but by letting them come every day and just be seen, I think really helps where they are now and helps like further trauma from happening with them.

Most of the informants highlighted the schools’ contribution to creating friendships. Through friendships, children and teenagers get to experience a sense of safety, as well as experience a normal childhood. Paul explained that he believed friendships had a calming effect on the

students. “When students come to school, they meet their friends, they smile, they are friendly, and they work together. Step by step they are calming down, learning, and developing”, he stated.

The protective aspect of education was highly valued by my informants. Children coming to classes experienced belonging. They belong to a class; they have classmates, and they have a teacher. Paul explained how they strived to be a safe space for their students. He explained that his teachers and the school were a safe haven where children could find support from teachers and fellow students. However, he also stated, “I cannot say 100% that it is a safe place, but we are trying”. Many of my informants expressed how they believed people would serve as a safe space for the children, as the camp environment makes it hard to provide a physical safe space. As expressed by Sophia, a teacher, and coordinator with a small NGO:

We have created this like comfort and safe space, and this safety net of people. And then I think especially in these extreme circumstances as they are here, you cannot really, or in the very different ways, rely on your household. We become this kind of anchor thing. It is this, yes, safe space and safety net.

Going to a school gives the children a sense of normality. Mary told how their school felt like something normal in an irregular situation. She explained how she would experience parents walking their children to class and picking them up an hour later “just like our parents would do.” In this case, education opportunities for children had the potential to bring back agency to the parents. While this was not a focus area for most programs, one informant stated that for them, having parents involved was part of what made their school feel like a normal school. Even though school, in most cases, was just an isobox or a tent inside the camp, teachers and coordinators believed that this was enough to give students a piece of normality to their everyday life. Emily stated that at their school, she had experienced children behaving like children. “They have a sense of normality to come to school, they will laugh, they will think, and they will fight with their friends,” she stated.

Agency and purpose are essential for people in all aspects of life. For refugees on Lesbos, agency, and purpose are, to a large extent, taken away, as decisions are always made for the refugees, and refugees have little to no control over their future. Several informants stated how their program contributed to helping refugees regain this agency. First, it was suggested that education and classes would contribute to a structure of their everyday life. As stated by a community school coordinator:



The most important is that the student will wake up every day and they will know that they can go to a school and learn something.

In camp, many refugees would struggle to make the day meaningful. It was expressed that many, especially teenagers struggle with mental health issues because they cannot envision a future. Informants addressed how they, through their programs, wished to improve how teenagers were feeling by offering them skills that could be beneficial in the future.

By improving their language skills, and any other skills that we can offer in this system, we are allowing them to then better represent themselves and navigate not only the asylum system but wherever they land next. We are hoping to give people the agency to build their own life for themselves (Maria)

Education and learning opportunities positively impact students' mental health and well-being. Findings in this research indicate that having a class to attend is important for children on Lesbos, as it is the only structured part of the day. Friends, stability, and structure seem to be among the main positive factors for children. While, for teenagers, stability and agency become more important. When asked how they could know that the students enjoyed coming to school, three informants clearly stated that they knew the students enjoyed school because they would come to class early or hang out at the school building. Education and learning programs were also described as having a positive impact on refugees' well-being because of routines. It was often expressed that refugees typically would have nothing to do if they did not have school or a job in the camp.

While all informants talked about the protective potential of their program, it was also acknowledged how the camp environment made it difficult to provide a safe physical space to teach. Ideally, all informants would prefer to have their classes and learning center outside the camp. Those who had experienced how it was organized in Moria reflected on the limitations of the structure of the Mavrovouni camp.

The new situation is not ideal for us. In old Moria we were outside, and we prefer to do that again, if it is ever possible. I think it's a better environment to be outside of camp. It is a safer, better environment for students.

When children can leave the camp, it will give them an extended experience of normality. At the time of Moria, children and teenagers would use the out of camp learning spaces as an

escape from what was going on inside camp, clearly indicating how schools can be protective and safe environments for children and students. Maria stated that children and teenagers would come to the school, no matter whether they were their students or not. “When there was violent outburst at Moria, children would flock back to school. If it was not their class time, they would come because they knew that was a place that they could come.”

Mavrovouni camp does not offer the same space to run away to. The closest would be the students attending classes in Mytilini. However, this is not a place where students can hang out before and after classes, as the students were transported by bus on a tight schedule. Yet, the students attending this school are the ones who are experiencing the most ‘school-like’ environment, as well as experiencing normality by going to school in a city.

Here at the school in Mytilini, students will have access to go out. Go to shops, speak with Greek people. We are not inside camp all the time (...) the feedback that we take from the students is that they feel like they are enjoying themselves.

There is a hope that the prospective learning hub inside the camp will provide a more suitable environment for children.

It will also be a safe place for them in camp. And it will be a bigger area than what we are in right now, and so that will kind of be like, I do not know, they could come there and just hang out, and just kind of be kids (Mary).

Community schools provide a dual purpose. This dual purpose of supporting both students and teachers was continuously brought up by advocates for community schools. All the factors mentioned above, structure, agency, purpose, and stability, are also offered to the teachers at a community school. Emily spoke of how the structure of a refugee camp is dehumanizing and how community schools offer this back to the refugees.

It is about each person have a meaning. Not to let a person erase his identity just and become “just” a refugee, you know. It is so easy, to be just a number, just wait for a line to get asylum. It is about humanity, about people, about a purpose, about giving meaning. Meaning to people, in an environment that just want to erase who you are.

#### 5.2.2. Soft skills and personal development

The importance of life skills and personal development was repeated by my informants. As stated by Paul, “we are not just teaching English, we are making good people. We are teaching how a teenager can go to the society with a good moral, good behavior, and good

character”. All programs identified their role in educating children to function in society. Most informants stated that they would provide the students with the skills necessary to navigate a western culture. As previously mentioned, English was seen as such a skill, as well as basic literacy. In addition, awareness, tolerance, communication skills, and time management were seen as skills possible to acquire through the learning programs.

When stating a priority of their goals and purpose, most programs would prioritize soft skills and personal development as the second highest priority after safety and structure. Soft skills were seen as a bi-product from just attending class, but it was also a stated goal in itself. Most programs had a diverse group of students in terms of language and cultural background. Conversations, where the goal was to create culturally aware children and teenagers, were seen as important. “We have conversations about what things are like back home. What are things like here. Why are they different? What do you feel about this? Not trying to change anybody’s mind but trying to understand where things are coming from”. These conversations were seen as a vital step toward future integration into western society. As a stepping stone into Europe, some informants saw it as their task to prepare their students for the ‘European classroom.’

All informants expressed that having children and teenagers from different cultures not able to speak each other’s languages could be a challenge. One informant stated that he had experienced teenagers refusing to be in the same class due to cultural conflicts in camp. Paul expressed how their program taught children respect for other children and adults, as well as respect and tolerance for differences and different cultures.

While tolerance and communication skills were taught, other soft skills like time-management are more a bi-product of having to relate to a time schedule. As many students had never attended school before, attending learning programs on Lesvos, being responsible and accountable to a set schedule, a teacher, and fellow students may provide challenges. Maria explained how they had experienced that teenagers would bring their troubles to school and class. However, when they were held accountable for their actions, they would slowly start to change and align to the rules. Such skills are essential to be able to function in society properly. Whether within the camp structure, in Europe, or their home country.

### 5.3. Challenges

Refugee children on Lesvos are part of a challenging and hostile environment. Camp structures and living conditions do not support quality living and growth. The actors trying to provide education and learning activities in this environment faced several challenges in their attempt to support children. Temporality was recognizable throughout all challenges addressed by informants in this research.

#### 5.3.1. Lack of stability

The nature of a refugee situation and refugee camp is temporary. My informants highlight this as the challenge that affects their work in most ways. As stated by David:

I would say that this lack of stability expands in all the aspects of our work, and not only our work, even more importantly, in the lives of the people who are living here. You can see that also when you talk with the parents, they are of course, frustrated. When you are trying to establish a program inside the camp, you see that the environment is not appropriate.

For education providers, the temporal nature made it challenging to make long-time plans. Flexibility was viewed as crucial, as well as the ability to change plans and be okay with it. The uncertainty of the situation made it difficult to work for both students, teachers, and coordinators. It was something I got to experience first-hand, as I never knew how many students would turn up for my class. This made it extremely difficult to make a course plan aiming for the students to develop progressively throughout the course. Several teachers expressed their own experiences with this issue and how it affected their motivation, like Anna, a Greek teacher:

Something you have to accept is that there will not be a huge progress. Because the students are not here and it changes all the time. So, it is not really easy. Because you want to see the progress and you do not.

There was a constant turnover in students, but there are also turnovers in teachers. Teachers have the potential to be a stable feature for the children; however, international volunteers and community teachers would also change. Where community teachers before were viewed as a much more stable fixture than international volunteers, the rapid turnovers and movement of refugees from Mavrovouni to the Greek mainland now result in refugee teachers becoming more unstable. For students, it is difficult to start a class with a new teacher on a regular basis.

Sarah stated how the instability of teachers and classes could be harmful because students would prepare for a course and plan to complete that course. Changing teacher or having that course canceled because the teacher would leave would negatively affect students.

Mary recognized that changing teachers is difficult for the children, but she also expressed that for the team dynamics, it can be challenging to always go through transitions. She followed up by stating that for her as a coordinator, it could be challenging to motivate volunteers

We have these, the long-term goals, but then we also have the short-term goals, and so sometimes it is hard to motivate our teachers to reach these long time goals because they are here for a shorter time in the big scheme of things.

Every teacher, coordinator, and student is affected by turnovers in the population. David explained: “the turnover of the population, it is unique for each case, some cases could take one month, some for three, some for six, some for two years maybe. This has a very big impact on us and our programs”. The uniqueness of each case has severe effects on the well-being of students, parents, and community teachers. There is no system for who will get their papers evaluated first, meaning that the process will be short for some, while others will have a prolonged stay without knowing when to expect an answer. The immigration system is unpredictable, which affects teaching, planning, and personal relationships.

There are frequently changing asylum systems, so they would be times when students would stay for two-three months, or one year at a time and then immediately out of nowhere the entire set of students would leave because the law would change immediately out of nowhere or for whatever reason (Maria).

Turnovers in the camp population affect children in multiple ways. They would have to adapt to losing their teacher and getting a new one, but they also lose classmates and friends. This affects children’s well-being and life in the camp. After discussing how children cope with losing their friends, Anna stated: “I think it is more easy to see [with teenagers] because they have a lot of friends, and maybe the next week they are alone here. And it is something that is really difficult for them to understand. Why does this happen”.

### 5.3.2. Space

Space was a main challenge for education providers on Lesbos. Finding and keeping a suitable space were particularly difficult, both for NGOs and community schools. Having an adequate space to teach was expressed as one of the main concerns for coordinators with the different programs. Camp management did not assist schools with space, meaning that when an NGO or a community school found a space where they could teach, they hoped camp management would not find out. If they found out, coordinators expressed that sometimes they would get to keep the space, and other times camp management would take the space and use it for something different. An issue described by Maria was that in the Mavrovouni camp, management would constantly move things around, as there would be construction and moving of tents and containers between the different zones. This constant movement made it difficult for both students, teachers, and schools.

All programs described in this research, except one, had experienced losing their teaching space. There are several reasons, but camp management requiring space or camp residents 'stealing' part of the structure would be mentioned. Three different informants had experienced that NGOs would either claim a structure or building used by a community school or loan out space, only to reclaim it shortly after. Paul explained that when he first started the school in Mavrovouni camp, he had struggled with finding a space to have classes. Requesting space from camp management did not lead to anything, and when he found a space, he could only keep it for a couple of months, until one day he arrived and found that they no longer had a classroom. "All the students they came to me and said "hey, teacher where is our school, what we should do?" It was difficult," he said. Later they would teach in housing tents, under a tarp, or out in the open before they eventually got an isobox from one of the NGOs in the camp to use as a classroom.

The lack of adequate space for teaching is reflected by the fact that the majority of informants could refer to periods when they had to teach out in the open air. Mary described several common scenarios:

We used to be teaching in tents, one time I showed up to work and the whole tent was stolen. Like the pallets get stolen every day, tarps get stolen, people use that as toilets, just, horrible things that we just have to deal with every single day. Or we were like teaching under tarps in open air structures over the summer, and it was super-hot, you know, and just distractions (...) we switched to portable gazebos and that was

disastrous cause the wind blows them away. We had just one teacher holding down the one leg of it.

Having adequate space is essential to be able to provide children with a safe learning environment where they can play and learn. However, even when schools and learning programs actually have a classroom, this does not mean that the space is suitable for children. Teachers experienced that it was difficult for the children to concentrate and learn in the camp environment. Noise, open structures, and difficulties in managing time were being suggested as reasons. “Inside the camp, all is different because the children are closer to their tents, their house, and they cannot understand exactly that right now we are in a school” (Maya). The lack of and instability of adequate space limit the ability community schools and learning programs have to provide a safe school environment and a place where they can play and learn. As expressed by Mary: I think it was a huge burden for the team, but I think it was also doing the kids a huge disservice, not to provide them a safe place.

### 5.3.3. Organization and cooperation

A common problem that was brought up was the lack of organization of the different education programs on the island and the lack of cooperation between the education providers. Some of my informants expressed concerns that because no agency has had the overall responsibility, many children have been left without any education and learning activities at all, while some have had the opportunity to attend several classes provided by different NGOs and community schools. David expressed a concern that without a common system, where agents pull in the same direction, many children would continue to be left without any real educational activities.

It [lack of coordination] has always been one of the biggest problems, one of the biggest challenges. Because there is no authority to enforce a certain control of what is happening. So, it is definitely a challenge. And of course, having different options, it is from one perspective, positive, but from the other perspective, we have to kind of find a prioritization of specific things. Of an activity that is educational, in comparison with an activity where children are left to play around. Often activities that have certified staff to work with children from another who have constantly shifts of their personnel and also uses volunteers of unknown background.

The lack of an overall structure affects the planning and organization of each program in the camp. As described by Mary: a lot of our kids will go to [other programs], so they are already

in school for three hours, so we have to work around those time schedules, so it doesn't always, it would be very tricky to figure out. She further stated that a common system would make their work easier and would benefit the children. The different NGOs could use their strengths and complement each other and by that, be able to offer more children more hours of classes each day.

#### 5.3.4. Psychological challenges

A key challenge addressed was psychological challenges. Where lack of stability, challenges with finding and keeping adequate space, and issues regarding cooperation would affect the daily work of the NGOs and community schools, psychological challenges were a barrier to learning.

Many children and teenagers would face traumas from their previous life. Some would also continue to face traumas in the Mavrovouni camp. Even though Mavrovouni camp was said to be safe in the form of low crime rates, it was a consensus among informants that the camp environment was harmful to children and teenagers. It was said that Mavrovouni did not give the children any opportunities to be a child. Barbed wire fences, dust, construction, no recreational activities, and lack of presence from organizations that could provide such activities. For most, the one hour or two hour class would be the only place to mentally and physically escape this environment.

As many children would struggle with trauma, and their emotional skills may be low. Mary explained her experience with this:

They [children] have like what you would call chronic trauma stressors. And so when they come to us, it is evident that their emotional skills are quite low, they do not know how to share (...) we see like very quickly that situations can escalate in class because like if something get triggered and then they get like way out of wacky, like really really sad, or really really angry.

Depression was highlighted as a common issue among the refugee population. For community schools, depression affected the children's learning capacity, but it also affected teaching, as the teachers could be facing depression themselves. Some of my informants stated that in periods, they would not know if the teachers would show up because they were struggling with depression or had their minds filled with worries for their future or their



family. As with students, teachers could also be physically present without being present mentally. Mental health troubles could always be traced back to temporality and uncertainty.

As expressed by Sarah:

The situation affects students' ability to learn because sometimes, generally every refugee is completely confused, even me. Because we cannot say that I decide to go somewhere, and then I do that. I mean, most of the time it is the situation, which makes decisions, not you. But yes, most of the time we lose opportunities because we do not have stability. It really affects how you are doing.

Teachers and older students were typically concerned with issues such as the asylum process, potential rejections and appeals, cash cards, and food. Maria stated: "there is just an endless supply of needs and worries and stressors on people who are then taking the extra initiative to try to come to classes and learn, or come to class and teach, if you are a teacher." The temporal nature of the refugee situation on Lesbos brought many worries about the future. Worries about the future seemed to impact the mental health of students and teachers significantly. Many of my informants emphasized this factor as highly relevant for students' motivation and ability to learn, but it also affected the motivation of the teachers and coordinators in camp.

#### 5.4. Chapter summary

This chapter has presented key findings from this research. Chapter 5.1. described what types of education and learning programs are available to children and teenagers in the Mavrovouni camp. It has shown that students rely on non-formal education actors. Further, this chapter has presented findings related to curriculum, structure, and content. In chapter 5.2. findings related to the purpose of the different programs have been presented. This chapter showed what the various providers of education and learning programs viewed as their primary tasks and what they believed their contributions to the students were. This chapter also showed that many value their immediate influence as the most important. Last, challenges were presented. This chapter has shown how temporality is a recognizable feature in challenges related to teaching, planning, mental health, and organization.

## 6. Discussion

This research seeks to contribute to the field of education in emergencies and refugee education. The purpose of the study is to investigate the current state of refugee education on Lesbos. As stated in chapter 1, there are three objectives to this research. First, this research aims to explore what type of education refugee children on Lesbos have access to. The research also seeks to investigate the form of the education refugee children on Lesbos are receiving, meaning what the content of the education is, who the teachers are, and what is the purpose of the education. Last, this research seeks to explore and analyze challenges in refugee education on Lesbos and how these challenges may affect the work of the different providers of education and learning programs.

This chapter presents and discusses key findings from chapter five. By describing the characteristics of learning programs and discussing these characteristics, the aim is to investigate the position of refugee education on Lesbos relating to theories and existing literature on Education in Emergencies. By adding theories on migration, the goal is to discuss how education in refugee camps is affected by temporality and what consequences this has for education providers.

This research has made strong assumptions that refugee education on Lesbos is poorly structured and managed. While the individual agents plan and structure their programs to the best of their ability, the lack of cooperation and organization makes it challenging to provide a complete educational offer. Findings also suggest that education providers on Lesbos face barriers in their attempt to make long-time plans, which affects how they choose to structure their programs. In this chapter, it will be suggested that while many programs aim to give their students tools for the future, they tend to settle with an understanding and acceptance of only managing to do ‘something’ to improve the current situation for the students.

The chapter is structured into five main sections. Chapter 6.1. will discuss findings related to EiE and non-formal education on Lesbos. Chapter 6.2 and 6.3. presents and discusses findings in relationship with a humanitarian approach and a developmental approach to EiE, and how these approaches are represented in EiE the case of Lesbos. 6.4 will discuss findings related to temporality, including challenges related to instability, using theories from migration studies

on temporality and waiting. Last, chapter 6.5. will address how the results in this research answers the research questions.

### 6.1. Non-formal education – supporting refugee children through education and learning

In the case of Lesbos, non-formal education is, to a large extent, the only viable option for refugee children. However, the non-formal education these children receive is far from sufficient to meet their educational needs. In refugee education literature, there is no clear answer as to what the educational needs of refugees are. There might also be huge differences between the needs of a refugee in suburban areas and out-of-camp housing and the needs of a refugee in a refugee camp.

For that reason, it is most viable to discuss refugee education on Lesbos in the light of INEE's definition of Education in Emergencies which is "quality, inclusive learning opportunities for all ages" that "provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that saves and sustains lives" (INEE, 2019).

By addressing all education and learning providers on Lesbos as non-formal education providers, this research adopts a broad understanding of the term non-formal education. Both community schools, small NGOs with typically unstructured programs, and NGOs with structured programs identify their program as non-formal education. However, using the definition by Coombs and Ahmed (1974), which states that non-formal education "is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning" (p. 8), it is possible to argue that not all learning programs on Lesbos fall into this category, as they are not providing selected types of learning, but serve more as facilitators of activities which may lead to learning.

Research points to non-formal education as a step toward integrating into public education. As stated in research by Nicolai (2003) and Rose (2009), non-formal education tends to lean towards being complementary to public education. However, for non-formal education to be complementary, there must be a structure and content which strive to prepare for future education in a public system. These programs are often described as accelerated learning or preparatory programs, with the purpose of teaching language or core curriculum comparable

to that used in public school. In the case of Lesvos, only one program can be said to serve this purpose: the one teaching Greek. However, as there is no actual system where the children attending this program will be enrolled in public school, it is arguable whether this program can be categorized as an accelerated learning program even though their primary goal is school readiness.

Interestingly, it does not seem to be a priority for most actors to provide non-formal education, which is complementary to the Greek public education system. Rather, non-formal education appears to be concerned with supporting children in their ‘here and now’ situation. This suggests that teachers and education program coordinators on Lesvos consider this a more pressing task and something more valuable to the children than solely focusing on teaching academic skills. Also, it might be a matter of understanding reality relating to what they are able to do within the system, capacity, and competence their organization holds.

What type of “education” a child receives seems to a large extent to be left to chance. This appears to be a consequence of the lack of a common functioning system for registration. Findings in this research suggest that there is a tremendous amount of competence among aid workers, teachers, and coordinators. There is also a willingness to provide education for refugees. However, there is also a constant feeling of not being able to do enough. I will argue that there is unused potential for cooperation and interaction between the different agents. This is also supported by many informants, who acknowledge that a functioning system could lead to an educational offer that could better cater to the educational and psychological needs of refugee children and teenagers.

In the case of Lesvos, there are attempts to create a common system. What limits this is space, structure, and cooperation. While everyone acknowledges shortages in their programs, there seems to be no real will to cooperate. Findings in this research do not give any clear evidence as to why this is; instead, it appears to be a combination of various factors. First, among many participants, there seems to be a distrust in UNICEF’s ability to assemble the education actors on Lesvos. Second, several community school representatives experienced that NGO representatives would discredit their schools and teachers. However, findings in this research suggest that many NGO representatives, in fact, value the potential that lies in community schools. It also seems that even though all participants in this research express frustration with the fact that there is no organization to have the overall responsibility, the consequence of

losing their autonomy leads them not to want to be part of a common system as they do not want to be “bossed around.” To create a more stable, complete education offer for the children, actors should acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and play to those strengths.

## 6.2. Humanitarian approach

There is strong evidence that actors within the refugee education sector on Lesbos apply approaches typically applied in emergencies. The purpose of the learning programs was usually said to be structure, safety, and stability. Structure, safety, and stability are key elements in the first response to EiE. From the findings in this research, I will argue that when it comes to living conditions, opportunities, and education, little has changed for refugees living on Lesbos since the start of the refugee crisis. The fact that education providers still operate education programs that can be said to include characteristics of an ‘emergency response phase,’ if using Nicolai’s (2003) term, supports this claim. Applying Nicolai’s theory of three phases in EiE, refugee education on Lesbos seems to be stuck between phase one and phase two. Phase one includes recreational activities, whereas phase two consists of a more structured form of non-formal education. This model suggests that the emergency phase should only be an initial phase, and phase two should be adapted as soon as possible. However, this is not the case on Lesbos.

There is no clear answer as to why education on Lesbos still operates in this initial phase, although some suggestions can be made. Based on the findings in this research, it is possible to argue that refugees on Lesbos do find themselves in an initial phase of crisis. The temporary structure of the camp leads education providers to find short-time solutions. In addition, it can be argued that there has been a reboot of the entire refugee situation on Lesbos due to the fire in Moria and Covid 19. Although there is no evidence of any structures or systems for refugee education even before the fire, informants stated that there were more NGO programs that more closely resembled what they would describe as a real school. Even though the conditions in Moria were horrendous, the situation was also more stable. Because more organizations were present in the camp, some aid organizations prioritized recreational activities and education. When Moria burned down, it created a situation where food, water, and shelter became more pressing than education. The fire started a new crisis within the

crisis, which may help explain why education providers focus on elements of EiE that are characteristic in humanitarian and emergency response.

Theories on EiE suggest that education providers and humanitarian organizations adopt different approaches to EiE. When adopting a particular approach, education providers choose their prioritizations and plan and structure their programs accordingly. On Lesbos, non-formal actors seem to apply elements identified in a humanitarian approach. The humanitarian approach, also referred to as an emergency approach, is characterized by short-time emergency solutions. Agents working from a humanitarian perspective acknowledge that education can provide assistance, safety, and stability in the immediate phase of a crisis (Burde, 2005). As the name dictates, this approach acknowledges that education has a role in humanitarian and emergency response.

Although Lesbos is not in an initial phase of a crisis, there is still evidence supporting the claim that most education programs apply this approach. First, most programs seem to acknowledge that their program serves a vital role in protecting their students from what they refer to as a hostile and violent environment. In research on conflict and crisis, it is recognized that education may take on this role. However, it is also recognized that certain factors must be present for education to live up to its potential as protective, and a safe space is one of these factors (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Nicolai, 2003).

Establishing a safe place is listed as one of the critical elements in a humanitarian approach to EiE (Burde, 2005). For a school to be a safe place where the protective potential can be unfolded, certain factors must be present. “It is possible to learn anywhere and in any environment. Structured education activities, however, require a safe space for groups of children to gather” (Nicolai, 2003, p. 84). Sanitation facilities and clean water should be available. In addition, there should be an adequate school building and access to basic school supplies (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Nicolai, 2003). It is evident that community schools and NGO learning programs in Mavrovouni camp face challenges in accommodating these factors.

First, most programs lack a suitable space to use as classrooms. It was described how some programs would have their students sit on the floor, as they lacked chairs and desks. In addition, the space would be too hot in the summer, leak during rain showers, and be freezing

during the winter. Informants also expressed that it would be constant worries concerning whether or not the space would be available the week, month, or even the day after, which does not cater to stability and foster a safe environment for students. Second, none of the programs in the camp have a space where they can provide sanitation facilities. Third, many programs struggle to provide learning materials like books and pencils. Some programs also lack chairs and desks, meaning the students would have to sit on the floor. If a proper safe space requires such facilities, it can be argued that learning programs in Mavrovouni camp do not manage to create a safe and protective environment for the children.

It is an interesting finding that many of my informants expressed how the structure of the Mavrovouni camp prevents NGOs and community schools from establishing safe spaces and learning centers. Some informants expressed that they experienced nostalgia for what they could do for the children before the fire and establishment of the Mavrovouni camp. One informant even expressed that the only way the conditions in Mavrovouni were better than Moria was safety. In her opinion, life in Moria was better in many ways because of the presence of NGOs and aid programs (Maria). In Mavrovouni, all aid assistance is strictly restricted, and NGOs cannot run programs without permission. Findings in this research suggest that NGO-run learning programs for children in Moria were better suited to cater to the protective needs of refugee children because the programs allowed children to attend a school-like environment outside the camp. Because learning centers were located outside Moria, these programs were also not subjected to any restrictions from camp management, meaning they were a much more stable fixture. While today, providers of learning programs face a significant challenge in having a stable and suitable space. Which affects their ability to be providers of stability, normality, and protection for children.

Even though education providers acknowledge their shortages, there is a general opinion that they are creating a safe environment for children. Findings in this research show that providers of learning programs largely connect children's safety and protection to caring and supportive adults. Research shows that caring and supportive adults and role models may indeed contribute to a safe and protective environment (Nicolay, 2003). However, in refugee education contexts, such research has been conducted in formal education programs or at more established non-formal programs than the ones in the Mavrovouni camp, meaning that research is conducted in places where teachers are a more stable and permanent fixture. As children were not observed or interviewed in this research, there is no evidence to support a

claim that teachers in non-formal education programs on Lesbos contribute to stability, safety, and protection. However, this research can support the claim that providers of non-formal learning programs believe that they are creating a safe place for their students and that the teachers are a significant part of this.

In addition to the potential protection aspect, a humanitarian approach recognizes the potential education has to provide structure and stability to a child in crisis. In Lesbos, structure is highly valued as something that significantly affects the students' well-being. Although one NGO clearly states school readiness as their primary purpose, most other programs tend to be more focused on what the structure of the school can do for the students in their present situation rather than the academic outcomes. Routines were clearly stated as an aspect that contributed positively to mental health:

Refugees are not in a normal situation. They do not have their normal life, their normal routine, and believe me, it is not only a matter of learning, but also spending their time (...) I think school is affecting their psychological health because they have a routine instead of staying in their house or tent, doing nothing, wasting their time. In class, you have to do something (Sarah).

Returning to the INEE definition of EiE as something that “provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that saves and sustains lives,” it is possible to argue that even though most education and learning programs on Lesbos do not fit perfectly into a definition of non-formal education, it indeed operates within the scope of education in emergencies.

### 6.2.1. Teachers

While many of the education providers on Lesbos agree on their purpose and goals, there is a tendency for different education providers to be skeptical and critical of programs choosing to do things differently than themselves. Teachers are subjected to such disagreements.

Arguments used in discussions on who should be teachers are typically founded on who is better at meeting the needs of the students. There are two sides to the argument: First, who is best equipped to support the mental health and well-being of the students? Second, who is best equipped to meet specific educational needs?

Findings from this research show that there are pretty polarized views on who should be teachers in the non-formal education programs. Interestingly, only three informants expressed



that they see benefits to the alternative that they are not using. This is not unique to the argument on teachers but is visible in several discussions, leading back to a lack of overall vision where all education providers are going in the same direction. There are currently three approaches regarding teachers: Greek teachers, international volunteers, and community teachers.

Research on refugee education and education in crisis and conflict supports the argument that, when possible, teachers should come from the community. In conflict-affected areas, community teachers are more likely to invest in the students because of the investment for the future (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). The results from this research can neither support nor deny this claim. On the one hand, informants stated that community teachers would be more invested in students and teaching than international volunteers. On the other hand, it was noted that community teachers sometimes would face psychological problems themselves, resulting in them not being the best suited to teach young students. It is possible to argue that there is a potential dual benefit of using community teachers, as the teachers will find motivation and purpose in teaching. It is also valid to assume that students will respond better to teachers that can communicate with them in their language.

The second discussion can be said to be rooted in the disagreement of what is the educational needs of refugee children and teenagers on Lesbos. This research has not directly investigated this; however, from the stated goals and purposes, it is possible to deduct what community schools and NGOs believe are the most pressing needs: preparing for an academic future or supporting students by improving their present. By those arguing against the use of resident teachers, competence is used as an argument. Due to the diverse classes, a qualified teacher would be better suited to provide differentiated education and, for that reason, provide education of quality. Findings in this research show that NGOs using Greek teachers or international volunteers value teacher certification. In addition, experience or qualification in the refugee field is seen as an advantage, as well as experience or certification in second language teaching. Those arguing for resident teachers argue that resident teachers are more qualified to teach refugee children due to language and cultural insight. Because resident teachers would have firsthand knowledge of experiences and traumas students might have faced or are still facing in the camp, they are better equipped to support children and teenagers.

In either alternative, language can be a challenge. In this research, most informants related language challenges to the fact that teachers were not able to communicate with their students in a familiar language. This issue would typically be most pressing for Greek teachers and international volunteers. Language barriers would make teaching challenging, however, many expressed how language barriers also made it challenging to communicate with the students and support their personal needs. Because of language barriers, teachers would not be able to make basic conversations, or assist when a child was sad, or teenagers were fighting. If using language, and the restricted communication opportunities that follows language barriers, it is possible to argue that resident teachers would be better at supporting the students, and for that reason, be the better alternative to contribute positively to the students' well-being. Language will also be addressed in 6.3.

Aguilar & Retamal (2009) argue that quality in EiE must be defined as part of a context. In EiE, quality education cannot be measured simply by academic outputs. Instead, it should be measured by a school or learning program's ability to provide an arena where play, humor, and creative expression are encouraged (p. 9). In the case of Lesvos, it cannot be argued whether resident teachers or Greek/international teachers would be able to provide the education of the highest quality. There is also no research to support a claim that one is better than the other. However, there are clearly some strengths and weaknesses with both models. I believe this was summarized well by one of my informants:

The best schools would be a combination of both community teachers and internationals because it is more powerful. You have people from all around the world, and they have access and they have more experience. When you are a European person, it is completely different from a refugee. Maybe I do not know the laws here, maybe I do not know how to do something officially, but they know, of course, they know better than me. But sometimes, it is the opposite, I know how to behave with the refugees, but maybe European people, they do not, and that is important (Sarah).

I believe Sarah's thoughts fit well into the picture of a European refugee crisis. While most EiE and refugee education research is conducted in the Middle East, Africa, or South-East Asia, this research is conducted in a refugee situation in Europe. For that reason, research, such as the ones conducted by Aguilar & Retamal and Nicolai & Triplehorn might not apply to the situation on Lesvos. Both studies build their arguments on studies from conflict-affected states, not refugee camps. In addition, these studies are conducted more than a decade ago. The nature of crises is changing, which also results in changes in what type of aid

is needed. Because there is such a focus on the immediate needs of children and teenagers in Mavrovouni, people might forget to address that there also is a future. In the case of refugees on Lesbos, there is a compelling chance that their future is in Europe. This will be further addressed in the next section.

### 6.3. Developmental approach and long-time perspectives

Chapter 6.2. discussed how education and learning programs on Lesbos are characterized by elements recognizable in a humanitarian approach to education. I stated that refugee education on Lesbos is stuck between two phases in education in emergencies; an emergency response phase, characterized by recreational activities and a focus on establishing safe spaces which can provide immediate protection, and a phase of structured non-formal education, where the goal is to prepare students for public education. This section will discuss how elements of a development approach to EiE are visible in refugee education on Lesbos.

A developmental approach to EiE recognizes education's role in the bigger picture. Where a humanitarian approach would focus on immediate needs in times of crisis, agents applying a developmental approach would aim to pursue long time solutions. In a developmental approach, it is also acknowledged that education also serves as a means of capacity building and future development (Burde, 2009, p. 9). In Lesbos, several agents apply a developmental approach or elements that can be identified as elements from a developmental approach. Interestingly, those who most seem to value a developmental approach and see the need for a long-term vision are representatives from the refugee community. There are not enough representatives from this community participating in this research to generalize. However, there seems to be a clear tendency for community schools to plan their classes and choose their subjects based on what is believed to be beneficial for the students in the future, like teaching English because English is a language that will support students in their prospective life, most likely in Europe. Representatives from community schools also tend to value the aspect of agency, which means that they believe that the schools' main purpose and achievement are to give refugees agency over their own life. People are becoming more independent by learning literacy, English, or even Greek. This certainly helps refugees navigate their present and gives them hope for the future. Agency will be further discussed in relation to active waiting in 6.4.1.

The struggle with long-time planning can be discussed in relation to what Vandevordt and Fleischmann (2021) called the *temporal dilemma* (p.193). The temporal dilemma refers to the conflict between providing what is necessary for the present situation and advocating and working towards a more sustainable, long-term solution that will be beneficial in the future. This notion of a temporal dilemma can be applied to refugee education on Lesbos in multiple ways. First, it can be applied to the fact that education providers are torn between offering a ‘minimum’ to as many children as possible, or extending their programs, to provide a school day more like the one the children will meet in public education in later life. While the first alternative will benefit many children in the present, it will not significantly affect their future schooling. Second, it can be applied to the fact that education providers on Lesbos, especially NGOs, are torn between policy and advocacy to influence the Greek government and to provide refugees with some kind of education. One informant expressed concerns about how non-formal education programs potentially contribute to maintaining the situation on the island. Suggesting that because non-formal education programs could reach all children in Mavrovouni with a learning program, authorities would be less committed to finding a long-time solution on Lesbos. In terms of children reached, there is an improvement from the previous year.

### 6.3.1. Soft skills

The strong focus on soft skills can also be discussed as a feature from a long-term perspective. While some participants would add soft skills to the list of biproducts, others would share that they strongly focused on their students learning various soft skills. It was also stated, specifically by representatives with a European / western background, that they were focused on facilitating the development of soft skills necessary to cope in Western society or at western public schools. Time management and accountability were highly valued as soft skills students would attain through attending a learning program. Several informants stated that children and teenagers would struggle with having responsibility and being accountable for their actions. Learning these skills would be highly necessary to be best able to manage in the future.

However, it can also be argued that learning soft skills is important seen from a humanitarian perspective. Educating “good people” were expressed as important. Skills such as tolerance, acceptance, and the ability to communicate in a positive matter despite cultural differences

and language barriers were emphasized. It can be argued that such skills are important contributions to a child's well-being, as they are essential personal skills to manage. Navigating social life, work-life, and school settings can be challenging without proper communication skills. Navigating through these parts of life is important for well-being. Both Nicolai (2003) and Winthrop and Kirk (2008) emphasize how the structure of education can contribute to personal and social development and how socialization will contribute to well-being. Learning activities facilitate socialization, both with adults and peers. Informants in this research stated that they saw a connection between routines and accountability and the well-being of their students.

In a multicultural and multilingual environment, communication skills, respect, and tolerance can be said to be specifically significant. It was emphasized that having same-sex classes or having students from different cultural communities in the same class could be challenging.

#### 6.4. The effects of temporality

This research shows a clear connection between the temporal nature of the refugee situation on Lesbos and refugee children's access to education and learning programs.

The temporal nature of the Mavrovouni camp, as well as the overall view of the Greek refugee situation, affects policies and planning on an authority level, down to the everyday life of camp residents. In this section, I will discuss how this temporality may influence how education providers plan their work, what choices they make when structuring their programs, and how it may affect the well-being of students, coordinators, and teachers.

As expressed by all my informants, there is and has been a reluctance by authorities to ensure access to public education for refugee children. This research has not found any clear evidence as to why Greek authorities have chosen not to prioritize education for refugee children on Lesbos. However, there is a valid reason to assume that authorities believed that refugees would stay on Lesbos for less than three months, which is when Greek authorities, by law, need to ensure access to public education. It can be argued that authorities have had more pressing tasks than providing education. Findings in this research suggest that aid workers have a great understanding of the many challenges authorities have faced during the last years. As one expressed: I think the Greek government was handed a huge problem and that they are, they do not have the capacity to handle all the problems (Mary), referring to

education in context with the more pressing needs of food and shelter. However, the research also found that many aid workers are frustrated that education is not a priority and have not been a priority at any time during the refugee crisis.

Temporality is found in every aspect of policy, planning, and execution of refugee education on Lesbos. Evidence in this research points toward a problematic situation for those trying to provide refugee children with education and learning programs. For education providers on Lesbos, not knowing whether or not they would have a space to teach was pointed out as one of the most prominent challenges and something that led to uncertainty. Uncertainty is closely linked to temporality and has been shown to negatively affect people's well-being (Griffiths, 2013). In this research, I found that the uncertainties affected both teachers, students, and coordinators, unrelated to the nationality or status of that person. International coordinators expressed just as much frustration for the unpredictable situation as refugee teachers and coordinators.

Findings in this research indicate that lack of support and involvement from authorities negatively affects what types of education are offered. Without government involvement and support, NGOs and community schools run their programs for an unspecified time. Aid workers and representatives from community schools expressed that a lack of support and communication with camp management led to uncertainties and worries regarding their school's future. They feared camp management or the more established NGOs would take back borrowed space or tell them to stop their program. This fear was well established in previous experiences, as many programs had experienced their makeshift school buildings being removed by camp management, destroyed by residents, or moved by other organizations. The experience of temporality was also expressed by sayings such as "for now" or "right now," referring to the fact that they did not know how long they would keep their space.

It might seem that the situation on Lesbos is starting to develop towards the short-time reception and identification purpose as was intended in the first place. Research and theories on temporality in refugee situations state that the temporal nature of a refugee situation affects the willingness to establish long-term solutions (Banki, 2013; Oesch, 2019). This coincides with findings in this research. Oesch (2019) states that different agents might have conflicting views on what temporariness means. He continues to argue that because of these

contradictory views, different agents might approach aid differently. In the case of Lesvos, finding in this research indicates that aid workers experience an attitude from authorities that Mavrovouni is just a pit-stop for refugees. For that reason, non-formal education is sufficient, even though refugees are staying longer than three months. Both Oesch (2019) and Turner (2015) argue that it is difficult to establish sustainable, long-lasting structures because of the temporal nature of refugee camps. Even though there is clear evidence that a crisis may be long-lasting and that there will be a need for a refugee camp for a long time, there are still uncertainties. Neither residents, aid workers, or local authorities will know how long a refugee camp will exist. Naturally, there will be a reluctance to invest money and time into such a project.

As temporal structures characterize the Mavrovouni camp, there is no ‘real’ opportunity to create a stable school environment for children, teachers, or parents. In addition to the unpredictable asylum system, there is also an overhanging worry about the new closed facility on the island, which clearly affects long-time planning for organizations and aid workers. As mentioned in 6.2 and 6.3. there is a conflict between immediate needs and long-time perspectives. Temporality and the uncertainties that follow are contributors to this conflict. Nothing is permanent, including students, teachers, international volunteers, school buildings, policies, and overall structures.

#### 6.4.1. Active waiting and finding ‘agency.’

Brun’s (2016) argument that the nature of temporality has changed, and so must be the focus of humanitarian assistance may be adapted to this situation. Brun (2016) states that temporality in conflict and crisis is a protracted temporality because conflict situations are becoming more lengthened. In the case of the refugee situation on Lesvos, temporality and protracted crisis is interesting. Moria camp had many characteristics said to be present in refugee camps where people live in protracted situations. As people in Moria created an everyday life for themselves, they entered what Brun (2015) calls a period of “active waiting.” What she means by active waiting is that even if a situation is protracted, it is not static. There will not be many years of entirely stand-still, but development and evolvment on several levels. In Moria, residents created bakeries, shops, and schools, one of my informants described it as a village with a fully developed economy, stating that “the old camp [Moria] developed to what it was because it existed for so long, and people were

staying for a long time” (Maria). Because Moria outgrew its fences, and it was a more open camp, people managed to get what they wanted in and out and could start their businesses.

While the old Moria had many signs of adapting to the protracted temporality, the Mavrovouni camp is more closely identifiable by short-time temporality. As Mavrovouni camp was established as an emergency camp, people were accommodated in tents and RHUs<sup>2</sup>, which were only suitable for short time accommodation. This research has found that the temporal environment in Mavrovouni makes humanitarian work, education, and daily life extremely hard for everyone involved, whether it be international aid workers, refugee teachers, or children and adults residing in the camp.

Even though the Mavrovouni camp is new in the timeframe of the refugee crisis on Lesbos, the refugee situation is not. The arguments in this research build on an understanding of the refugee situation on Lesbos as a protracted crisis. This research supports Brun’s (2016) claims that refugees living in a prolonged situation will find a way for life to go on. For refugees on Lesbos, one of these ways of continuing life is education. I will argue that community schools function as a stable, normal fixture to the other very temporary fixtures. Community schools provide refugees with two normal fixtures, which they would have been concerned with in their home country as well: work and school. Community schools become a workplace for many, and a place for education and learning.

As mentioned by several of my informants, education, learning, and teaching give refugees agency. Hage (2009) argues that because refugees are stuck, they also lack agency. This claim is supported by informants in this research. Several informants claimed that by attending a school or teaching a class, students would reclaim agency in their own lives, as they were contributing to a prospective future. Further, Hage (2009) argues that surviving a crisis is an endurance test, where the ones who are better at ‘waiting it out’ are those who would better manage during the crisis (p. 74). In Lesbos's case, there are few places where people can find agency and take control of their own life. I will argue that education, particularly community schools, is critical in supporting refugees in coping with the crisis and ‘wait it out.’

---

<sup>2</sup> Refugee Housing Unit, see chapter 3



Active waiting and finding agency is closely related to well-being and is connected to hope. In this research, participants would express that they liked to believe that they gave their students hope. According to Brun (2015), hope is essential in surviving a crisis. For people to reclaim agency and be able to ‘wait it out,’ the waiting must be seen as purposeful. In the case of Lesbos, education was viewed as a purposeful activity. Many participants would state that their activity would be purposeful because it gave students a place to be, structure, and stability. Others would explain their activity as purposeful because it would benefit the students in the future. In addition, soft skills, such as accountability, may contribute to making choices that are good for yourself and those around you, as having responsibility can be both motivating and purposeful. As expressed by both Sarah and Paul, being able to navigate and participate in society is extremely important to have agency and some control of their life. Summarized by Sarah:

Generally, every refugee is completely confused, even me, because we cannot say that I decide to go somewhere, and then I do that. I mean, most of the time, it is the situation that makes decisions, not you (...). Refugees are not in a normal situation. They do not have their normal life, their normal routine, and believe me, it is not only a matter of learning but also spending their time. Because they cannot go to a school or a university, and most of them they do not have a job. So, it is wasting time if you have nothing to do. And there are people they want to do something and really care about that.

## 6.5. Chapter summary

The purpose of this research has been to explore and analyze key elements of refugee education on Lesbos. By presenting key findings and discussing these using literature and theories on education in emergencies, refugee education, and migration, the goal has been to answer the following research questions:

- 1: What is the current situation for refugee children’s access to education on Lesbos?
  - Who are the leading providers of education and learning programs, and why?
- 2: How do different agents approach education and learning for children on Lesbos?
- 3: What are the challenges in providing education for refugee children on Lesbos?

As an answer to the first research question, I found that as the refugee situation is frequently changing, it is difficult to describe a 'current' status. However, as discussed in this chapter, refugee children and teenagers on Lesbos rely on non-formal education provided by community schools or NGOs. Findings in this research point firmly to a situation where authorities do not have the political will or interest to ensure access to public education. There is no consensus on what type of education and learning different agents provide and, for that reason, what children are receiving. While some might attend an NGO learning program providing Greek, English, and Mathematics using Greek teachers, others might attend a small community school teaching mother tongue and English.

It is suggested in this research that refugee education on Lesbos is inadequately structured and managed. Everything seems to originate back to a lack of overall control and vision. This research suggests that there is unused potential in cooperation. Students could benefit from more class hours if the different agents pulled in the same direction. In addition, students could receive a more complete education, as they could attend classes teaching different subjects, such as mathematics, English, and Greek.

The answer to the second research question would be that different education providers have different approaches to education and learning. This research found that the choice of approach is connected to the aims and purpose of the program. What approach an organization, or a program use have been investigated through how the programs are structured, including subjects, as well as the purpose of the programs. In addition, approaches are also closely related to structural barriers.

In this research, it has been argued that refugee education on Lesbos is stuck between an emergency response phase and a phase of transition to public education. Authorities are responsible for students not attending public school. There is no clear answer to why many education providers on Lesbos still approach education from a humanitarian or emergency perspective; However, structural barriers and lack of an overall plan and management seems to be participating factors. In addition, the lack of government involvement. In the case of Lesbos, education providers find it difficult to apply long-term goals and plans in accordance with a developmental approach to EiE because of a poorly structured system.

When applying this approach, a consequence seems to be that education providers mainly focus on how the structure can contribute positively to personal development and well-being. EiE features structure, stability, and normality as quality measures. It is evident from this research that education providers value these aspects and, to some extent, value them as more important than academic skills. One program separates itself from the others as it offers a structured, out-of-camp alternative with the primary goal of school readiness. However, this program's representatives also state challenges related to long-time planning and vision for their program and students.

While short-time perspectives are typically added and used in practice, long-time perspectives are seen as a more unreachable ideal. While one NGO specifically applied a long-term perspective identified in a developmental approach, as they stated their goal as school readiness, others would say that they hoped they were making a difference for the future. However, that would not be their primary target. The purposive teaching of soft skills such as communication, awareness, and tolerance shows how agents seek to give their students tools to navigate society.

This research has also applied theories on migration to education in emergencies. Specifically, theories related to temporality and its effect on people have been discussed in relation to education in refugee camps. A key finding was the importance of agency. This research found that education would contribute to refugees getting agency over their own life. The actions of going to school, learning, and teaching and the possible future benefits were seen as crucial for refugee children, teenagers, and adults. This research has found that all learning programs, but particularly those supporting community engagement, highly value this aspect of their program. It is suggested that agency contribute positively to refugees' visions of their predictions for the future and, for that reason, their well-being. This subject is barely touched on in this research. However, these findings indicate that research combining theories on temporality and EiE in refugee camps will be relevant to explore in the future.

Providers of education and learning programs on Lesvos are faced with several challenges. A common denominator is temporality. Informants referred to movement as a critical challenge, specifically related to never knowing when people would leave, who would arrive, or which teachers would stay. This movement makes it difficult to make long- and sometimes even short-term plans. Informants would address the instability of the student group as a critical

challenge for teaching and planning, as well as a key challenge for students' well-being and mental health.

In addition, temporality is also visible in the challenge of having a suitable space. A safe space is critical to ensure a safe, protective environment for the students. In the case of Mavrovouni. The camp structure and camp environment portray a great challenge for the NGOs and community schools to provide a safe and child friendly space, with necessary facilities and materials. Most organizations do not have the option to give students an out-of-camp alternative. For that reason, most students attend schools in make-shift structures or tents. Space is also a barrier in terms of the number of students a program can accept, and the total hours of classes they can offer each student. Last, many would address language as a key challenge, connecting language to students' well-being and teachers' ability to teach different subjects and cater to the educational and personal needs of the students.

## 7. Conclusion

This master's thesis has explored refugee education on Lesbos. Based on answers from interviews with teachers and refugee education coordinators representing community schools and NGOs on Lesbos, the research has described the current situation on refugee children's access to education and learning. The purpose has been to investigate questions related to access, content, and structure, including factors affecting these, such as potential challenges.

The research found that the only *real* education refugee children on Lesbos have access to is provided by two non-formal actors: community schools and NGOs. Together, these programs manage to support children with learning activities. Yet, the number of hours and selection of subjects is limited. Results suggest that Covid 19, poor structure, and little government interest contribute to why non-formal education is the only viable option. In addition, findings indicate that overall structure and lack of government involvement also serve as maintaining factors.

In the quest to investigate why refugee children on Lesbos rely on providers of non-formal education, this research has also explored prior events to discuss how these events may have contributed to the present situation. This research has also investigated the objects and purpose of the different programs, how these objects affect how community schools and NGOs choose to structure their programs and what challenges are present, and how these challenges affect refugee education. This research found that while recognizing potential benefits in the future, most programs viewed features recognizable in a humanitarian approach as the most important, such as providing students with structure, protection, and a safe space, mentally and physically.

Temporality is a critical feature that seems to affect all aspects of planning and teaching. Addressed by participants as movement or lack of stability, this challenge affects planning, structure, and students' and teachers' well-being. Temporality also contributes to an unstable camp environment, which obstructs long-time planning. The research also suggests that due to challenges relating to cooperation between agents, there is an unused potential that would potentially benefit students.

This research has been named: Education in Emergency: Supporting children on Lesbos through education and learning. Supporting *through* learning is a key aspect of the results of this research. Education providers on Lesbos face many challenges, making it hard to provide a good educational offer. Education providers seem to focus on all the benefits of education and learning that are not simply academic outputs. Through the education and learning programs, community schools and NGOs support their students by creating a place for social and personal development.

### 7.1. Refugees in Europe

Although there is an increase in the number of refugee studies in Europe, the field of education in emergencies, specifically refugee education, would benefit from more thorough research. Specifically on education opportunities for refugee children living in camps or temporary settlements. As conflicts continue to affect Europe, this topic has become more present than ever.

While this research contributes to expanding the field by giving insight into how refugee education on Lesbos is managed and what challenges are present, the study also has its limitations. As the research has focused on describing a current state, there are limitations because the refugee situation on Lesbos changes rapidly. Organization, purpose, and challenges might have changed since the fieldwork. However, as this research also found similarities with other research conducted in refugee camps, it is feasible to assume that many of the education features in refugee camps are static and permanent. For that reason, this research can be said to add to already existing research on education for refugees in camps.

As this research did take a descriptive approach, connections and causality have not been investigated thoroughly. This research has suggested a correlation between organization and cooperation, or rather, the lack of it, and the education providers' ability to support children with education. Further research should investigate why organizing and facilitating cooperation in refugee camps is challenging. In addition, further research could explore what effects this missing overall vision might have on education opportunities for refugee children.

## Bibliography

- Aguilar, P., & Retamal, G. (2009). Protective environments and quality education in humanitarian contexts. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29, 3-16. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2008.02.002
- Are You Syrious? (2020, 09.02.). AYS Special from Lesbos: Right Wing Attacks on refugees, Volunteers, and Locals. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious/ay-special-from-lesvos-right-wing-attacks-on-refugees-volunteers-and-locals-9f98779aef8e>
- Asylum Information Database. (2021). *Country Report: Greece*. Retrieved from [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR_2020update.pdf)
- Banki, S. (2013). Refugee Camp Education: Populations Left behind. In L. Bartlett & A. Ghaffar-Kucher (Eds.), *Refugees, Immigrants, and Education in the Global South* (pp. 133-148). New York: Routledge.
- Banks, G., & Scheyvens, R. (2014). Ethical Issues. In R. Scheyvens (Ed.), *Development Field Work: A Practical Guide* (pp. 160-187): SAGE Publications.
- Barnets, N. (2015, 10.07.). Greek island community finds private ways to help refugees. *DW*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/greek-island-community-finds-private-ways-to-help-refugees/a-18578098>
- Bell, B. (2020, 22.01.). Greece migrant crisis: islanders strike over crowded camps. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51204084>
- Bjertrup, P. J., Bouhenia, M., Farhat, J. B., Neuman, M., Mayaud, P., & Blanchet, K. (2021). 'Being Stuck': Refugees' Experiences of Enforced Waiting in Greece. In C. Vindrola-Padros, B. Vindrola-Padros, & K. Lee-Crosset (Eds.), *Immobility and Medicine*.
- Bjertrup, P. J., Bouhenia, M., Mayaud, P., Perrin, C., Farhat, J. B., & Blanchet, K. (2018). A life in waiting: Refugees' mental health and narratives of social suffering after European Union border closures in March 2016. *Social Science & Medicine*, 53-60. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.08.040>
- Brun, C. (2015). Active Waiting and Changing Hopes. Toward a Time Perspective on Protracted Displacement. *Social Analysis*, 59(1), 19-37. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2015.590102>
- Brun, C. (2016). There is no Future in Humanitarianism: Emergency, Temporality and Protracted Displacement. *History and Anthropology*, 27(4), 393-410. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2016.1207637>
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burde, D. (2005). *Education in Crisis Situations. Mapping the Field*. Retrieved from USAID: <http://www.beps.net/publications/EdCrisisFinal.pdf>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, M. (1974). *Attacking Rural Poverty: How Nonformal Education Can Help (World Bank)*: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cossé, E. (2020, June 12). Greece Again Extends Covid-19 Lockdown at Refugee Camps. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/12/greece-again-extends-covid-19-lockdown-refugee-camps>
- DeStefano, J., Moore, A.-M. S., Balwanz, D., & Hartwell, A. (2007). *Reaching the Underserved: Complementary Models of Effective Schooling*. Retrieved from USAID: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505689.pdf>
- Divers. (2015). UNHCR boosts presence in Greek islands to cope with soaring refugee arrivals. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/6/557171779/unhcr-boosts-presence-greek-islands-cope-soaring-refugee-arrivals.html>

- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). *The Educational Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- El-Shaarawi, N. (2015). Living an Uncertain Future. Temporality, Uncertainty, and Well-Being among Iraqi Refugees in Egypt. *Social Analysis*, 59(1), 38-56. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2015.590103>
- European Commission. (2016). Implementing the EU-Turkey Agreement – Questions and Answers [Press release]. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_16\\_1494](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_16_1494)
- European Commission. (n.d.). Common European Asylum System. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en)
- European Council. (2016). EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016 [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>
- Eurorelief. (2022, 10.01.). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/eurorelief/>
- Eurostat. (2016). Asylum in the EU Member States: Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6>
- Eurostat. (2021, 28.10.2021). Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data (rounded). Retrieved from <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>
- Fallon, K. (2021, 29.03.). EU announces funding for five new refugee camps on Greek islands, Web. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/mar/29/eu-announces-funding-for-five-new-refugee-camps-on-greek-islands>
- Farrell, G. (2020, 06.04.). The impact of Covid-19 on the inhabitants of Greek camps. Retrieved from <https://refugee-rights.eu/2020/04/06/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-inhabitants-of-greek-camps/>
- France24. (2022, 18 February). Refugees in greece face hunger, homelessness despite status, Electronic. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220218-refugees-in-greece-face-hunger-homelessness-despite-status>
- FRONTEX. (n.d.). Migratory Routes. Retrieved from <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/>
- Gash, J. (2020, 05.03.). Rising tensions on Lesbos causing disruption to NGO work. Retrieved from <https://www.rte.ie/news/world/2020/0304/1120264-lesbos-greece-turkey/>
- Grant, H. (2020, 17.01.). ‘Moria is a hell’: new arrivals describe life in a Greek refugee camp. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/17/moria-is-a-hell-new-arrivals-describe-life-in-a-greek-refugee-camp>
- Griffiths, M. (2013). Living with Uncertainty: Indefinite Immigration Detention. *Journal of Legal Anthropology*, 1(3), 263-286. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3167/jla.2013.010301>
- Hage, G. (2009). Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality. In G. Hage (Ed.), *Waiting* (pp. 74-79).
- Harrel-Bond, B., & Voutira, E. (2007). In Search of ‘Invisible’ Actors: Barriers to Access in Refugee Research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 281-298. doi:[doi:10.1093/jrs/fem015](https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem015)



- Hernandez, J. (2015). Europe's Front Door: The Refugee Crisis on Lesbos Island. Retrieved from <http://www.fletcherforum.org/multimedia/2016/10/19/europes-front-door-the-refugee-crisis-on-lesvos-island>
- Horst, C., & Grabska, K. (2015). Flight and Exile - Uncertainty in the Context of Conflict-Induced Displacement. *Social Analysis*, 59(1), 1-18.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2015.590101>
- Human Rights Watch. (2008). *Stuck in a Revolving Door. Iraqis and Other Asylum Seekers and Migrants at the Greece/Turkey Entrance to the European Union*. Retrieved from HRW: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/greeceturkey1108web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/greeceturkey1108web_0.pdf)
- Human Rights Watch. (2011, 28 January). Greece's Asylum Crisis Can't Be Fixed without Reforming Dublin Rules. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/01/28/greeces-asylum-crisis-cant-be-fixed-without-reforming-dublin-rules>
- Human Rights Watch. (2018). Greece: Inhumane Conditions at Land Border. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/27/greece-inhumane-conditions-land-border>
- Human Rights Watch. (2019, 4.12.). Greece: Camp Conditions Endanger Woman, Girls. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/04/greece-camp-conditions-endanger-women-girls>
- Huss, E., Asher, S. B., Shahar, E., Walden, T., & Sagy, S. (2020). Creating places, relationships and education for refugee children in camps: Lessons learnt from the 'The School of Peace' educational model. *Children and Society*, 2020(00), 1-22.  
doi:DOI: 10.1111/chso.12412
- INEE. (2019). *INEE Strategic Framework 2018-2023*. Retrieved from New York: [https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE\\_Strategic\\_Framework\\_2018-2023\\_ENG.pdf](https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_Strategic_Framework_2018-2023_ENG.pdf)
- INEE. (2020). *Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies*. Retrieved from <https://inee.org/system/files/resources/CPHA%20-%20EIE%20Position%20Paper%20ENG%20v01.pdf>
- InfoMigrants. (2020). Homicide at Moria refugee camp sparks riots. Retrieved from <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/22191/homicide-at-moria-refugee-camp-sparks-riots>
- International Rescue Committee. (2022, March 18). A Europe that protects. What is the EU-Turkey deal? Retrieved from <https://eu.rescue.org/article/what-eu-turkey-deal>
- Jalbout, M. (2020). *Finding solutions to Greece's refugee education crisis*. Retrieved from TheirWorld: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/theirworld-site-resources/FINAL-RefugeeEducation-Report-050520-1.pdf>
- Kingsley, P. (2015, 22.12.). Lesbos is swept by wave of compassion as refugees continue to arrive by sea. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/22/lesvos-humanitarian-operations-compassion-refugees-continue-to-arrive-by-sea>
- Kingsley, P. (2020, 9.9.). Fire Destroys Most of Europe's Largest Refugee Camp, on Greek Island of Lesbos. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/09/world/europe/fire-refugee-camp-lesbos-moria.html>
- Legal Centre Lesbos. (2021). There is nothing more permanent than temporary. Retrieved from <https://legalcentrelesvos.org/2021/09/14/one-year-of-mavrovouni-camp/>
- Lesvos Solidarity. (n.d.). About Pikpa camp. Retrieved from <https://lesvossolidarity.org/en/who-we-are/history/pikpa-camp>
- Markham, L. (2022, 21.04.). 'A disaster waiting to happen': who was really responsible for the fire at Moria camp? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/21/disaster-waiting-to-happen-moria-refugee-camp-fire-greece-lesbos>
- Masri, L. (2018, 19.02.). Inside Lesbos' Moria camp, home to thousands of trapped refugees and migrants. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/491135995/MoMA-Info-January>
- Ministry of Migration and Asylum. (n.d.). R.I.C. & C.C.A.C.I. Retrieved from <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ris/perifereiakes-monades/kyt-domes/>
- MoMA. (2021). *MoMA Info January*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/491135995/MoMA-Info-January>
- MoMA. (n.d.). Facilities/Temporary Reception. Retrieved from <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ris/perifereiakes-monades/domes/>
- Moria White Helmets. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/MoriaWhiteHelmets>
- Nicolai, S. (2003). *Education in Emergencies. A tool kit for starting and managing education in emergencies*. Retrieved from London: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44830231\\_Education\\_in\\_emergencies\\_a\\_tool\\_kit\\_for\\_starting\\_and\\_managing\\_education\\_in\\_emergencies](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44830231_Education_in_emergencies_a_tool_kit_for_starting_and_managing_education_in_emergencies)
- Nicolai, S., & Triplehorn, C. (2003). *The role of education in protecting children in conflict*. Retrieved from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/role-education-protecting-children-conflict/>
- Nye, C. (2018a). Children 'attempting suicide' at Greek refugee camp. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45271194>
- Nye, C. (Writer). (2018b). The worst refugee camp on earth. In C. Nye (Producer): BBC News.
- Oesch, L. (2019). The Politics of Temporariness and the Meteriality of Refugee Camps. In B. Meeus, K. Arnaut, & B. v. Heur (Eds.), *Arrival infrastructures. Migration and Urban Social Mobilities* (pp. 229-248). Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Panayotatos, D. (2021). Advocay letter. Walling Off Welcome: New reception facilities in Greece reinforce a policy of refugee containment and exclusion [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2021/9/8/one-year-after-the-moria-fire-few-lessons-learned-as-greece-expands-barriers-to-refugees-protection>
- Papadimitriou, J. (2021, 08.09.). Lesbos after Moria fire: 'People are still living in tents by the sea'. *DW*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/lesbos-after-moria-fire-people-are-still-living-in-tents-by-the-sea/a-59115403>
- Papadopoulou, A. (2016). *The implementation of the hotspots in Italy and Greece*. Retrieved from ECRE: <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HOTSPOTS-Report-5.12.2016..pdf>
- Psaropoulos, J. (2021, 23.09.). New Greek camp pushed refugees out of sight. *Aljazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/23/samos-greek-camp>
- Refugee Support Aegean. (2021). *Excluded and segragated. The vanishing education of refugee children in Greece*. Retrieved from <https://rsaegean.org/en/excluded-and-segregated-the-vanishing-education-of-refugee-children-in-greece/>
- Refugees International. (2020). Refugees in Greece: Risk of Homelessness and Destitution for Thousands during Winter [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/12/21/7z5xegmkuq5p3lob24hmxp3l0zy7oc>
- Rose, P. (2009). NGO provision of basic education: alternative or complementary service delivery to support access to the excluded. *Compare*, 39(2), 219-233. doi:10.1080/03057920902750475

- Saleem, A. (2019). Life in and around the infamous Moria Camp. *InfoMigrants*. Retrieved from <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/20024/life-in-and-around-the-infamous-moria-camp>
- Save the Children. (2021). *Back to School? Refugee children in Greece denied right to education*. Retrieved from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/back-school-refugee-children-greece-denied-right-education>
- Schmitz, F. (2022, 8 February). Greece: Refugees, asylum-seekers struggle to. *DW*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-refugees-asylum-seekers-struggle-to-integrate/a-60687733>
- Sinclair, M. (2001). Education in Emergencies. In *Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries* (pp. 1-83). Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/4a1d5ba36/learning-future-refugee-education-developing-countries.html>
- Skleparis, D. (2017). *The Greek response to the migration challenge: 2015 - 2017*. Retrieved from [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=9ca070c8-b546-01ac-e85a-df93ea2e5297&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=9ca070c8-b546-01ac-e85a-df93ea2e5297&groupId=252038)
- Skleparis, D., & Armakolas, I. (2016). The refugee crisis and the role of NGOs, civil society, and media in Greece. In D. L. Phillips (Ed.), *Balkan Human Corridor: Essays on the Refugee and Migrant Crisis from Scholars and Opinion Leaders in Southeast Europe* (pp. 171-184): Columbia University.
- Smith, H. (2021, 19.09.). Why Greece's expensive new migrant camps are outraging NGOs. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/19/why-greeces-expensive-new-migrant-camps-are-outraging-ngos>
- Terry, K. (2021). The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On: A Frayed and Controversial but Enduring Blueprint. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>
- Triani, N. (2015). Thousands of arriving refugees overwhelm Greece's island villages. *France24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/20150924-greece-lesbos-molyvos-migrants-refugees-outnumber-locals>
- UN General Assembly. (1951). The 1951 Refugee Convention. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>
- UNESCO. (2016). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning...* Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>
- UNHCR. (2008). *UNHCR Position on the Return of Asylum-Seekers to Greece under the «Dublin Regulation»*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/482199802/unhcr-position-return-asylum-seekers-greece-under-dublin-regulation.html?query=dublin%20regulation>
- UNHCR. (2009). *The Dublin Regulation*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/4a9d13d59/dublin-regulation.html?query=dublin%20regulation>
- UNHCR. (2016a). Lesvos data snapshot 31 Dec 2015 [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/46649>
- UNHCR. (2016b). *Policy Paper 26: No more excuses: provide education to all forcibly displaced people*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244847>
- UNHCR. (2017). *Left Behind. Refugee Education in Crisis*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/59b696f44.pdf>

- UNHCR. (2019). *Access to Education for Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/09/Access-to-education-europe-19.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2021a). *Kara Tepe. More Than a Home 2016-2020*. Retrieved from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86762>
- UNHCR. (2021b). *Mid-year trends 2021*. Retrieved from Copenhagen: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/618ae4694\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/618ae4694_0.pdf)
- UNHCR. (2021c). UNHCR Greece bi-annual Factsheet September 2021 [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88966>
- Vandevoordt, R., & Fleischmann, L. (2021). Impossible Futures? The Ambivalent Temporalities of Grassroots Humanitarian Action. *Critical Sociology*, 47(2), 187-202. doi:<https://10.1177/0896920520932655>
- Voutira, E., & Doná, G. (2007). Refugee Research Methodologies: Consolidation and Transformation of a Field. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2). doi:doi:10.1093/jrs/fem017
- Winthrop, R., & Kirk, J. (2008). Learning for a Bright Future: Schooling, Armed Conflict, and Children's Well-Being. *Comparative Education Review*, 52(4), 639-661. doi:<https://10.1086/591301>
- Wollaston, S. (2020, 18.02.). 'I get a lot of love': how hope survives in the hell of Moria. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/18/librarian-moria-ales-hope-refugee-camp>

## Appendix

### **Interview guide**

#### **Theme 1: Background**

- Can you tell me about your educational and professional background?
- For how long have you been involved in (NGO) and working with refugees?
  
- Can you give me a brief overview of how the organization work and are organized?
  
- How would you describe the need of non-formal education for young refugees on Lesvos?
  - have the needs changed?
- In your opinion, to what extent is refugee children on Lesvos relying on NGOs in order to get education/learning opportunities?
  
- How has covid 19 and the fire in Moria affected your work?

#### **Theme 2:**

- Can you please describe the content of the education and learning program?
  - subjects (what, how, why)
  - methods, how do you plan your work, what's important for you in your teaching?

Can you please explain how your education program is organized?

- number of children, age group, language level, who and why?

#### **Theme 3:**

What do you see as the main purpose of your education/learning program?

How is your education/learning program designed to support the educational needs of young refugees?

- What is your approach to education and learning for refugee children?

Do you believe your education/learning program is contributing to the personal development of refugee children? Please explain your answer.

- Do you do anything specific in order to support personal and social development?

In your opinion, what are the potential benefits of non-formal education?

What would you describe as educational needs of refugee children?

#### **Theme 4:**

What are the major challenges NGOs face on Lesvos. Especially related to education and learning?

What barriers are refugee children facing in relations to education opportunities on Lesvos?

In your opinion, what are the challenges refugee children face in a non-formal learning environment?

Which factors can limit a refugee child's ability to learn?

Which obstacles and limitations does teachers face when teaching refugee children?

Physical and structural barriers?

- camp management, space, learning materials, language

What do you see as the most rewarding part of your work? Why do you find your work important?

What do you see as the most challenging part of your work?