



# The Stepping Stone Academy

An academy  
that provides to  
refugee children  
and their  
mothers, the  
opportunity to  
heal, develop,  
rebuild their  
lives and  
become self  
sustainable

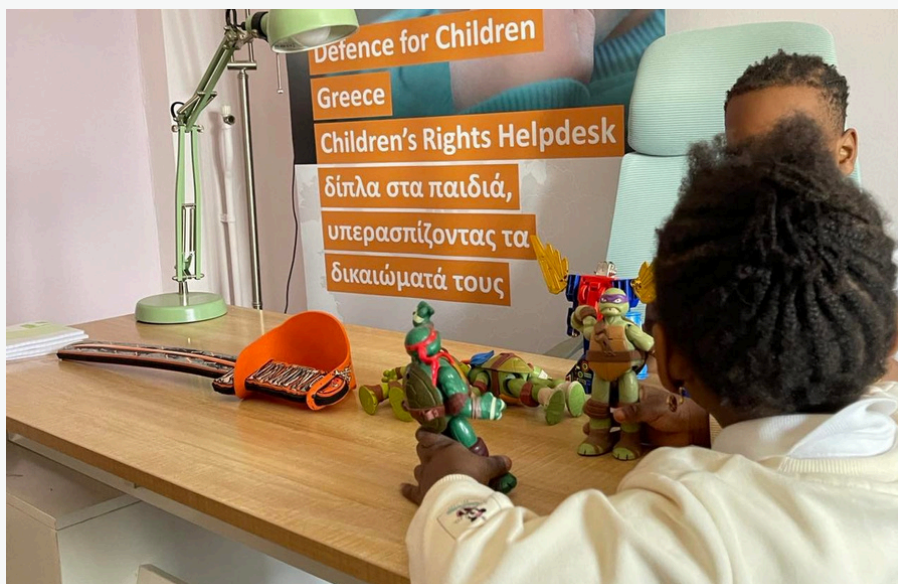




Established in 2016, Defence for Children International - Greece is a dedicated organization that provides critical support to vulnerable individuals, particularly those on the move.

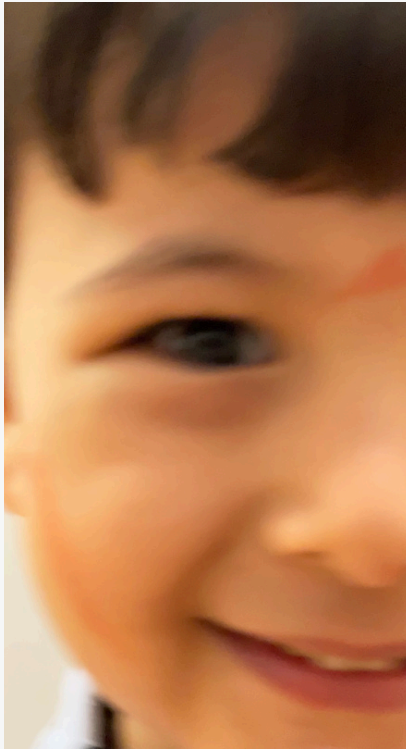
The organization offers comprehensive **protection services, including legal representation, psychosocial support, and empowerment programs**, with a **focus on children, young mothers, and survivors of severe violence**.

Through a trauma-informed and holistic approach, DCI-Greece supports their access to housing, healthcare, and education, enabling individuals to reclaim their rights and autonomy. The organization's high-impact services have been internationally recognized for their excellence in fostering an environment conducive to healing and recovery.



In **2023**, **85%** of the mothers visiting our Center were survivors of torture and exploitation, **84%** lived in dire conditions, and **80%** had no access to vocational training. Meanwhile, **95%** of their children faced severe developmental issues without mental support or formal education. **Our goal** is to transform these grim statistics into stories of resilience, empowerment, and hope.





The displaced population in Greece includes new arrivals, rejected asylum applicants, and those with positive decisions. Despite rising numbers, the reception and asylum systems have failed to adequately meet their needs.

Refugee mothers and children face violence, legal uncertainty, homelessness, and limited access to education.

Many asylum rejections could be overturned with proper legal support. Children, deprived of schooling and healthcare, experience severe developmental setbacks.

Our report, **In the Shadows: Accompanied Children and Mothers in Greece**, highlights these urgent challenges.

The *Stepping Stone Academy*, an extension of our Helpdesk, supports refugee mothers and children by fostering growth and self-sustainability.

## It offers:



By addressing both mothers' and children's needs simultaneously, the Academy empowers personal development and nurtures children, breaking the cycle of dependence and exclusion through a trauma-informed approach that promotes healing and integration.







## Main goals:

- 🎯 Focus on young refugee children, especially preschoolers, to support early development;
- 🎯 Provide a safe, nurturing space for both mothers and children.
- 🎯 Offer mothers legal aid, protection, psychological support, education, and vocational training;
- 🎯 Break the cycle of dependence, enabling mothers to pursue employment and personal growth;
- 🎯 Use a holistic approach to support the well-being and development of both mothers and children;
- 🎯 Help children thrive through age-appropriate education and healing activities, preparing them for school;
- 🎯 Empower mothers to secure legal status, advocate for their families, and receive psychological support;
- 🎯 Turn challenges into resilience by addressing the needs of vulnerable mothers and children;
- 🎯 Foster a supportive environment for mothers and children to build better futures.



## Identified Needs:

1. **Safe space** for refugee mothers and children to access comprehensive services.
2. **Legal support** to navigate the asylum process and overcome rejections.
3. **Vocational training and education** for mothers to achieve self-sufficiency.
4. **Psychological and trauma-informed support** for healing and empowerment.
5. **Educational and psychosocial activities** for children to address developmental gaps and prepare for formal schooling.
6. **Simultaneous support** for mothers and children to ensure both groups' needs are met concurrently.





## Activities Towards Children:

1. **Educational programs:** Focus on bridging early learning gaps, fostering Greek language proficiency, and promoting literacy.
2. **Psycho-social support:** Trauma-informed counseling and emotional well-being activities.
3. **Creative arts therapy:** Sessions involving drawing, painting, music, and other forms of artistic expression for emotional expression and healing.
4. **Social connections and play:** Workshops encouraging social interaction, play, and peer connections to foster emotional and social development.



## Activities Towards Mothers:

1. **Vocational training:** Practical, hands-on workshops in areas like knitting, sewing, cooking, and hairdressing.
2. **Language courses:** Greek and English language proficiency training to support employability and integration.
3. **Skills development:** Including computer skills, CV development, and job interview preparation.
4. **Legal and protection services:** Trauma-informed legal support, including asylum application assistance, victim identification, and legal representation.
5. **Psychological support:** Individual counseling, including Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), and group support sessions.
6. **Internship and scholarship opportunities:** To provide practical work experience and support further education.



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