

May 2019

Good morning from the pedagogical community of Mikros Dounias!
It's been almost three months since our last newsletter. Now that the spring has arrived, we want to share with you some moments from the green corner of an open refugee camp in the surroundings of Mytilene, Lesvos. Do you want to know what did we do in Mikros Dounias during the past three months?

We got wet

The rainfall on Lesvos was quite intense. We crossed newly created rivers and observed them gradually dry up over several days. We fished for imaginary fish from rain-water-lakes; we did not miss them when they disappeared, as they left behind tempting puddles of mud. We got dirty and wet; we fell down and stood up again. We pedagogues observed that clothing that allows the children to both adapt to the weather conditions and move freely is extremely important. Once more, the connection of children to nature was verified: when given the choice between outdoors and indoors, regardless of the weather, most children showed a clear preference for the open air.





We played

Indoors, next to the fire that we light every day, board games and puppet shows were the most popular activities. Outdoors, group games (classical ones, spontaneously created ones or games inspired by kids and forest pedagogues) brought together children that speak different languages. Free play remains a central part of our day and pedagogy; the pedagogical team is currently diving deeper into these theories and the research behind them.



We observed and camouflaged

We felt the influence of spring upon trees and flowers and admired the shivering of light inside and outside the yurt. We also patiently observed the habits of worms, snails, ants, grasshoppers and other creatures in action!



We constructed and planted

We nailed and repaired, painted, constructed little houses with broken branches, experimented with our homemade “gravity disc” and constructed the alphabet letters using various materials. During a beautiful celebration organized by Lesvos Solidarity, we planted trees all together.



We took responsibility

Every day, we water the above-mentioned trees, we feed Koulouki (a dog that seems to like our company) and we wear gloves and pick up the "stray" rubbish. We prepare the snack and the table, we wash our dishes and we take care of our compost. Participation in the above-mentioned activities is optional, as are all activities taking place in Mikros Dounias; yet, there are almost always children who wish to be involved. We are grateful to the parents residing the camp for their frequent and tasty treats!



We got in tune

One year ago, an expert came to help the children of the community construct wooden bird nests in nearby trees. Currently, tanagers go in and out, while jays build up their own nests a bit higher. Whenever one of us sees the birds, he/she informs the others in a hushed tone so we can observe without scaring the birds away.

We said “goodbye” and “welcome”



We said goodbye to five children, who left Lesvos to start a new life in Crete, Athens, Ioannina, Kavala. We also welcomed new members to our community. Among all this, we learn how to recognize, express and manage our feelings, as well as cultivate empathy for ourselves and others.

We got enriched

Since mid-March and for three months, Ken Truong, a 16-year-old student from the Evangelic School Berlin Zentrum, is part of our pedagogical team. Ken immediately invalidated any prejudice that could exist towards a 16-year-old partner, a contribution that brought us one step closer to the inter-ageing, adultist-critic approach that we embrace. We want to thank Ken from our hearts for his attitude, support and precious advice.

We painted our faces and danced

Did you know that the simplest and friendliest face paints are made of ingredients we encounter on a daily basis? By mixing coffee, beetroot, flour or turmeric with the right ingredients, we transformed ourselves into lions, butterflies and whatever else we could think of. Afterwards, we danced to Balkan music played on a violin, a clarinet and a guitar and accompanied by a beautiful voice. We want to warmly thank the band “Allonellia” for the beautiful day.



We went on excursions

Moreover, thanks to a generous donation that allowed us to buy toddler car seats, we established the enjoyable habit of a monthly excursion. Once a month, the cars of friends and community members arrive to PIKPA camp and get filled with families and children of all ages. Hiking and games in the forest or educational activities are accompanied by discussions and food from different corners of the world.



We held seminars

We like to organize seminars on topics that matter to us, which are open to anyone who is interested. Maria Hatzara, a homeopathic pediatrician from Athens, visited us for a two-days seminar on practical, natural ways of healing infants and children. A three-day workshop on Non-Violent Communication with the certified facilitator Vincent Delfosse from Switzerland opened new horizons concerning the recognition and management of our feelings and needs. We want to thank all facilitators and participants for sharing and caring. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have an idea!



We wish you a spring time that is full of surprises!

With love,
The pedagogical team of Mikros Dounias

About us

[Mikros Dounias](#) is an educational project on the greek island of Lesvos. Every day, young local and refugee children play and learn together in the small forest of PIKPA refugee camp, run with the contribution of the organization "[Lesvos Solidarity](#)". We, the children, [pedagogues](#), and parents of Mikros Dounias, organize our learning processes collectively, beyond any form of discrimination. We respect the rhythm, the needs and the desires of each person by encouraging freedom of choice and self-regulation. Outdoor learning brings us closer to the creatures and the elements of nature, reinforcing our relations to everything around us.

The financial survival of our project depends on the contribution of parents, friends, and those who believe in it. Support us by donating or becoming a monthly donor. Thank you!

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