

# Macro Work for the Clinical Student: My GIS at Ristona Refugee Camp

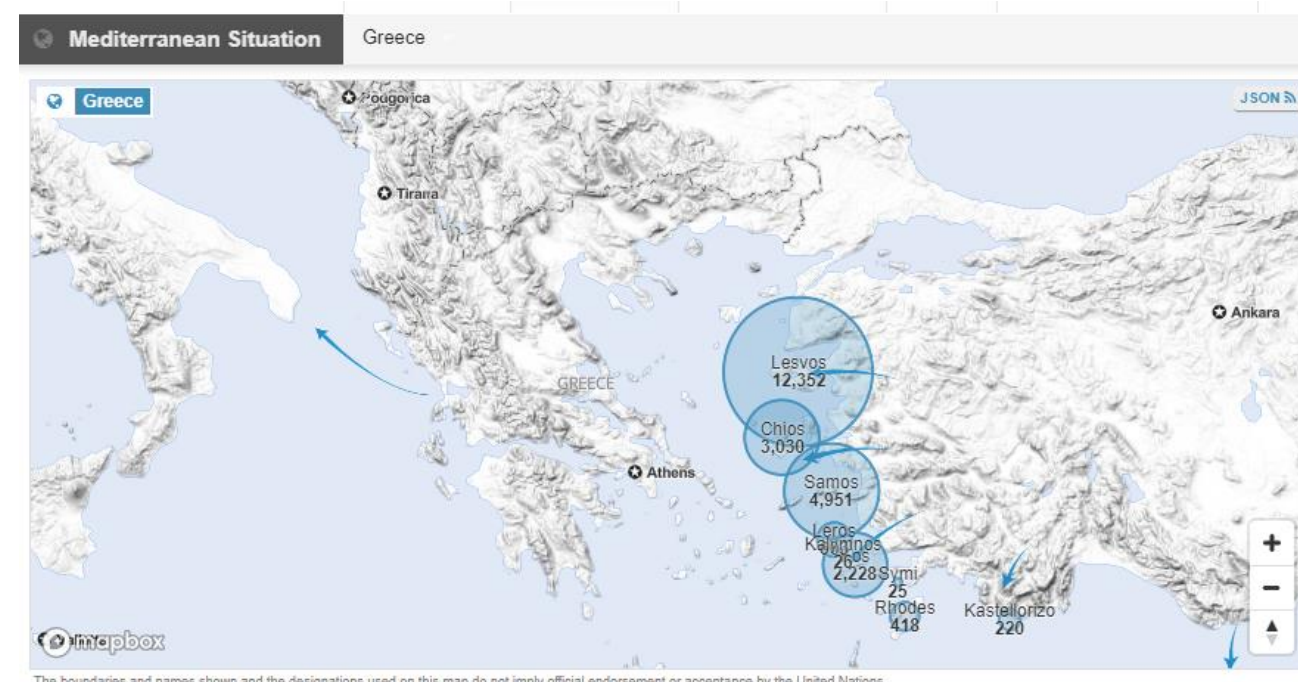
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## Greece

Centrally located on the Mediterranean Sea, Greece is the crossroads between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Over 1.2 million people have sought refuge in Greece since 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Volunteers stayed in Chalkida, a small city in central Greece (roughly 1 hour north of Athens). We worked at the Ritsona Refugee Camp, which opened in 2016 at a former Air Force base.



Mediterranean Situation: Greece 2018. UNHCR. *Operational Portal: Refugee Situations.*

## Context

Refugee population: Mostly from Arab and African nations (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and others)

Service delivery: Greek and EU systems

Actors at camp: UNHCR, IOM, international NGOs

Languages spoken at Ritsona: Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Greek, French, and English

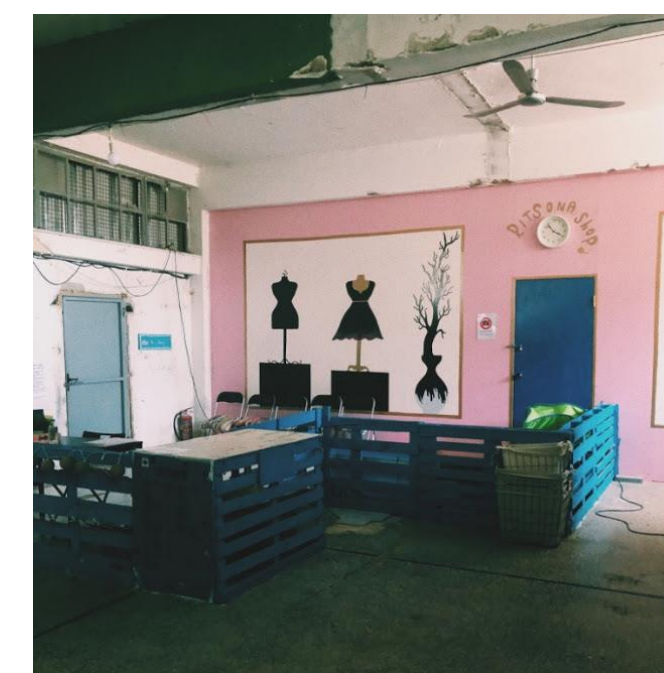
## Community Partner

I volunteered with Cross-Cultural Solutions, an NGO acting at Ritsona to restore dignity to residents through meeting basic needs.



## Project Information

In my three weeks at Ritsona, I worked in CCS's four core areas: food and hygiene distribution, laundry, shop operation, and female-friendly space (FFS) restoration.



Each week, I logged my tasks at Ritsona and how they related to micro and macro social work practice. I also wrote a 16-page essay after my return to the U.S. to process the experience and reflect on connections to CSWE core competencies (e.g., values and ethics, social policy, diversity and difference).

## Skills Developed

- Program evaluation (assessment; feedback; use of funds)
- Community organizing (understanding and integrating with communities; getting buy-in and feedback from residents)
- Appropriate assertiveness, both in upholding CCS's protocol at camp and in training new volunteers
- Engaging with people of all ages, from different backgrounds and countries, and sometimes across a language barrier



## Lessons Learned

- The success of an organization depends on how committed each individual is to the overall mission
- The benefits of a social work lens in humanitarian work, and the privilege and influence I will carry as a social worker
- The best-laid plans will still have their hiccups, so be flexible!

## Classroom Connections

SW 560: Introduction to Community Organization, Management and Policy/Evaluation Practice

SW 504: Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work

SW 691: Advanced Field Instruction

## Career Connections

This GIS put me far outside my comfort zone. It gave me macro social work experience and opened me up to engaging in that work as a professional. I also gained familiarity with refugee populations and a better understanding of the obstacles I might face if I seek work abroad (e.g. language barriers).

## Special Thanks

- To the Office of Global Activities and Bob Sutherland of the Cherry Republic for financially supporting my GIS.
- To Dr. Rich Tolman for advising me throughout this project.



<sup>1</sup>UNHCR (2018). Mediterranean situation: Greece. *Operational portal: Refugee situations.*