

Bridging Occupational Gaps with Refugees and Asylum Seekers

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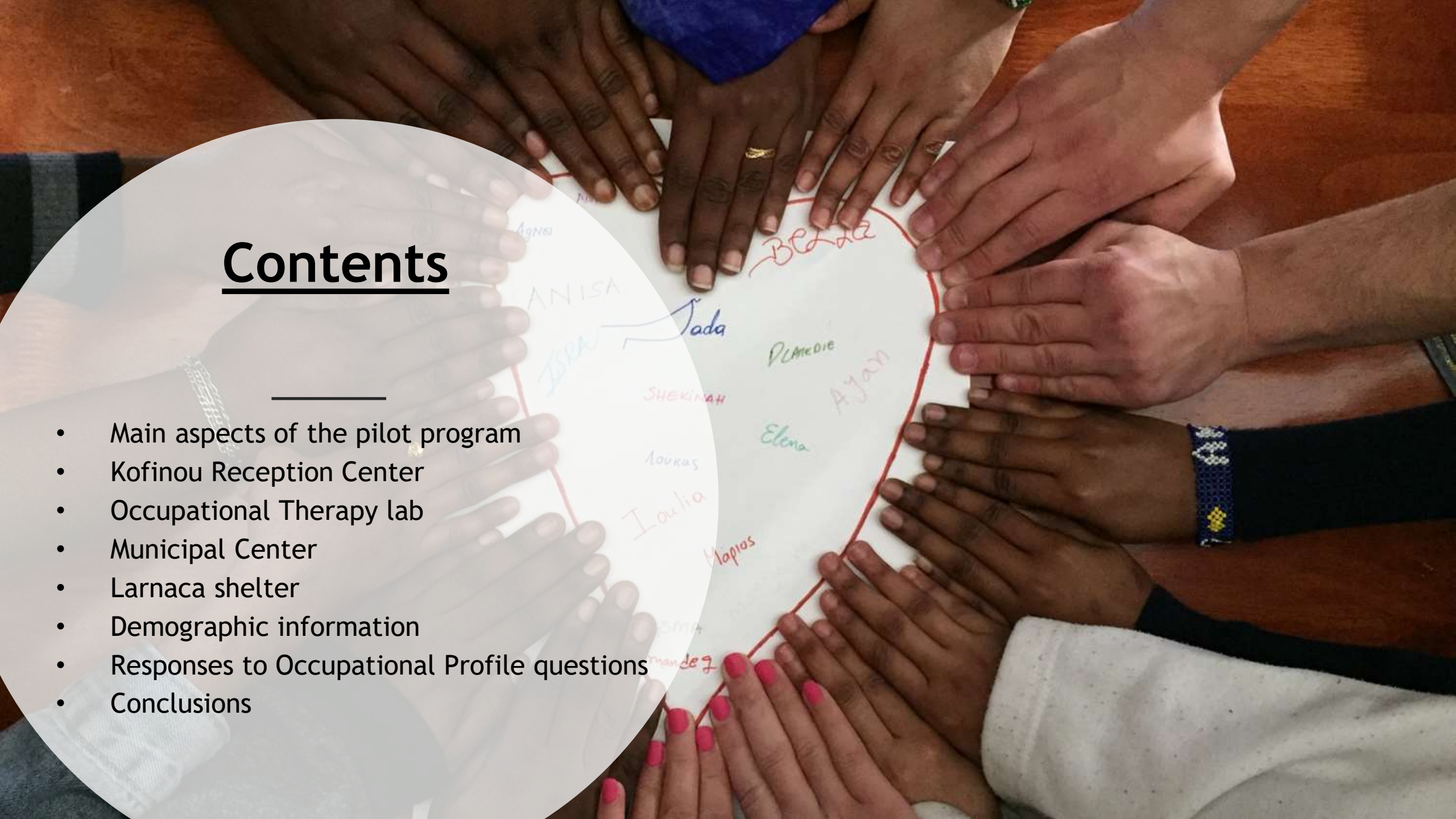
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**European
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Main aspects of the pilot program

Duration

- Spring Semester 2019, 17 weeks (four days per week, six hours per day)

Occupational Therapy team

- One clinical supervisor
- Three final year students

Objectives

- To perform needs assessment
- To familiarize with the procedures, regulations of each establishment and the wider operational framework in Cyprus
- To perform occupational-based evaluation
- To establish relationships (professional and therapeutic)

Placements

- Kofinou Reception Center, Occupational Therapy lab in the University premises, Community venue provided by Nicosia Municipality, Shelter for unaccompanied teenagers in Larnaca

Collaborators

- UNHCR Cyprus, Cyprus Refugee Council, Cyprus Social and Welfare Services, Kofinou Center Management Office & Nicosia Municipality Center



Kofinou Reception Center

Participants

Adults & young children

Goals

- *Adults*
 - To enhance life skills and integrate into the host community
- *Children*
 - To enhance psycho-social skills and integrate into the school environment

Individual Assessments

- *Adults*
 - Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, 5th Edition (CAOT, 2014)
 - Occupational Profile (AOTA, 2017)
- *Children*
 - Ayres Clinical Observations (Blanche, E. I., 2002)
 - Beery VMI (Developmental test of Visual-Motor Integration), 5th Edition (Beery, K. E. et al., 2004)



Kofinou Reception Center

Intervention

- *Adults*
 - Group workshops (gardening, sewing, cooking, jewelry making)
- *Children*
 - Art and play groups (arts and crafts, hands-on activities and games, psycho-motor activities)



Challenges and solutions

- Lack of translator services ➡
 - A participant from Syria offered volunteer translator services (English-Arabic)
- Participants had difficulty in following a structured schedule ➡
 - Reminders of the group schedule were announced by the management office
 - Posters about the program were set up
- Participants showed little commitment to the Program ➡
 - Gatherings (“tea parties”): to explain the role of OT and the value of the services provided



Occupational Therapy lab

Participants

Refugees and asylum seekers with psycho-motor difficulties

Goals

Individualized goals depending on each participant's needs

Individual Assessments

- Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, 5th Edition (CAOT, 2014)
- Occupational Profile (AOTA, 2017)
- Locomotor Capabilities Index (LCI-5) (Gauthier-Gagnon, C., 2004)
- Lower Extremity Functional Scale (LEFS) (Binkley et al., 1999)

Intervention

Individual sessions

- Life-skills and psycho-social skills enhancement through activities that promote the feeling of empowerment
- Prosthetic leg rehabilitation and pain management



Occupational Therapy lab

Challenges and solutions

- Only 3 participants engaged in the project
 - ❖ Difficulty in commuting to and from the OT lab due to unfamiliar bus routes and costly bus tickets ➡
 - Volunteers helped participants move about the city
 - The participants practiced using public means of transport with the help of the students
 - Information Technology tools were used (GPS and city-bus smartphone apps)
 - ❖ Participants didn't show up at their scheduled appointments (possibly, because they didn't engage in the project due to lack of knowledge about OT and its role) ➡
 - A Facebook page about the Program was created with informative posts



Municipal Center

Participants

Unemployed English-speaking adults (recognized refugees, refugees with subsidiary protection and asylum seekers)

Goals

Vocational skills and soft skills training

- Preparing a CV in English and Greek
- Getting informed about job search techniques
- Enhancing skills necessary for successfully attending a job interview
- Learning time management techniques
- Getting access to Greek lessons



Municipal Center

Individual Assessments

- Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, 5th Edition (CAOT, 2014)
- Occupational Profile (AOTA, 2017)

Intervention

- Workshops
- Seminar by a University's career advisor
- Interview simulation
- Follow-up sessions



Municipal Center

Challenges and solutions

- Difficult to link participants with possible employers
 - Because of discrimination by local employers
 - Limited employment sectors for asylum seekers
 - Extremely low-paid jobs
 - Poor services by the public employment office ➡
 - ❖ Help Refugees Work platform (by UNHCR Cyprus and Cyprus Refugee Council)
- Lack of fitting job positions
 - University graduates didn't have copies of their degrees with them
 - Difficulty getting University degree accredited ➡
 - ❖ Provided information about the due process in public services and UNHCR online information platform for refugees in Cyprus
- Participants missed scheduled appointments
 - Lack of knowledge about OT and its role
 - Not direct link to employment
 - Had participated in similar projects with no immediate benefits ➡
 - ❖ Created appointment reminder system



Larnaca shelter

Participants

Unaccompanied teenage girls

Goals

- transition into adulthood
- integrate in the local society
- adapt to the new socio-cultural norms

Individual Assessments

- Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, 5th Edition (CAOT, 2014)
- Occupational Profile (AOTA, 2017)



Larnaca shelter

Intervention

- Group daily life activities
 - Group games and sports activities
 - Arts and crafts projects and hands on activities (jewelry making, cooking, gardening)
 - Outings to the community (shopping and money management)
- Group self-care activities
 - Crafting home-made soap and learning about personal hygiene
- Group workshops
 - Preparation for the job market
 - House searching techniques
 - Use of public means of transport
 - Briefing about the rights and duties of a refugee and asylum seeker



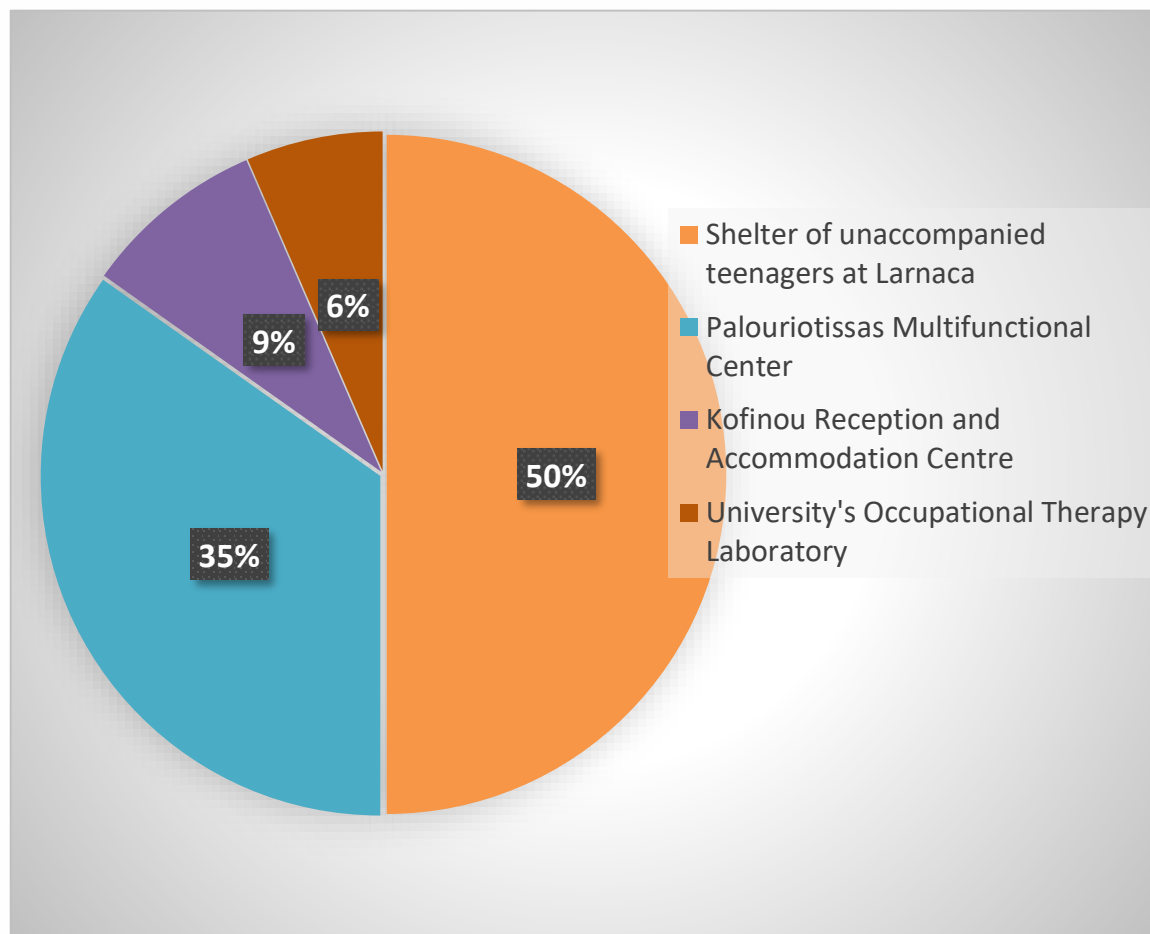
Larnaca shelter

Challenges and solutions

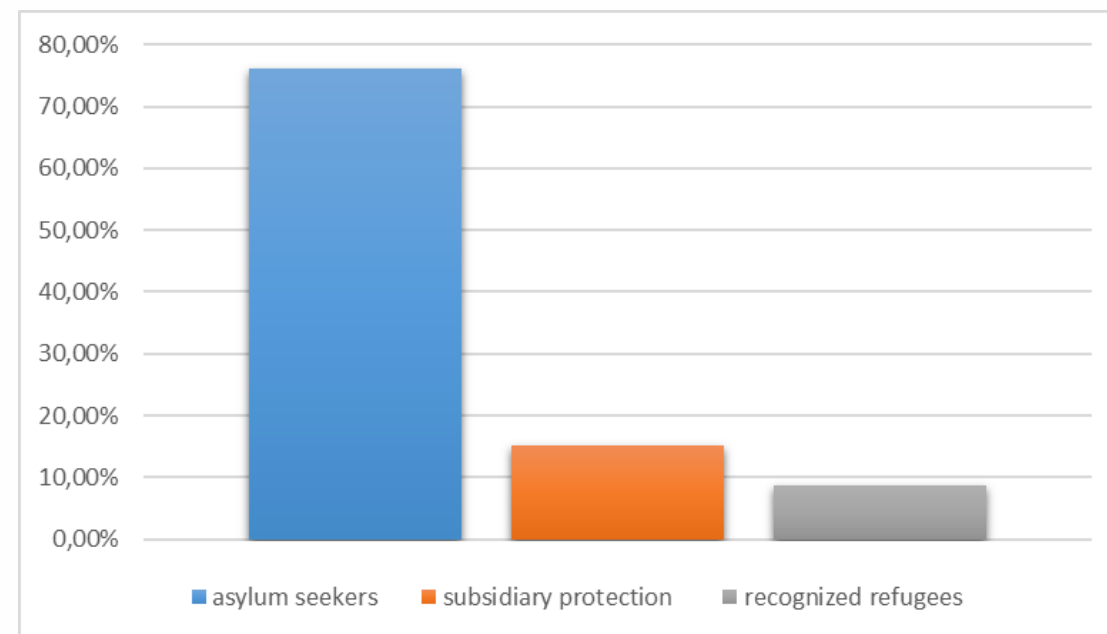
- A lot of the girls didn't speak English ➡
 - A girl from Cameroon helped translate from French
- Girls were usually late for the meetings/didn't commit to the program ➡
 - Set up posters (activity, day, time)
 - Cooperated with carers from the shelter to remind the girls about our visits
 - Tried to discover activities they considered most meaningful
- Cultural factors (change of daily schedule and routine due to the Ramadan) ➡
 - Adjusted the time of visits to the shelter and the content of activities (no food, no music)



Demographic information

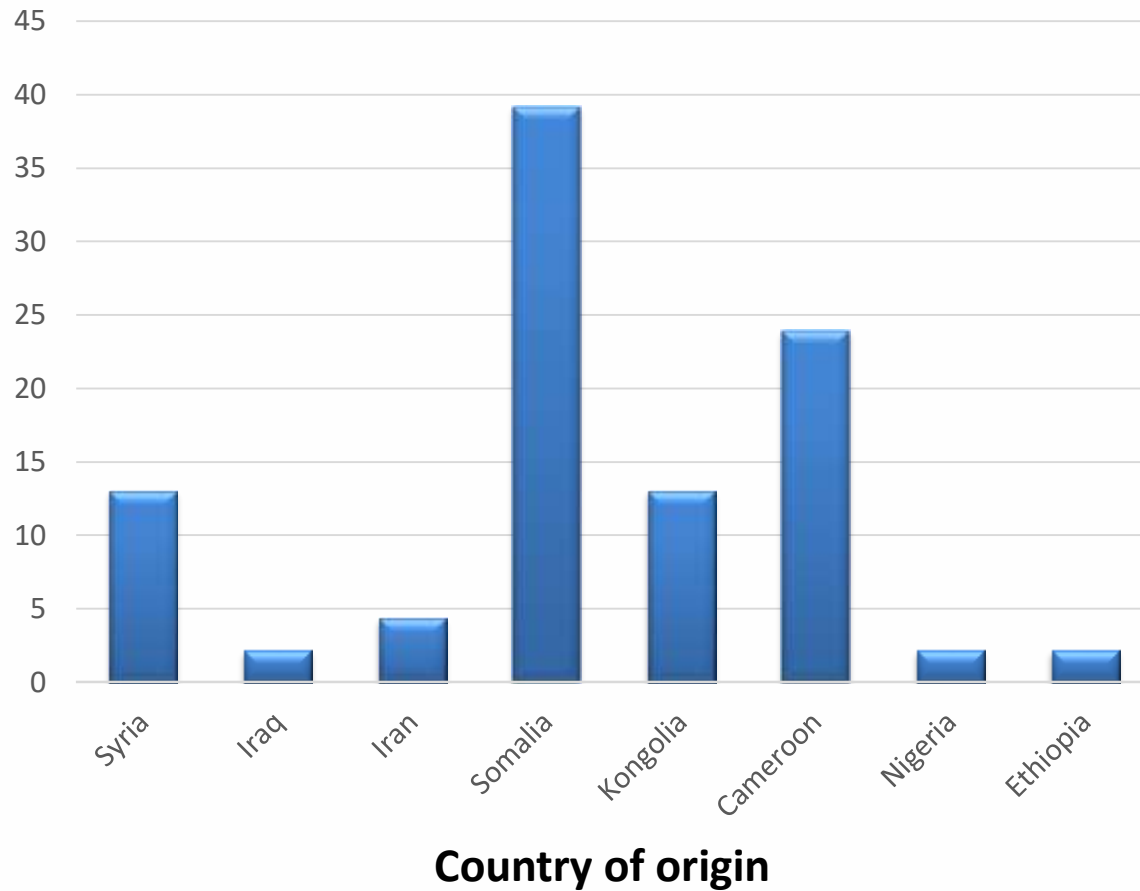


Participants



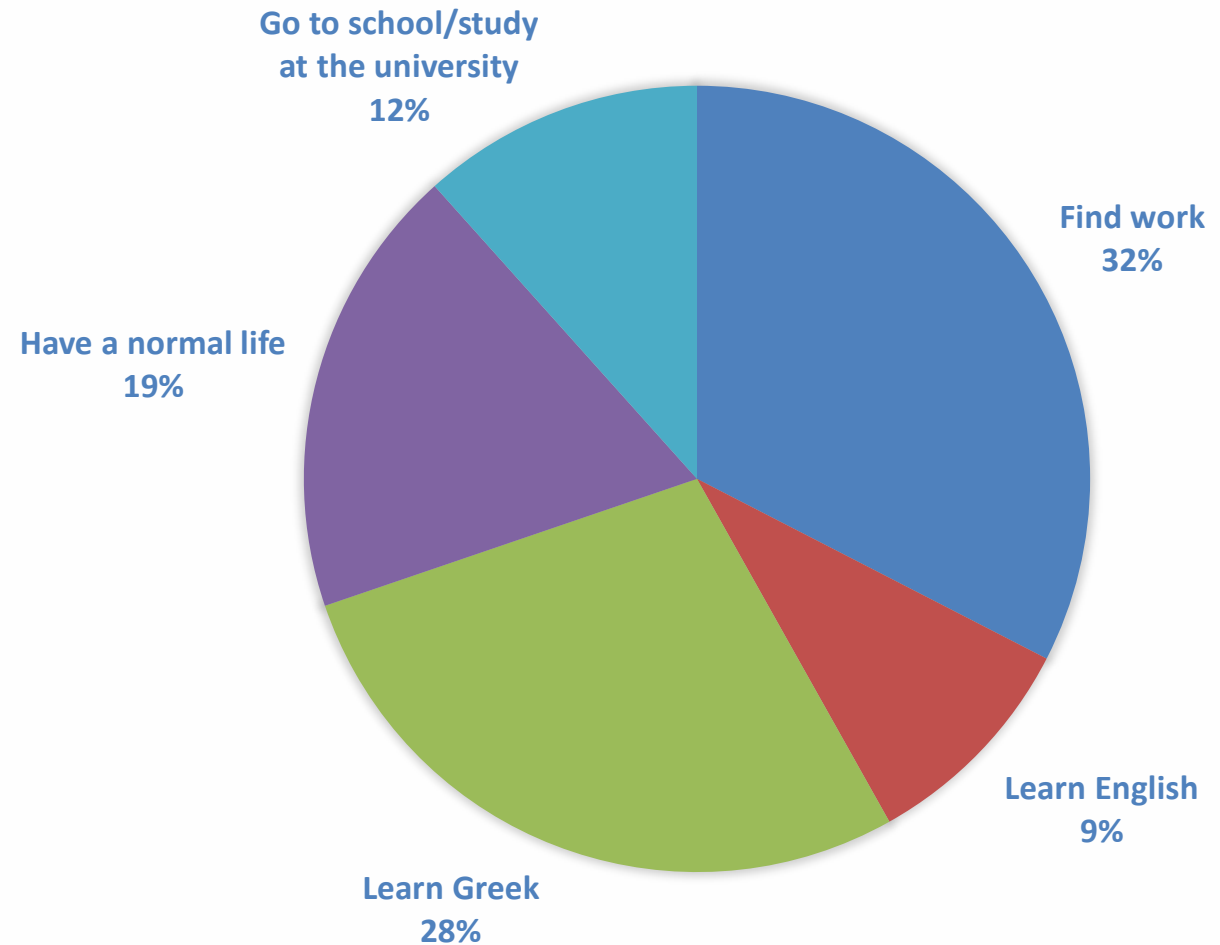
Refugee status

Demographic information



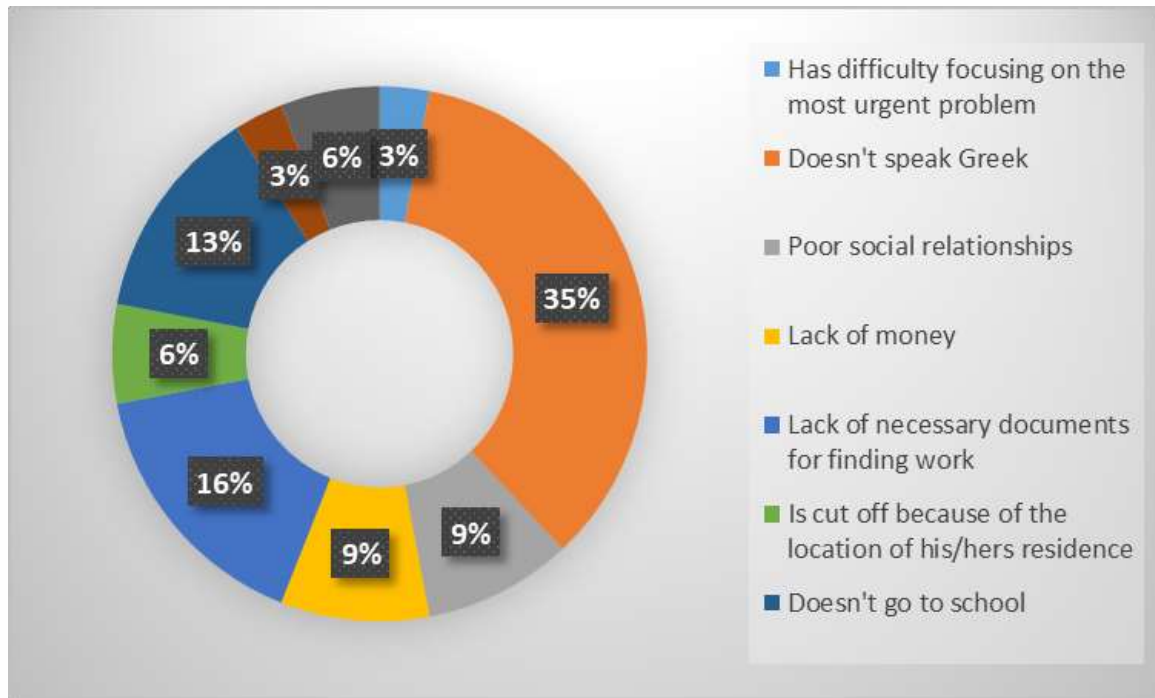
Responses to Occupational Profile questions

Client goals and desired targeted outcomes

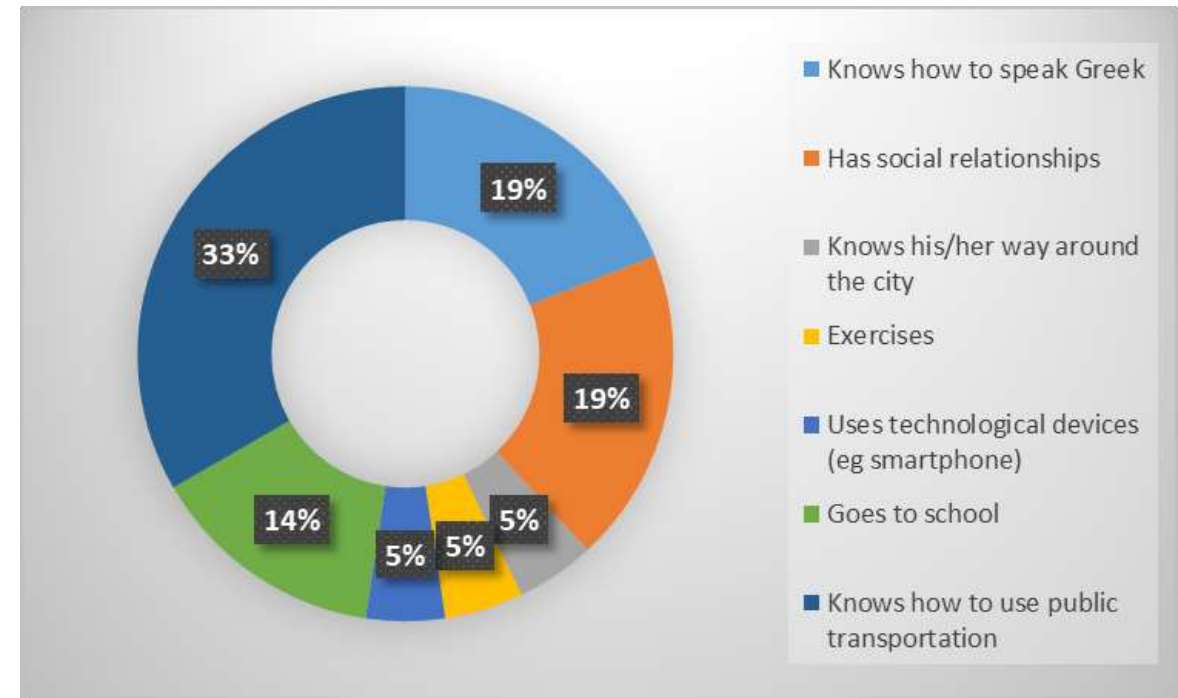


Responses to Occupational Profile questions

Aspects of the clients environments or contexts that support or barrier occupational engagement



Inhibitory factors



Facilitating factors

Conclusions

- **Most pressing problems of our participants (that stretched our personal and professional limitations)**
 - Lack of employment and housing
 - Ineffective and slow asylum process
 - Social and racial discrimination
- **Program evaluation (through e-questionnaires)**
 - Participants: enhanced functionality in daily life activities and overall satisfaction from the program
 - Students: “life-changing experience”, their attitudes towards this population changed for the better
- **Limitations**
 - Lack of literature on guidelines for assessment and intervention from an occupational perspective
- **Next step**
 - Develop specialized Occupational Therapy evaluation tools and needs assessment methods





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Cyprus



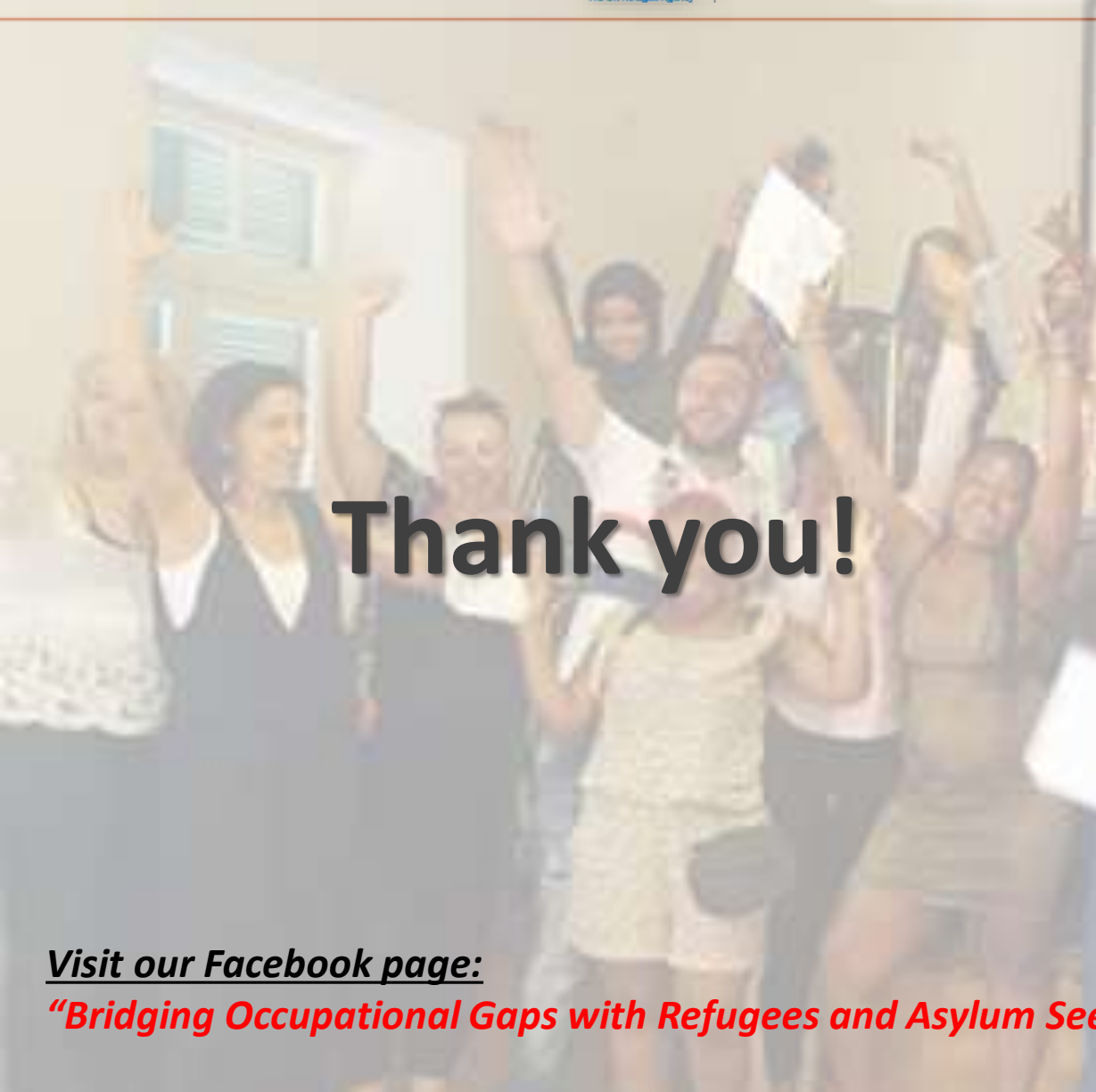
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