

### A message from Miss Stodart

Dear students, parents and colleagues,

After leaving ETA in July, I moved to Thessaloniki in Northern Greece and started volunteering as an English Teacher with an NGO called Intereuropean Human Aid (IHA). I am writing to let you know a little about my work here and to tell you about a fundraiser I have launched.

I work at the IHA community centre which is located a 10 minute walk from a refugee camp in a tiny village called Lagadikia. Since Lagadikia is a two hour bus ride from Thessaloniki, the centre is a lifeline for the 540 people currently living in the camp. IHA is open 5 days a week and provides a safe and welcoming space to socialise, relax, seek advice and take part in various classes and activities. Activities are often led by people in the camp, for example IT and photography class. There is a team of about 8 international volunteers and the same number of community volunteers, who are men and women living in the camp. The two centre managers are former asylum seekers who speak around 8 languages between them.



The team in the main room of the community centre.

I teach 3 levels of English daily, mostly to adults but also teenagers and children. **Roughly 50% of the camp population are under 18.** There is very little education provided for children in the camp and nothing for adults. The children are encouraged to attend the local school but there is no language provision in place to support them so they struggle to understand. My students are all so motivated and an absolute pleasure to teach. I have decided to stay here for another few months which means I can repeat and refine the cycle so the resources are ready for the next teacher.



Lagadikia Camp. It is fenced in and ID cards must be shown on the gate. There is also a curfew.



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**Left: Level 2 students receiving their certificate for completing the 10-week course.  
Right: One of our students with all her certificates - too many to hold!**



**Level 1 students on certificate day.**

The majority of people in the camp are currently from Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan. Many belong to the Yazidi community who are a Kurdish minority who were forced to flee their homes in Iraq during the genocide committed by the Islamic State in 2014. Many of my students spent their childhood or teenage years living in IDP camps in Iraq before making the journey to Europe.

IHA also runs the biggest humanitarian warehouse in Northern Greece. It serves as a logistical hub for aid in the region and provides material support to refugees and asylum seekers, for example by organising a monthly distribution of hygiene products (no hygiene products are provided in the camp) and a bi-weekly distribution of food. IHA also organises a bi-yearly clothes distribution. Sometimes big companies donate brand new clothing to charities and last week all the boys and men in the camp were able to choose a complete Nike outfit during the 'free shop' in the centre (it will be the women's turn next week!).



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**Food packing. A pack usually includes rice, milk, flour, tinned tomatoes and chickpeas.**



**The IHA Warehouse and one of its resident cats.**

In my Level 3 English class, I teach some of the community volunteers who are all in their early 20s. They have a high level of English and we have just entered four of them for the B1 IESOL exam this December. The B1 certificate is an internationally recognised English qualification that can be used for job, university and visa applications. These students will soon be receiving their documents and leaving the camp so it will be incredibly beneficial for them to leave with this qualification in hand. Although IHA will cover these costs, funding is incredibly stretched because the camp population has increased fivefold in the past couple of months. IHA has already had to launch an emergency fundraiser to ensure they can keep providing food over the winter months.

I have therefore launched a fundraiser to try to raise the funds to cover the cost of the English exams. This is a really concrete way to make a positive difference to someone's life.

**Any donation, large or small, would be highly appreciated.**

[Please click here to donate](#)

**Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and I wish you all a very happy Christmas.**

Miss Stodart