IT’S ALL ABOUT LOVE...

Refugee Children photograph their lives in Northern Greece

Summer 2016

Thanks to the Rights and Opportunities Foundation for funding this project
Take ten Camcorders. Give them to some fifty Syrian children between eight and twelve years old, living in a refugee camp in Northern Greece. Ask them to photograph what is important in their lives. Let them choose their favourite pictures and tell us why these pictures matter.

This is what the children wanted to show us....
وهذا هو ما تراه أول المشي في المخيم. المجلس الدنماركي للأجانب هنا، الشرطة هنا، في الأمم المتحدة هنا. الولد يحمل الخوخ و أنه ينظر إلى الوراء. هذا هو مثل لمحات الأولى من المخيم. هنا الصنابير و مكبات التفاضيات. هذا هو الطريق الرئيسي والناس يفعلوا المهامات ويمكنك ان ترى كيف العيش هنا. نحن ليس متعودين ان نعيش في الخيم.

This is what you see when you walk in. DRC are here, the police are here, the UN is here. The boy is carrying a peach and he is looking back. This is like a first glimpse of the camp. There are taps and dumpsters. This is the main road and people are out doing their errands and you can see what it is like living here. We are not used to living in tents. Ayatt age 12
I love the woman in the picture with me. She is very nice to the children. She is kind. She is my friend and I love her and when I leave the camp I want to make sure she goes on seeing me and remembers me.

Maria, age 11
I took this so people can see our cooking. It is good. This is lentil soup. My uncle’s wife made it because I was asking for it for such a long time. She cooked it on the hot plates. The food is 100% better than what we are given. We buy the lentils in town. Father sends money from Germany.

Angeli age 9
I want people to see how it is here. My brother is eating. JAFRA made the food and he is sitting on the floor because there is no proper place to eat. Let people see how we are the ones that made the couches so we don’t have to sit on the floor.
Aya age 10
I chose this picture because I love this boy. I met him here, he gets close to your heart, his face, his voice. I play with him and look after him. I bring him food and things.
Lamees age 10
I am on the swing with my friend’s sister on my lap and I took this myself. The trees and sky look so nice.
Lamees age 10
It is a picture of food on a carton. It is being sold by a man. It is not expensive. We don’t buy food here. We buy it in town, but if we need food in a hurry we get it here. That is Zaatar. I like Zaatar, we dip bread in olive oil and then Zaatar and then we eat it. In Syria my mum made Zaatar sandwiches for school.

Nour age 8
I chose this because it is something nice that I made. We were not given any toys so the children have nothing better to do than make their own toys. I took metal things from a broken caravan in the DRC compound and my friend gave me wheels. The food came and I took one of the cartons. I bring food in it. If someone in JAFRA wants help, I can help.

Sofian age 12
This is my cousin and my brother. They are my flesh and blood and I love them. I love his mother and wanted her son to be in the picture. That is our tent behind us. The camp is not very nice but mine is the nicest tent. The entire camp is jealous of how my mother decorated our tent.

Hassan, age 11
This is my mother’s bed. It is the nicest and most important bed in the tent. She tidies it up. I never tidy mine. The teddy is my mum’s. Sometimes I cuddle it at night and I feel safe when I cuddle it.

Hassan, age 11
هذا معلم الموسيقى، يعلمنا قراءة النوتة الموسيقية وكذلك اللغة الإنجليزية، وكذلك يعلمنا الفن والأنشطة اليدوية، فهو المفضل عندي ووالدي، أعرف أنه يحبني كذلك فهو يذكرني بعمي حيث كان يلعب معى ولكنه الآن في سوريا لذلك فناً أحب هذا المعلم.
شاكر 12 عام

He's our music teacher, he teaches us how to read notes and English too. We do Arts and Crafts with them, he's my favorite. He loves me a lot too. He reminds me of my uncle who used to play with me like he does, but he's in Syria now. That's why he's my favorite teacher.
Chakdar age 12
We took it at the camera workshop. The boy and I are relatives, and I love him because he doesn't let anyone hit me. Mr. A. plays with me.

Lulu age 8
I took it because the sheds in the distance look like a train and it is my dream to go on a train. I want to go around and come back here. I have only been on a train once and it was such a short distance.

Abdullah age 9
I love my cart. I made it. I got the wheels from the dumpsters and I got the plastic container from the man at the supermarket. He gave it to me when I asked. The hook was mine. It was something I found in the camp. I made it myself and I use it to carry foods or I put children in and give them rides.

Maria age 11
I want the world to see my photo. It's not a real bed, but it's comfortable enough. I took this in a room in our house in the camp, it was very hot outside so I had to come inside. I don't sleep here, I just come to rest from the sun. If I were in a real home, if I wasn’t a refugee, I'd be resting on a real bed and there would be an AC. I don't like living in tents, it's really small and like an oven, I can't play in comfort.

Omar age 8
She told me to take a picture and I did. I like the picture. It is nice. I love this girl but I don’t play with her much because she plays in the sun and I don’t.

Angeli age 9
It's a pretty picture. In Syria we lived in an area full of trees. There were all kinds of trees. When I was five when we lived there, my parents would never let me out at night, but in the morning while they were still asleep I would run out and walk among the trees because I wanted to enjoy the peace of the forest.
Asma age 8
I love JAFRA because they play with us and when there is no food in the camp they cook for us and they clean the camp for us and have fun with us.

Aya age 10
You can see life in the camp and how disgusting it is here. The graffiti says: “We don’t want organisations to speak for our camp, we just want an ambulance to stay in the camp” because everyone here is sick. Not me, but it is cold.

Jad age 12
We took this next to our tent, after playing. I was standing underneath the nylon because the sun was scorching hot. I couldn't stay in the tent either, very stuffy. The food at the camp is bad, but my favorite thing is playing with the Spanish.
Ali B age 9
He was going outside by himself, as usual. I asked him where he was going and he put up his arms so I carried him. I sat him on this ledge and asked if I could take a picture of him, he giggled so I captured him. This picture expresses a lot of the camp: look at the dirt on the ledge, the bedsheets turned to curtains. Regardless of this, he's a young boy and his innocence permits him to smile and live happily anyway. Us adults, we're aware and have to deal with what's going on, he's lucky he doesn't. He's a naughty boy, always jumping around, but the way he talks and moves and smiles makes me adore him. His favorite thing is dogs, he’s always running off to JAFRA to play with the dogs. My message to the world is that our situation is disastrous, and I ask them to speed up the process of sheltering us, so we don't remain stranded. I wish this upon no one.
Analeen Age 12
She's very pretty I like her smile. She's foreign, we play together, and they give us toys. They're good. It's comfortable living here. We live in a tent like the one behind, they're fun. I love my siblings and being around them all the time, I have a 10 day old sister I love too. Living in houses would be better though, at least they stay cool. Tents stay hot.

Yousef age 8
It's the nicest picture, this volunteer has always been my favorite but she's left for Spain. We played football with her, and it made us happy. It was a nice distraction from the camp. She also used to sit with us in class and tutor each child before the teacher would even start teaching, she taught us a lot. The situation isn't good, life is bad here. Look at the full dumpsters, how hot it is, and how there's rubble everywhere.

Hamza age 11
I chose this because I love her, she’s pretty and gives us cameras, and the cameras make us happy. We were able to show our lives through our lens. I want the world to know that I love Dr. Lynne. I wonder why she chose to do this for us, but I’m very happy she did.
Noura age 10
He's my teacher and he's very loving. He makes me laugh a lot, even just by looking at him. He entertains a lot at the camp, it would be a sadder place without him.
Leena age 10
It's a very nice picture, my favorite one. I love her so much, she plays with us. She loves us and shows it well. She teaches us a lot and she's important to me.

Ana age 8
The girl is my friend she is getting food for all her family. The boy is splashing her with water. We always have water fights. There is a boy going up to his tent and a man fixing the water coolers. The food is in blue plastic bags with apples and cutlery. The food is good but I don’t like it because it is different from Syria. I eat it sometimes.

Ayatt age 12
I love this boy. I don’t know why but I do. I wash his feet and shoes. I like it when he bites me. I get mad.
Nour age 8
I like this because it is my mother. She does everything for me. Everything she does is the best. She looks happy here.
Jawad age 8
I’m in my tent, my mother took the picture for me. I sleep in the bed behind me and she sleeps in the one next to it with my little brother. It’s like an oven in there, and the bed is metal and uncomfortable. The tent is tiny, and there’s no space; look at how all our bags of things are stuffed under the beds. Look at how strong the sun is. I’m unhappy living here, but my friends help me cope. I don’t have anything positive to say about the camp. I want the world to see this, so they can feel with us.

Abd al Hai age 10
He's playing with me, he was laughing, running around and hiding from me, then I grabbed him and he fell, so I took a picture of him. Every morning, he slaps me on the face to wake up and play with him. But life isn't good for him here, there's no healthy food for him. Dirty water everywhere and he plays in it.

Abd Al Rahman age 11
It's very expressive of the situation here. This is how we're living, with garbage, and it's tiring. I love this man because he's kind, and takes care of us all. He's carrying buckets back to Jafra. The picture just shows how hard we work, I want the world to see this.

Leen age 10
My father was making food so we could eat. He was making ‘meat in the oven’ with eggplant and courgette. They distribute egg plants, courgettes and potatoes. We cook on stoves at the electricity point.

Lilly age 10
This is a picture of the JAFRA group. I love these men because they are so good to us. They play with us and make us happy.
Tabboush age 11
It’s a beautiful memory. Look at his face, he is an old man now. It is a good face. He is a good looking man. I love my dad, he has had a lot of experience. He is sitting next to the tent where he always sits with his friends.
Majd age 11
I really like this girl. She makes my heart flutter, the way she moves and walks and talks. I play with her a lot. It’s a good life for her because her father makes the tent nice and he cleans the camp. She is so happy, but if someone annoys her she will cry.
Sileen age 8
This is my father’s friend. He loves me every day. He tickles me. It is a nice picture.
Msala age 8
This is a friend’s daughter. I always play with her. I really love her. I put her in the cart and take her for rides. I look after her, if she falls I pick her up.

Tabboush age 11
They are sitting at the stand and I asked if I could take picture. It shows their normal activities. This is how they spend their time.
Ali age 10
I want to show you how wrecked the tent is. It is not our tent, it is someone else’s. They ruined everything and they just left. They were in a hurry so they just made a mess finding their essentials. They were going to a new camp. It was wasteful leaving it like this. It took a lot of time and effort for the new family to put it right.
Lilly aged 11
I wanted to show how exhausting it is to carry beds around the camp. The beds are so much better than the old ones. If you sat on the old ones you sank. On these you don’t. This was a new family so they went to get them. Each family gets a card like the food card. There is a man from DRC. We give him the card he gives us the beds.
Lilly age 10
This is my father, and that is my home. I want the world to witness the state of our lives. He plays with me a lot, all kinds of games, and he takes care of me. But most importantly he plays with me.
Ali C age 9
We are playing water fights. We do that often here. We use bottles of water. The water situation is better now but the drinking water is still warm.

Majd age 11
These are my best friends. They play with me, and they're very kind too. We play house, and always come to hang out with Jafra together. Living at the camp wouldn't be nice without them.

Yasmine age 11
Very pretty, I love Mr. A, JAFRA play with us and throw us parties, give us toys too. They provide us with everything, they’re nice to me. This picture makes me feel happy, it makes me feel everything.
Naghman age 12
He was bringing food. He is a funny guy and he asked me to take his picture so I did.
Leena age 10
This is Adel, he's from Jafra. He was trying out the camera with the Spanish volunteers, I looked at him as he took my picture and decided to capture it.
Aloosh age 12
I took this because Harara was upside down and A. was tickling him and I noticed the purple colour. Islam says dogs sometimes give disease so you should keep them clean and outside. I like playing with Harara. But I like cats more than dogs. In Syria we lived near an area without houses and many cats came there and I played with them.

Leena age 10
أنها تبدو جميلة هكذا. الدب يعانق السلحفاة والكلب رأسه يستريح على السلحفاة. إنهم يحبون بعضهم البعض. هم أصدقاء.

، أنا أتحدث إليهم. صديقتي الأجنبية أعطتهم لي. كان لي دلاء من الألعاب في سوريا، غير الذي موجود في الخزانة و على السرير. كانت باربى المفضلة لي. استمتعت بها. عندما كنا نحاول ترك منزلنا أسقطت قبالة. تم كسر ساقين جدي بحيث لا يستطيع الهرب معنا فما. لم أكن أقدر أن أرجع للاعابي و ما قدرنا على مساعدة جدي. اهلي بقوا على جدي، و أنا ركست إلى بيت الجيران لأن بيتهم كان عن. احد ما وضع شريحة على منزلنا، و بعد 10 دقائق، نزلت القنبلة علينا.

رحان عام 10

They look nice like that. The bear is hugging the turtle and the dog, his head is resting on the turtle. They like each other. They are my friends, I talk to them. A foreign friend gave them to me. I had buckets of toys in Syria, not including the ones in the cupboard and on the bed. Barbie was my favourite. I miss her. When we were trying to leave our house a bomb dropped. My grandfather’s legs were broken so he couldn’t run with us so he died. I couldn’t go back for my toys and we couldn’t help him. My mother and father both started crying about my grandfather. I just bolted to the neighbour’s, because their house was Ok. Someone put a chip on our house. He stuck it on and 10 minutes later the bomb dropped.

Hanan age 10
I love trees so much, but I couldn’t get the full picture of this one, I like this tree the most though. It’s the most beautiful, it looks like a painting. It’s pointy at the top, a perfect tree. And I also asked the tree permission to take her picture and she said yes. It reminds me of the greenery in Ladkia, there was a tree there that looks like this one and I loved it, too. So when I saw this, I loved it too. It looks like one of those ancient trees, they’ve been through everything and have seen it all. They’ve seen refugees from all over the world, they witness our lives. Allah loves trees, and created them to be good for us. Nature is good to us and cares for us, I feel safe when I am around it. And trees never die until somebody harms them, that’s why God punishes those who cut trees down. However long they live, the tree sees everything and never forgets. Every leaf on it protects you, so every time you pick a leaf, you’ll be punished. Each leaf was born for a purpose and has a past and a story. For every refugee it sees, a new leaf grows. It protects us from the sun. The prophet Mohammed loved trees too, this tree is a source of strength in the camp.
Abdo age 9
THANK YOU

This photography exhibit would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of all the families living in Lagkadikia refugee camp.

Also, a grateful thank you to:

Dalia Al Sharkawi (Translator)

Giorgos Anastoulis (Photo editor)

Lynne Jones (Coordinator)

Jafra team in Greece, Refugees helping Refugees

Danish Refugee Council

International Medical Corps