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DISSERTAÇÃO

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD, CULTURE  
AND FOOD SECURITY. A CASE STUDY OF FOOD  
CULTURE IN KATSIKAS REFUGEE CAMP.

**LILIANE MACHADO ABDALLA**

Docente: Prof. Doutor: Manuel Francisco Pacheco Coelho

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**ABSTRACT:** This dissertation deals with concepts of Food Security, Human Right to Adequate Food and Culture. It aims to understand the role of culture in satisfying the Human Right to Adequate Food among asylum-seekers living in the Katsikas Refugee Camp. The difference in concept and means between Food Security and Right to Food is introduced. Moreover, the Cultural dimension of Human Right to Adequate Food is described. Finally, a case study is presented in order to analyse if food culture, indispensable for fulfilment of the Human Right to Adequate Food, is being observed by food security policies in Katsikas Camp. This study is divided in introduction; three chapters and conclusion. The first chapter defines food Security, Human Right to Adequate Food and the cultural dimension of Human Right to Adequate food. Chapter two focus on understanding food culture and migrants foodways. Chapter three presents the case study: Food Culture in Katsikas Camp.

**Keywords:** Food Security, Right to Food, Human Right to Adequate Food, Culture, Food Culture, Food Anthropology, Refugee foodways, Refugee, Refugee Camps.

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## Introduction

Although movement of people between countries is not a new thing, the world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record (UNCHR, 2019). An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution at the end of 2018 and among them are nearly 30 million refugees (UNCHR,2019). Europe has been a route of migration since ancient times with periods of great influx and efflux to and from the continent. During the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries a large immigration flow along the transatlantic route was observed, explained by the colonial times and the slave trade. However, since the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe has become a region of net immigration. (MIGRATION DATA PORTAL, 2019). Greece was the European Country that received the highest number of refugee and migrants during the Refugee Crisis therefore it was chosen as the Case Study that is going to be presented. Greece, in 2019 ranks 3rd (third) among EU countries, in the number of asylum applicants, the majority of whom originate from some of the world's top 'refugee-producing' countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq (UNCHR, 2019).

Individuals seeking asylum in a foreign country are often in situation of extremely vulnerability (fiscally and mentally), thus having their Human Rights neglected in many ways and in the large field of achieving Human Rights through humanitarian assistance, food plays a big role. Food is everywhere in society, everyone loves speaking about food, sharing their recipes, cooking skills, favourite dishes or restaurants. Knowing about food is fun, but there are more cogent reasons to worry about understanding foodways (ANDERSON, 2005). Notice that at least 795 million people do not have enough to eat and 12.9% of them are in developing regions (WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, 2019). Humanity, recently, for the first time in human history, has succeeded in producing enough food for everyone however it is available in a global scale production, food is not offered and provided to all human beings (ANDERSON, 2005). Therefore, we need better understanding so that we can provide

better food and encourage better use of it to all and especially those in vulnerability (BROWN 1995; SMIL, 2000).

In order to better understand foodways, this paper comprehends that issues regarding to food cannot be seen exclusively in its economic dimension (access to income), feed (availability of food) or biological (nutritional status) as defended by food security programs. Notice that the notion of nourishment in modern society faces many different perspectives and different views are considered depending on the field of study. (SIQUEIRA,2013). As a multidimensional concept, nourishment is studied by different fields of science such as Nutrition, Economics, Law, Anthropology and Sociology, with each sector focusing on different aspects of nourishment. (SIQUEIRA,2013) The Human Rights dimension of foodways was selected to be argued by this study for reasons that will be better explained further on.

The Human Right dimension of food security has recently become popular between the academic communities although the legal Right to Food is not a new concept. The incorporation of the Human Rights approach in the elaboration of Public Policies to promote Food and Nutrition Security finds strong support in international treaties and national legislation, thus providing a new way of analysing the subject of hunger and malnutrition. (CARVALHO, 2012). Food security without its Human Rights approach is perceived as just a policy of strategically safe storage and adequate supply of food and not a right of every human being to have access to healthy and culturally adapted eating. (BURITY, 2010).

Food is also an indispensable process for life and reproduction of the species. It is the way which nutrients are obtained, providing the body with energy, structural and regulatory substances necessary for the body to perform its functions properly. Despite being a biological imperative, food is also a human activity and like any other human activity, it is regulated by socio cultural habits (VILLA,2012). By eating we not only seek to satisfy the urge of hunger or satisfy our nutritional needs, as we feed each other and our families, friends or strangers, using recipes of our ancestral or family, we rebuild ourselves as human beings in our organic, intellectual, psychological, cultural and spiritual way. (VALENTE, 2003).

In conclusion, this study aims to understand the role of culture in satisfying the Human Right to Adequate Food among asylum-seekers living in the Katsikas Refugee

Camp. Cultural foodways, indispensable for fulfilment of the Human Right to Adequate Food, are being observed by food security policies in Katsikas Camp? The present paper is in three chapters. The first chapter seeks to: 1) Define food Security 2) Define Human Right to Adequate Food. 3) analyse the cultural dimension of Human Right to Adequate food. Chapter two aims to: 1) understand food culture and migrants foodways. Chapter three describes the methodology and limitations and presents the case study; foodways in Katsikas Camp.

## **Chapter I.**

### **1.1 Conceptualizing Food Security**

Food Security is a concept under construction. Food is related to the most different types of interests thus its conception is still in the scene of great disputes. Food Security significance evolves according to changes in the social organization and power relations in a society. (BURITY, 2010.) Concerns about security of food were first recognised by governments during the First World War, when food was poorly available, therefore food security was closely linked to guaranteeing self-sufficiency at a national level and to not rely on external resources to guarantee food availability. Food was thus a central issue regarding to the ability of countries to produce their own food to avoid a supply crisis caused by military fences or political boycotts (PINTO, 2013).

Even though it was first recognized after the first world war, food security become an official concept for the international community during the global food crisis, in the mid-1970's (PINTO, 2013). During this time the main issue was regarding the food supply and to ensure the availability and stability of basic food prices on international and national levels. This crisis was responsible for changes in the organization of the global food economy and in 1974, during the World Food Conference, a new set of institutional arrangements were agreed and the first official concept of food security was defined as: “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (FAO, 2006).

Notice that during the 80's the world began to realise that the availability of food resulting from increases in agricultural production would not solve the problem of hunger. (PINTO,2013) For this reason, more attention shifted to the demand side, i.e. the issue of access to food by the most vulnerable groups (FAO,2006). In this decade, work developed by the Indian economist Amartya Sen decisively influenced this change in thought. Amartya Sen (1983) presented an alternative method of analysis based on the entitlements of access to food, i.e., production, transformation, trade and transfer of basic resources to the poorest and most vulnerable (SEN, 1981). Therefore, in 1983, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations- FAO, changed the concept of food security in order to guarantee access to food to individuals in situations of vulnerability. The new concept was defined by FAO as: "ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need."

From the beginning of the 1990s, other perspectives were added to food security approach, including components of nutrition, health, culture, quality and safety. Studies from different fields, perceived that the composition and variety of the diet, the quality of ingredients (chemical, biological, physical), food preferences (socially or culturally determined) should also be considered by food security (FAO, 2006). Therefore, during the World Food Summit, 1996, a new definition for food security was adopted: "Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" Within this new definition, States committed themselves with more than providing food availability, access, utilisation and stability. A new set of Rights were established: The Right of all individuals to have access to safe and nutritious food; the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to not starve. (CARVALHO,2012). Within this new set, Food Security begins to be understood as a possible strategy to guarantee the Human Right to Adequate Food. After this period, food security started being seen as mechanism to deliver the fundamental Right to Food and nutrition. (CARVALHO,2012)

## 1.2 Conceptualizing Human Right to Adequate Food

The previous section was important to define the concept of food security. In order to give a broader framework to issues regarding food, the Right to Food in its Human Right dimension - Human Right to Adequate Food, shall be introduced

According to Valente (2002) Right to Food must be understood as “ the access of all human beings [...] The resources and means to produce or acquire safe and healthy food that enable a dignified life according to the habits and practices of its culture, its region and its ethnic origin. ” Valente (2003) clarifies that Right to Food goes beyond nutritional, availability, access, utilisation and stability aspects, seen in Food Security concept. According to the author, in order to accomplish Right to Food, people must have access to food that is adequate to its culture.

Notice that even though Right to Food is closely linked to Food Security, those two concepts can't be understood as the same. Food security was once understood as a mere policy of strategic storage, safe and adequate food supply, rather than a right of every human being to access healthy and adequate food. (CARVALHO,2012) Moreover, food security is seen as a concept based on needs, which sets a goal to be achieved through policies and programmes whilst Right to Food is a legal concept, involving rights-holders (people) and duty-bearers (states). (VALENTE,2003)

The Human Rights dimension of food security has recently become popular between the academic community. Carvalho (2012), affirms that Human Rights should be understood as more than principles and rights but as aspirations and demands working together in order to promote a society where human dignity and equity are promoted, protected and guaranteed. Human Rights were established to guide the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of public policies (like Food Security), seeking to reduce inequality and to hold governments accountable for their obligations. Notice that any definition of food problematics based only in the Food Security framework, even in its most up-to-date version, focus mainly on the dimensions of availability, access, use and stability of food and in doing so the discussion does not face other aspects necessary to achieve dignifying foodways . (VALENTE, 2003).

The Human Right to Adequate Food was first recognized by the international community in the 25th article of UN Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover, in the need of spelling out more precisely and in details about those Rights, the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Within those legal instruments, Right to Food became officially part of the ICESCR-agenda which determined the following:

*ARTICLE 11 1. 1. The States Parties to the present Convention recognize the right of everyone to **an adequate standard** of living for himself and his family, **including adequate food**, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. (...)*

*2. (...), recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:*

Carvalho (2012) points that this legal instrument addresses to the Right to Adequate Food by providing elements that incorporate the idea of adequacy and sustainability of food access and availability, stabilising that “the human right to adequate food is crucial for enjoyment of all rights ”. The author affirms that the meaning of Adequacy refers not only to calories, protein and other nutrients, but also to social, economic, cultural, climatic and ecological conditions. Moreover, this Right is also inseparable from social justice, requiring thus the adoption of economic, environmental and social policies, both nationally and internationally, oriented towards the eradication of poverty and the realization of human rights for all. (CARVALHO,2012). Finally, States are obliged with extraterritorial duties and shall take measures to recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. Pioseven (2007) complements by saying that fundamental needs should not be conditional on the charity of State programs and policies but should be recognized as fundamental rights.

In conclusion, Human Rights do Adequate Food and Food Security are both important concepts, the first protects dignifying and equal values and standards to society and the latest is responsible to create public policies to manage and guarantee that those rights are well implemented and achieved. It is through food security policy,

articulated with other public programs, that the State must respect, protect, promote and provide the Human Right to Adequate Food. Therefore, when it comes to food security, it refers to how States, through public policies, can guarantee HRAF to all citizens. (BURITY, 2010)

### **1.3 Food Culture and Human Right to Adequate Food.**

As seen before, issues regarding to food cannot be seen exclusively in the food security dimension. The notion of nourishment in modern society faces many different perspectives which creates controversies about its real meaning, different views are considered depending on the field of study. (SIQUEIRA,2013)

As mentioned, each area of study is concerned about different aspects of food. For nutritionists, the main concern is with nutritional aspects of food such as calories and a balanced diet, made up of the perfect balance between carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables etc. On the other hand, within sociology and anthropology, the main objective is to analyse cultural issues in terms of food, seeking to understand the impact of food on social life and to consider the importance of maintaining particular food habits to protect cultural identity. To this field, foodways is one of the human activities that most reflects the historical and rich process of constructing social relations, those social relations constitute what we can call "humanity" in all its diversity and is also linked to the cultural identity of each individual or social group. (SIQUEIRA,2013).

Regarding to Law, as seeing before, Right to Food is understood as a multidimensional right, radiating its effect to many other rights such as health, culture, land, family, housing, work, etc. According to this legal view, it is important to recognize the results achieved by the other areas of study on food, such as Sociology, Anthropology and Nutrition as it is the combination of these results that will allow the HRAF to be achieved (SIQUEIRA,2013).

As described in the introduction section, this study aims to understand food culture between asylum seekers residents of a refugee camp in Greece. As said, foodways can be studied by many different fields but only the anthropological and legal dimensions are to be studied by this paper.

Notice that although HRAF is composed by several dimensions, the cultural dimension is not always highlighted by the academia. Only recently, authors are starting to focus on the cultural dimension of Right to Food, according to Carvalho (2012) *“Food right is also a Cultural Right. (...) The important cultural dimension of this fundamental right presents itself as an important element of social integration or as a way to avoid social exclusion thus nourishment cannot be understood as a mere act of eating, but also as a social and cultural act, with different rituals proper to each individual group, regarding to the collective context to which it belongs.”* Valente (2014) complements this idea by arguing that the act of eating goes far beyond satisfying hunger. To the scholar, the conceptual framework of HRAF needs to capture its cultural dimensions since eating is a precious way of reaffirming our identity and our cultural diversity and it is not by chance that all community, family festivities and most religious rituals involve the preparation and communion of meals.

Moreover, Villa (2012) also argues over the complexity behind the simple act of eating. For the author, food is an indispensable process for life and reproduction of the species when nutrients are obtained, providing energy and regulatory substances necessary for the body to perform properly. Yet, according to Villa (2012), despite being a biological imperative, food is also a human activity and like any other human activity, it is regulated by socio cultural habits. What to eat, how, with whom, where and when are decisions made based on social, cultural and economic characteristics. Hence, the action of eating does not respond only to the necessity of satisfying hunger or to social events because even when individuals eat alone, their eating decisions are guided by cultural references.

In contrast to the theory which defends culture as being a fundamental dimension of Right to Food, some authors advocate against the social paradigms of food (VALENTE,2014). Recently there is an increase in the hegemony of the neoliberal paradigm led market, which is promoted by both industrialized and emerging economies, and is closely linked to the interests of transnational corporations and other powerful ventures. This model states that hunger and malnutrition can be resolved by the complete liberalization of international trade and strives to reduce right to food to the "right to calories", especially in the form of aid or food assistance. Proponents of this approach refuse to recognize their obligations under international human rights law

to respect, protect and apply HRAF in both a domestic and international way. Those same actors, advocate in favor of access to dietary supplements and food fortification as ways to promote "nutrition", ignoring cultural aspects of food. (VALENTE,2014)

On the other hand, social movements – backed by civil society organizations (OSCs), academics, some of the aforementioned scholars, a small subset of UN agencies (in particular the human rights system) and some governments – remain resistant to this perspective. Those actors still defend the paradigm which sees culture as a fundamental dimension of Right to Food. They also understand the act of feeding oneself, your family and your community as a social process of transforming nature and food into human well-being. (VALENTE,2014). Notice that foodways, in its Human Rights dimension, cannot be considered as just commodities or a "medicine". The act of eating is an expression of a social process in which nutritional well-being is not the ultimate goal. Food is also a prerequisite and a primordial ability that enables humans to be healthy, to give birth, to breastfeed, to be born, grow, develop, learn, work, make love, and be happy. (VALENTE, 2014).

As mentioned, foodways should be understood as an expression of a social process and as in any social expression, cultural factors must be present. Different cultures have different food habits. What to eat, where to eat, with who to eat and how to eat, are all defined by culture, human beings eat according to their culture (GARINE, 1987).

In conclusion, the H.R.A.D cultural dimension understands that eating and nourishing are much more than an instinctive act moved by the feeling of hunger. Valente (2014) affirms that Humans don't feed on iron, proteins, and vitamins. We feed on meals, which are socially produced from the time of sowing and harvesting of diversified food crops, until the time of preparation and sharing a meal. Human beings, throughout their evolution, have developed a complex relationship with the food process, transforming it into a ritual rich in creativity, sharing, love, solidarity and communion between human beings and with nature, permeated by cultural characteristics of each community and human grouping. By feeding together their family, friends and community, eating typical dishes of their childhood and culture, the individual and the group go beyond just restoring their physical energy and health, they reaffirm their cultural identity, their dominance over the course of life with dignity. By

eating we not only seek to satisfy the urge of hunger or satisfy our nutritional needs, as we feed each other and our families, friends or strangers, using recipes of our ancestral or family, we rebuild ourselves as human beings in our organic, intellectual, psychological, cultural and spiritual way.

## **Chapter II – Understanding Food Culture**

This paper doesn't attempt to dismiss that our basic nutritional needs and some very broad preferences are set by biology. It is recognized that the environment can modify the needs somewhat but cannot change the basic biology; we all need protein, vitamin C, and so on, no matter what we think or believe. (ANDERSON, 2005). Preferences however are, notoriously subject cultural and social forces and it should be taken into account in understanding what to do about world food problems.

Regardless Human Rights understanding on foodways, Anderson (2005) highlights that part of the global stress on food is still on producing more and convincing people to eat more healthily. However, according to the author, consumption is not a simple function of production. Consumption is important to determine what is produced by creating effective demand. Production and consumption determine each other. Hence, since cultural and social factors have an enormous influence on consumption, the importance of studying culture and society has become significant since they are more important determinants of production than studies of production usually imply.

Adam Kuper (2000) in his recent work, defines culture in its most general sense as being simply a way of talking about collective identities. Moreover, Kuper (2000) elaborates how everyone is into culture now. The word "Culture" has become a trend world while. Culture sells. Being cultural is now considered "cool". "'Culture'—the word itself, or some local equivalent, is on everyone's lips," and it has become a selling strategy of companies.

However, to Samuel Huntington (1996) the future of the world might depend on culture. Huntington (1996) predicted a new phase of global history in which "the

fundamental sources of conflict” will not be primarily economic or ideological. “The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.” The author elaborated on his thesis arguing that we can expect a titanic clash of civilizations, each representing a primordial cultural identity. The “major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures,” and “culture and cultural identities...are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post–Cold War world ...In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations.”

Kuper (2000), also believes that status is also in play. Notice that individuals tend to believe that cultures can be measured against each other. These same people are prone to value their own culture more highly than that of others, this is when the rhetoric “they” vs “us” becomes a reality. There is a belief that there is only one true civilization, and that “the future not only of the nation but of the world depends on the survival of one's own culture.” Kimball (1991) insists, “the choice facing us today is not between a ‘repressive’ Western culture and a multicultural paradise, but between culture and barbarism”. Kuper (2000) and Hungton (1996) rhetoric was proved true in the recent years. In the context of the Refugee Crisis a conflict of Culture was observed when Western countries had to face the arrival of millions of refugees and migrants, bringing with them their own culture. Austerity measures were observed, and the speech of protection of our culture and identity was one of the strongest arguments.

Within this conflict of culture and austerity, Turner (69) goes further by affirming that “transitioning individuals are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing, nor another, they may be both, (...) and are at the very bottom “betwixt and between” all the recognized fixed points in the space time of cultural classifications. ” Hence, refugees are seen to haemorrhage or weaken national boundaries and to pose a threat to national security.

In anthropological terms, refugees are people who have undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition', or in a state of 'liminality'( BOND, VOLTIRA, 1992 ). This 'betwixt and between' (TURNER, 1969)

status may not only be legal and psychological, but social and economic as well. Bond and E. Voutira (92) noted: "Once an individual, a human being becomes a refugee, it is as though he has become a member of another race, some subhuman group" Most refugee predicaments involve cultures in violent collision. To survive, refugees must adapt to radically new social and material conditions.

Regarding to food culture, the rise of refugee cuisine is being noticed. The UNHCR has organized refugee food festivals in collaboration with dozens of buzzy restaurants found in Amsterdam, Madrid, New York City and San Francisco. Moreover, It is not difficult to find in any big city, advertising of Refugee Kitchen courses or dinners offered by refugee. Furthermore, it is a common place to find restaurants and companies opening its doors and hiring refugee as cooks or Chefs, one of many examples is a Queens, New York-based catering company founded by grad school students and Lebanese immigrants, Eat Offbeat hires primarily refugees and asylum seekers—mostly women who love to cook and seek audiences for their native cuisines.

Moreover, food culture is also used in every society on earth to communicate messages. Anderson (2005) points that among food culture is possible to find messages of solidarity. Sharing a meal is a sacred gesture in many religions on the globe and is nearly as sacred in many families around the earth. Food also transmits messages about status, gender, role, ethnicity, religion, identity, and other socially constructed regimes. Also, often food is used to mark particular occasions, particular personal qualities, particular hangups and concerns as well as it can be subject to snobbism, manipulation, and debate.

More than sending cultural messages, food is a symbol of comfort, home, and love. Thus, many an eating disorder is traced to a family problem related to lack of these. (ANDERSON, 2005). Individuals suffering from psychological traumas can manifest their symptoms in food by overeating or starving themselves. Anderson (2005) affirms that recent studies have shifted attention to the complexity of cultural/social perceptions of food. Since it is possible communicate through food, then is expected to find the encoding and decoding of messages sent by food to be extremely complex and interesting. Some obvious questions about foodways still lack answers., i.e: When do we want the familiar, and when do we want the new? If food is a voice that expresses meanings like speech, it can tell us stories.

It is in routine food, as well as in other manifestation of culture in daily life, that we can best perceive the maintenance or changes of identities through the coexistence of communities of different origins and cultures - characteristic not only of migratory processes, but also of globalization. Eating behaviours reveal strategies that allow a group to demarcate a local identity and distinction. (AMON and MENARCHE, 2008)

Finally, Food concerns all human beings; it is universal, general; Food defines a domain of options, manifests specificities, establishes identities. Food is transformed by culture (DA MATTA, 1987).

## **Chapter III - Case of Study: Human Right to Adequate Food and Culture in The Katsikas Camp - Greece.**

### **3.1 – Methodology and Limitations**

Participant observation is part of an ethnographic observation approach in which the participant actively participates in data collection activities and ability of the investigator to adapt to the situation (PAWLOWSKI, ANDERSEN., TROELSEN, SCHIPPERINJN , 2016).It is a method that allows us to access common situations and events that is difficult to grasp through interviews or through self-assessment tools (ATKINSON, HAMMESRLE, 2005). According to Vogt (1999), Participant Observation is

*(...) A researcher participates as a member of the group that he or she is studying. Sometimes the researcher informs the group that he or she is an observer as well as a participant, and sometimes the researcher pretends to be an ordinary member.* (VOGT, 1999)

However, due to its own characteristics, participant observation has some limitations, such as the investigator's ever-present risk of slipping into subjectivity, due to his personal involvement with the object, and the possibility of his presence disturbing the normal course of social interaction. (BURGESS, 1995).

Refugee camps are not common sites for ethnographic work and displaced people are not the usual informants for Anthropologists, yet fieldwork among refugees

demonstrates profound mysteries and doubts that inhabit the very heart of the discipline. Anthropological studies on refugees have been shown to say much about key facts of the social construction of refugees in the contemporary world order (MALKKI, 1995)

Finally, storytelling is the way that communities understand their past, present and future. In this discussion of narrative as constitutive of a community, and not an expression of it, one of the perspectives that this article allows us to see is how the narrative of food builds community. (AMON, MENARCHE, 2008).

### **3.2 Case Study**

Katsikas Refugee Camp is located in a remote and tiny village of Katsikas, in the northeast of Greece with a population of approximately 4.000 people. During the time I spent there doing this research, the population of the camp was around 1.100 individuals, men women and children of more than 30 different nationalities (mainly from sub-Saharan and middle eastern countries). Little information about the history of the camp is available, so that the source of what is to be said here will be mainly from residents of the camp and NGOs that support the area.

First established in December 2016 and run by Greek military, the refugee camp witnessed many changes throughout the years. Katsikas refugee camp hosted around 1200 people when it was first opened, and it was a grid of tents set up on a fenced off and isolated plot of land covered in rubble. The camp's population has ebbed and flowed as people transition out and new arrivals are moved in. The inhabitants are mainly individuals transferred from Reception and detention centres on the Greek mainland and islands, persons waiting for their asylum-process to be concluded, which could take many years, depending on the case. People from a large variety of nationalities, age and background were sent to the Camp, between them were 400 particularly vulnerable cases – 100 of which were identified as cases of severe trauma. left there with no psycho-social support or adequate follow-up. The tragic result observed by this carelessness are suicides inside of the camp, conflict between nationalities (stab), mental breakdowns, abuses, etc.



Katsikas Camp 2016



### Katsikas Camp 2019

After conducting research between many refugee camps in Greece, Katsikas camp was chosen to place this study. Even though it had gone through hard times, nowadays it is considered one of the best refugee camp in Greece and it hosts two meaningful programs regarding food, managed by two different NGOs. The facilities of Katsikas Camp nowadays, when compared to other Greek Refugee Camps, is considered favourable. Individuals are set in full furnished cabins that are equipped with air conditioning (Northeast of Greece faces severe weather conditions with cold winters and very hot summer). Mainly three organizations work inside of the camp and in the area, providing a variety of services to the camp residents.

The main organization in the camp is named ASB and defines itself as a non-political and non-denominational charity and relief organisation. The NGO was selected by the Greek government to manage and provide basic service to the residents of the camp. According to the ASB web page, the organization is responsible for a package of services that includes the provision of SMS, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) monitoring, shelter, maintenance and repair, non-food items, food assistance until beneficiaries can register for cash assistance and transportation services. The project has two other components funded by EU emergency support: the provision of primary medical care, psycho-social support, legal aid and informal educational activities.

In order to have a broader idea about the services and programs implemented by ASB, I was given the opportunity to speak with its coordinator. I considered myself lucky, since I was told by residents of the camp and staff of other organizations that he would probably not receive me. During a short conversation, of approximately 20 minutes, a middle-age Greek man tried to explain me the ASB work and answer some questions. However, the conversation wasn't as productive as I thought it would be. The coordinator of the NGO was not able to provide basic information such as the population of the Camp, nationalities, gender, documentation as well as the specific programs that were being implemented. It wasn't a surprise, since during the whole month I spent in Katsikas, I had rarely seen members of the SBE Staff outside of their Cabin, located in the entrance of the camp. Moreover, no such type of medical care, psychological assistance, educational service or food assistance program offered by the

organization during the time that I spent in Camp was observed. Hence, ASB will probably not be mentioned further.

The second organization providing services to Katsikas residents is the forehead mentioned, Habibi Works. Self-founded and managed by a German woman and volunteers, the NGO the project provides platforms for education, empowerment and encounter. The makers have access to 8 well equipped working areas, among them a wood workshop, a metal workshop, a sewing atelier and a Media Lab with access to advanced technology such as 3D printer and laser cutter and. Although it offers a big variety of programs, the first and most popular program offered by the NGO is a community kitchen within the camp.

With a vision of creating a community hub where volunteers, aid workers and the refugee population could make meals alongside each other – emphasising a shift from ‘cooking for’ to ‘cooking with’, the community Kitchen was the first service provided by Habibi Works. In a conversation with a member of the Staff, it was told me that the idea of a community kitchen came from the understanding that even in the presence of tragic circumstances, food is a way of bringing people together and “in the warmth and vibrancy of a busy kitchen, individuals not only felt they were part of a productive process but were also recognised for their contribution”. The community kitchen is open to everyone who desires to prepare a meal, it is just necessary to inform them previously of the desire to cook the next day. The kitchen is open daily, for lunch and in the afternoon (usually with bread, cakes, coffee and tea), all the ingredients are provided by the organization (bought in local markets) and the only two rules are: Everything made in the kitchen should be shared with everyone present; The chefs for each meal should always be thanked with a round of applause.



### **Habibi Work Building**

During the afternoon that I spent in Habibi Works, the kitchen was dominated by males. Those responsible for that afternoon meal were an Iraqi middle-aged man and a young man, also from Iraq. Further on, I found out that they have been preparing the meals in the community kitchen at least three times a week. I questioned if I could join them and I was warmly welcomed. While the men were preparing lunch, it was clear that the old man who had worked as a cooker in Iraq for 25 years, was the one giving the instructions. The young man, in a tone of joke, told me that due to their low cooking skills they could prepare the salad only and that afternoon the salad would be composed of cucumber, onion, tomato and parsley. To those men, the hours they spend in the NGOs kitchen are the most rewarding moments of the day, it brings some normality and it helps to kill the boredom of a refugee camp. When I questioned what type of food they usually prepare, the old man affirmed that when possible he prepares the same dishes as he used to, back in Iraq “because food diminishes distance and makes us feel closer to home”. When the meal was ready, one of the members of the staff closed the main door (you must arrive until 13hrs in order to enjoy the meal) and around 100 people, mainly men (I counted only 5 women) of a big variety of nationalities, sat on the floor, which was covered by what looked like an improvised carpet, put there only for the occasion. The plates were served by members of the staff, we all enjoyed together that simple and delicious meal which was emphasized by the cooker to be an Iraqi typical dish. At the end of the meal everyone thankfully clapped the person responsible for that enjoyable moment.



**Dish of the day**



**Preparing the meal**

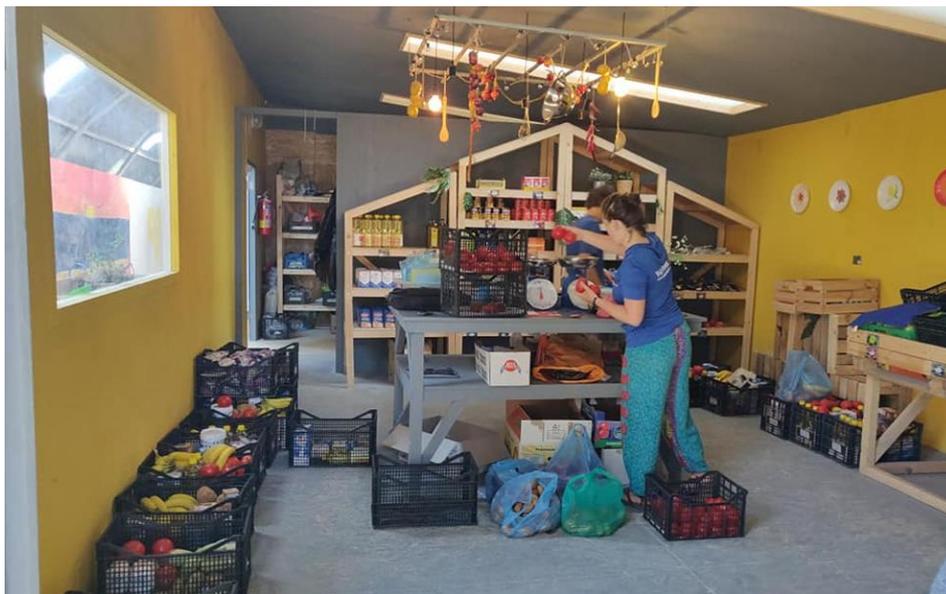


### **Communal Lunch**

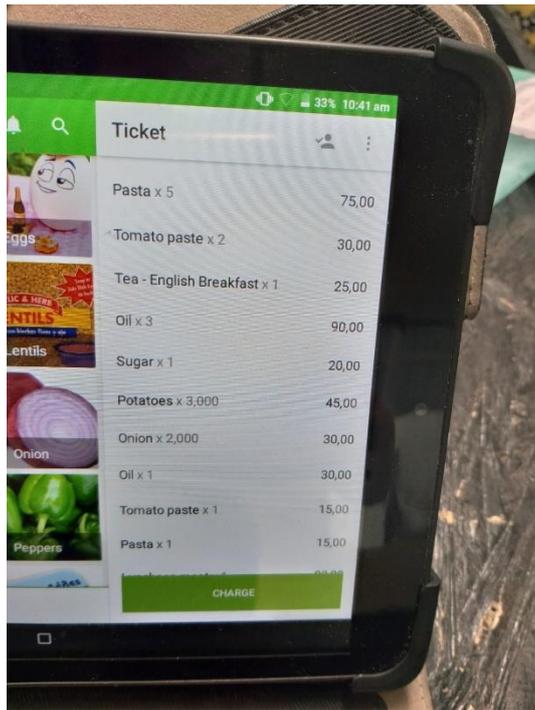
After lunch, me and the group of young cooks sat outside, on improvised couches. Between cigarettes and cups of tea we started an informal conversation about food in our countries and a friendship was instantaneously formed. In poor English, they insisted on explaining to me how a famous Iraq barbecue is made, the words “very good” were repeated many times. They showed me videos of food in Iraq and I showed them pictures of some Brazilian dishes. These young men confirmed what the “chef” of the day affirmed about the importance of the community kitchen to kill the boredom of their life and how they go to that same space every morning to help the improvised “chef”. When I asked about Greek food, they didn’t seem to be very excited. One of the boys affirmed that the food was better in Jordan, where he was before arriving in Greece. They also showed me pictures of an Iraq barbecue, which is composed of Sheep meat on sticks (in a shape of a kafta) that is served with grilled onions, tomato peppers and a special sauce, that is the dish they miss most, back in Iraq. Whilst they were showing me pictures and trying to explain to me how the Iraqi barbecue is prepared, I could see the excitement in their faces. In Brazil making a barbecue is a common tradition, where family and friends gather to celebrate something or just to spend some time together. A barbecue is rarely done for one person only, it’s often a social moment that lasts hours, sometimes the whole day. Hence, when those boys were presenting the meal, it wasn’t only about food. They were showing memories, a lifestyle, a social moment, an Iraqi culture After the afternoon that I spent in Habibi Works with these

men, and surrounded by food, a bond between us was created Every time that one of those young men would see me in the Camp they would come to speak to me as friends.

The third organization placed in the Camp is named Refugee Support Europe-RSE. RSE was where I spent the biggest part of my time, working in its Mini-Market, placed inside of Katsikas Refugee Camp. The heart of the NGO operation is the mini-market, open Monday to Friday, at the same times. Volunteers (including me) of the organization distribute fresh fruit, vegetables and essential food in order to give residents of the camp a taste of home and help with food security. Everyone on the camp received fake cash bills (literally monopoly bills) that were used to buy products in the mini market. The aim of the organization is providing aid with dignity and the mini market tries to be a place where normality comes first. Everything that is bought in the market is recorded by an app so that the NGO can track distribution and manage the stock. Moreover, a space and seeds for a community garden is also provided.



**Mini-Market**



#### **System used by the NGO.**

During my first day working in the mini market, everything seemed normal, even though I was in a refugee camp, it didn't feel like it. The excitement of the first day made everything look normal but within days my perception didn't remain the same. The Mini- Market although small, is maintained in perfect conditions. Before it is open to clients, everything is cleaned, food are-stocked and vegetables that are not in good condition for consumption are removed. A mini board is placed outside of the Mini-market and every person who wishes to shop must write his/her cabin number in it. A maximum of 2 people are allowed inside of the store each time and only when a certain cabin number is called the person is allowed in. Tensions between residents to define who turn it is, is commonplace in the mini market, when it happens one the volunteers must go to the door and solve the confusion.

Inside of the shop, the "clients" can choose freely which products they wish to "buy" and at the end they pay with the money that was given to them previously. Even though the idea behind the mini market being a place where normality comes first, acting normal in a situation of extreme abnormality is not often easy. Since the same people who give the "money", sell the food and the "money" given can be used only in that exact store, it was perceived that the system generates a relationship of superiority

and dependence between the camp residents and the NGO. While in a normal mini market the logic of “the client is usually right” is present, in the mini market it doesn’t exist. I was told in my first day of work that I should maintain a strong posture and show authority when it was necessary.

Notice that the act of shopping (which in normal circumstances is a relaxed and enjoyable moment, when individuals choose food and ingredients from a big variety of options) in a refugee in the camp could become a tense moment, were people have to select carefully from little food options (24) the most suitable and with best cost-benefit. All the joy coming from buying food is substituted by a tense face. I tried to carry some conversation with clients, but only short answers were given, followed by concerned faces. That worried expression would shift to mercy eyes, when fruits or vegetables were being weighed by me and those eyes would transform into ashamed smiles when I pretended that the scale was showing 1kg instead of 1.5kg.

Regarding the selection of products available in the shop, the NGO tried to create a criterion that suits all cultural preferences. However, it is impossible reaching food cultural aspects of 30 countries with only 24 options of products. Moreover, the organization relies on limited private resources thus the products must fit in its “budget”. Hence, individuals coming from parts of middle east (like Syria) have the Mediterranean diet in common with Greece so that more culturally suitable options are available to them. The mini market offers courgette, eggplant, potatoes, onion, garlic, parsley, cucumber, peaches, apple, banana and lemon. Moreover, eggs, rice, lentils, chickpeas, yeast, tomato paste, sardines, flour, and yogurt and other common staple food as sugar, oil, salt etc were available. I.e. to their cultural habits. All local products bought from local shops. Notice that Syrians and other Mediterranean nationalities presented in camp, during our conversations about Greek food and products offered by the mini market, seemed to be satisfied. Many different speakers coming from Mediterranean diet countries affirmed that is somewhat easy to find ingredients that they were used to having in their country and that their diet considerably changed since they moved to Greece.

On the other hand, the same cannot be said by residents coming from Sub-Saharan countries. I was told by the coordinator of the mini-market that some changes in products were made in order to accommodate people coming from Africa although

the staple foods that those persons are used to, are difficult to find in Greece (and more expensive), however few options were incorporated. I.e: white beans and banana. The discontent with Greek food by part of Africans could easily be perceived. I was told by a big group of single men, from Ghana, that Greek food is tasteless, has no flavour and the ingredients don't seem fresh or healthy. In contrast, their reaction changed when talking about food in Ghana. As the Iraqis, they were excited to show pictures and seemed annoyed when I showed lack of knowledge about some of the dishes. Notice that not recognizing foodways could be understood as unawareness of local culture and certain cultures feel very disrespected and diminished when individuals show no knowledge about their customs.

Furthermore, the same opinion about Greek food was shared by some Ethiopian residents of the camp. Differently from Syrians (have Syrian food often) they had Ethiopian dish only once during their whole staying in Greece (in Athens). The words "artificial and "tasteless", referring to Greek food, was continuous repeated. Moreover, they affirmed that their diet changed considerable since they arrived in Greece, the biggest difference is that the quantity of meat that they eat now is much smaller than it used to be in Ethiopia. Reducing the quantity of meat seems to be a common habit between individuals in situation of poverty and it was also perceived between the residents of Katsikas Refugee Camp. The mini market provides only two options of meat (sardines and halal meat in can), meat is considered expensive thus cannot be afforded by the NGO. Moreover, it was noticed that those young and single African mentioned above, when shopping in the mini market, would select a few varieties of products such as pasta, rice, beans, tomato paste and banana. It wasn't clear if their choices were due to cultural preferences or because it those options are cheaper and provide more energy (Calories).

The African community present in the Katsikas camp was mainly composed of a single man. However, I had the opportunity to speak with a 26 years old woman from Serra Leoa and her two brothers. We sat outside of her cabin to talk about food and since they knew I was a volunteer in the mini market, the conversation started with this topic. The mini market was very important when this family first arrived in Camp, 10 month ago, coming from Lesvos. Nowadays it still helps, they use the cash provided by the NGO to buy products for their breakfast, composed of eggs and tea. During lunch

time, rice is the elected staple; the family buys around 25kg of rice per month in the local supermarket. To complement the meal, they usually choose the cheaper option, chicken. It was told by one of the brothers that food in Lesvos were more suitable to their taste, since they were able to have fish very often. In Serra Leoa fish is a common source of protein together with other staple food such as cassava, potato, rice, beans. The brothers also complained about the lack of choices of fruit in Greece. In Serra Leoa, a bigger variety of fruits were provided to them, mango was mentioned many times in our conversation as an example of food that they miss most. However, apple was inserted in their diet. In Serra Leoa, apple is an expensive item and in Greece it can be afford by the family.

The family is part of the cash assistance program, managed by the UNCHR. Most of the money received by them is located to food. The woman is responsible for cooking although each member of the family is responsible to buy a part of the ingredients. She loves cooking soup, with many spices, enjoying the meal together. The woman spends around 50EUR in the local supermarket. They had to adapt their diet to their momentous reality, thus fish is not affordable anymore. Eating out is a luxury that they could never afford since they arrived in Greece, except for one time when one of the brothers sat in a cafe, trying to socialize with the local community. The siblings also mentioned the period of the Ramadan, which was described as the time of the year when everyone can live well and everything is possible, people become very generous and joy is everywhere. The Ramadan in Katsikas Camp wasn't as special as in Serra Leoa, although the Eid al-Fitr was celebrated in the Camp with a large meal, donated by RSE. Our conversation was finished by one of the brothers affirming that "if you cannot eat good food and you cannot drink good water then you cannot live. (...) Sometimes I starve myself, sometimes stress makes me lose appetite. Sometimes I have food, but stress makes me lose appetite. (...)". Food is not only about availability, in order to be healthy, nourishment needs to feed the soul.

As mentioned before, Katsikas Camp is recognized as one of the best facilities for refugee in Greece. The cabins provide dignifying conditions, regarding to the kitchen, all basic instruments are provided. I had the opportunity to visit the cabins every afternoon, for cash distribution ("cash" was distributed by the RSE every 2

weeks, during the afternoons, two volunteers go to selected cabins and distribute the money). Although it looked like an easy task it is can be challenging in certain moments. It was during the distribution of money that I could get closer their “home” and talk more freely with the camp residents. Katsikas Refugee Camp is divided by side A and side B. The side A is mainly consisted by Middle Eastern families and it is known as the peaceful part of the camp. Regarding to the money distribution in the side A the only recommendation was giving the money to an adult resident in the cabin. On the other hand, in the side B, which was mainly composed by single men from Africa and some parts of middle east, the requirements were different. In order to receive the money each individual should be present and show a document of identification. Those special requirements often create problems and disagreements between the volunteers, coordinator and the residents. Notice that food is not always peace and love, in this case, the difference of criteria (even though the reasons given by the NGO seems to be reasonable) caused large tensions and in certain moments individuals refused to receive the money for feeling offended and disrespected.

Often, during the money distribution, I was invited to come inside for a cup of tea. I perceived the gesture as a way of thanking me for my work. Even though these people are in situation of poverty, they still value small gestures bought from their culture, such as to offer a cup of tea to a stranger that they sympathise with. It is important to mention the role of tea in a refugee camp, even if it was one of the most expensive products in the market, it was one of the bestselling products. However, I couldn't accept the majority of the tea invitations, at one occasion my answer was positive. During a very hot afternoon, in the month of July, a middle-age man and his two kids were fixing a bike outside of the building were Refugee Support Europe works. It was probably the only shade available nearby and I stood there with them, waiting for my shift start. As habitual, he offered me a cup of tea and came back with an oversweet and boiling cup that tasted delicious. Because the tea was so hot, it took me a while to finish the cup and we ended up having an unusual conversation. Offering a cup of tea to a stranger stood next to you might seem to be unusual to most people but not for the residents of Katsikas Refugee Camp.

Refugee Support Europe tried to introduce a new project regarding to food in the camp. The project aimed to help residents to gain independence and integrate with

Greek society by incubating independent and viable businesses in order to introduce some normality in the daily life of the Camp. The NGO plan was to move from emergency aid (food and sanitary wear) to integration aid (business activities and employment) that gives people a chance to rebuild their lives and become independent. It offered loans and grants to run tiny shops, cafes, teaching and food production, all valuable things that people on the camp need. Unfortunately, there was a repressive response of the Greek authorities, they demanded that anyone running one of those activities needed to pay punitive tax rates and adhere to impossibly bureaucratic processes from the moment they set up. As a result, the police threatened vulnerable people with exorbitant fines and imprisonment unless they shut down their activities immediately.

Luckily the Greek government measures didn't stop Yasmin. The restaurant and shop of Yasmin (this is how the people in the camp called it), is an informal "restaurant" that was set by a Syrian mother. Yasmin had no previous experience with restaurant and commerce before moving to the Katsikas Camp, the only knowledge that she had about food was the one learned from her mother, back in Syria. Fortunately, the Greek government measures didn't stop Yasmin and she kept with her business in discreet way. Settled in her "garden", under an improvised tent and circled by a simple garden, some tables are exposed and six euros is charged for a full meal, which includes appetizers, main course, dessert and mineral water. In accordance to Syrian culture, were the quantity of food served is always more than one can afford eating, Yasmin's table almost couldn't fit the quantity of food served. Everyday Yasmin prepares a different menu, composed only by Syrian dishes. During my first visit, served was hummus, Tabbouleh, Kaftan (with tomato sauce), chicken shawarma, rice and fries. As a desert, she bought baklava with tea. I can affirm that it was one of the best Syrian meals I have ever eating in my life, notice that I came from Arabic origins thus I grew up having those dishes in a daily basis.



**Yasmin Restaurant**



**Yasmim with R.S.E volunteers.**



### **Yasmim`s Food**

After a delicious meal , Yasmin took me to visit her garden, which is well cared for by her husband and provides some of the ingredients for the meal, I questioned her if it is difficult to find typical Syrians ingredients nearby, she told me that is possible to find anything she wishes in the town but otherwise from Syria, it is necessary to go to many different places in order to find good quality an affordable prices. It was during my second visit, after sharing a cup of tea that she mentioned the importance of food and cooking in her life. The Syrian woman affirmed that food reminds her of beloved family members, often she cries whilst is cooking for missing the afternoons she spent with her mother in the kitchen, back in Syria. Yasmim also told me that her mother is still in Syria but the what she learned from her will always follow her, it doesn't matter in what country she resides. As a mother of four girls, she tries to teach them the Syrian recipes that have been in the family for centuries and her plans are to open a formal food business after leaving the camp.

### **Conclusion**

One of the best ways to improve world nutrition is to pick up the best ideas from the thousands of cultures that humanity has developed. Each culture encodes a vast amount of knowledge of local foods: how to identify them, prepare them, grow them (if they are planted), and so on. Ultimately, the better we understand why people eat what they eat, the better we can feed the world. (ANDERSON,2005). Although, we know the names of a few latter-day chefs, food history—unlike the history of war and violence—is generally a history without names (ANDERSON, 2005).

By sharing some stories of Katsikas Camp residents, this paper has shown, through real life stores, that food assistance cannot be seen exclusively in its economic dimension (access to income), feed (availability of food) or biological (nutritional status). Culture and foodways play a big role in providing a dignified life thus satisfying HRAD. Public policies must be designed to guarantee a life with dignity where human rights (HRAD) are respected.

The notion of nourishment in modern society faces many different perspectives which creates controversies about its real meaning. In Katsikas Camp, three main NGOs are responsible to provide assistance. It had become evident that the NGO selected by the Greek government doesn't play any role in satisfying HRAD and understating foodways. Even though receiving public financial, this NGO limits its work to basic camp management such as water, sanitation, transport etc. Thus, HRAD and its foodways was not shown to be a concern to Greek policies although food security is guaranteed by cash assistance provided by UNCHR. Moreover, two self-founded NGO's shown to have specific programs related to food, both aiming to delivery dignity to the camp residents.

Habibi works, with a model of community kitchen, opened to everyone and providing a large variety of ingredients shows a successful model. Because everyone can use the kitchen, independent of the background, it offers a multicultural and relaxed environment where food preferences are respected. The NGO created a community where everyone seems to be equal. Moreover, the system seems to favour single man that have no cooking ability, although it was observed that the community kitchen doesn't aim for food security since only one big meal(lunch) and an afternoon snack is provided. The place is perceived as a complementary option to those who like to a share meal, to cook for a large amount of people or who not have cooking skills.

Finally, RSW, through the mini market, tried to be a combination between guaranteeing food security and considering HRAD pillars. The market aims to provide aid with dignity and create a sense of normality in the camp. The project encounters difficulty because of its lack of resources. A little option of products is available and even though cultural preferences are taken into account, it is not possible reach cultural preferences of a large group of nationalities. Moreover, the amount of cash distributed is of very little guarantee to food security, hence it is only a small complement to people's diet. The presence of the NGO in camp was noticed as important since it is the only food shop available in the camp. In addition, the shop plays a big role to individuals who just arrived in camp.

The first weeks in a refugee camp are the most difficult, since persons have just come from traumatic and exhaustive journeys hence, they arrive in there in very a vulnerable position with very little or no money. The NGO tried to implement more

sustainable form of AID through the loan program to small business. However, the measure was shut down by Greek authorities. In conclusion; The mini market model has shown to have a big potential to achieve HRAD, although a larger amount of resources is needed to guarantee and to make available a broader quantity of products and a higher value in cash needs to be provided in order to guarantee food security. Finally, the combination of the three forms of AID, ie: UNCHR cash assistance, community kitchen and mini market seem to complement each other and guarantee food security in Katsikas Refugee Camp.

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