

**REFUGEE
TRAUMA
INITIATIVE:
IMPACT
REPORT
2018**



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OUR STORY

RTI is striving to set a new benchmark in mental health care for the world's refugees. Through innovative programmes of psychosocial support, education and training, we resource refugees, aid workers and organisations with skills and tools to deal with stress, insecurity and trauma. In less than three years, we have grown into a leading provider of psychosocial support to refugees in Northern Greece.

In Spring 2016, Refugee Trauma Initiative was a collective of volunteers helping to fill the vast gap in emergency trauma care for thousands of men, women and children stranded in Greek refugee camps. After a few months, we realised the enormous demand for culturally-sensitive long-term support for refugees and migrants, both those living in camps and those in other forms of accommodation. We are now a team of eleven, including therapists, support workers and trainees, helping hundreds of children, adults and young people at multiple locations in the region. We also offer services to aid workers and organisations serving refugees, helping to build their capacity and extend the reach of our methods.

What we do:

- We help parents and young children to address trauma and build strong, secure relationships.
- We help young people build support networks and teach them career, community and life skills.
- We provide mother-tongue group and individual support to refugee women and girls.
- We train aid workers, volunteers and educators to provide culturally sensitive, trauma-informed support to the people they work with.
- We give organisations tools to develop identity-informed practices and bespoke systems of staff care.
- We empower people to take better care of themselves, their families and their communities.

In less than 3 years, we have resourced over 4000 people with skills and tools to deal with stress, insecurity and trauma.

But our story is just beginning...

There are still thousands of men, women and children beyond our reach in Greece, and many millions more worldwide. As we begin 2019, we are ready to scale, collaborate and build capacity to ensure that thousands more families get the psychosocial support they need. With your help, we can achieve that.

OUR APPROACH

Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial support helps individuals and communities to heal their psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after an emergency or a critical event. RTI's approach to psychosocial support is multi-layered. First, our team of therapists and support workers offer native-language one-to-one counselling, group sessions and wellbeing-centred activities, including mindfulness, art therapy and movement therapy. Second, our programmes and activities are especially designed to promote secure, supportive relationships and foster agency and a sense of belonging. In short, our work empowers refugees to be the necessary support for themselves, their families and their communities.

Working With Trauma

Exposure to prolonged periods of stress and uncertainty can lead to chronic anxiety and toxic stress, which are major obstacles to people hoping to build new lives for themselves and integrate into a new culture. For young children, traumatic events can alter the physiology of the developing brain in a way that can have severe impacts on mental and physical health over the course of a lifetime. RTI's programmes take into account that refugees may have suffered trauma. Our activities are specifically designed to support self-regulation, encourage self-expression, create positive experiences and promote joy and relaxation.

Changing The Landscape

Up to 80% of displaced people are estimated to experience symptoms of trauma, but only a small fraction of that number ever receive support. RTI's vision is to guarantee the delivery of psychosocial support to refugee populations in any country and any context- through training, education and the development of flexible and innovative models that can achieve that scale. Working with other organisations, we build capacity and enhance their ability to provide better care, both for their service users and their employees. Through partnerships and advocacy, we hope to create a sea change in mental health care services for refugees.



IN 2018 OUR PROGRAMMES REACHED...

151
Parents



40
Young People
18-25

426
Children
0-6



WE RAN...

20
Workshops

187
ECCD
Sessions

15
Focus
Groups



In partnership with



BAYTNA EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY SUPPORT

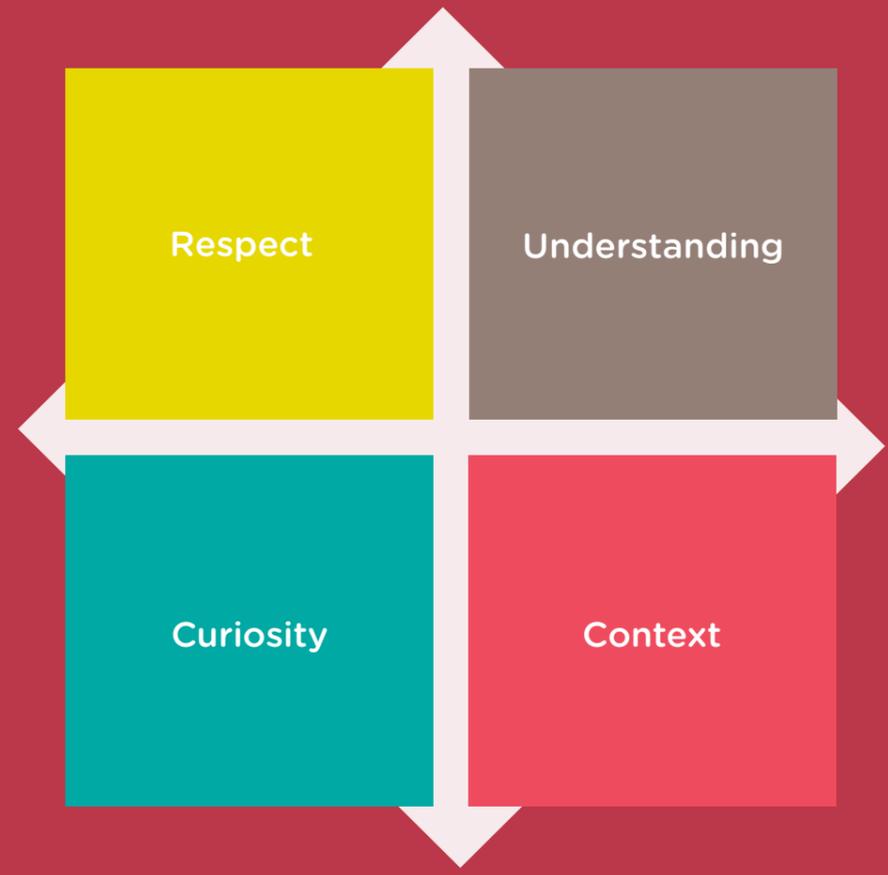
Baytna - بيتنا - Our Home

Baytna gives families with young children the tools to address traumatic experiences, build strong relationships and get essential respite from everyday life in camps

and shelters. Led by a multidisciplinary team that includes Arabic and Dari-Farsi speakers, the programme provides psychosocial support that focuses on strengthening the relationship between children and their parents.

Since its establishment in December 2016, the programme has supported 785 children and their parents. We run Baytna in partnership with **Help Refugees**.

BAYTNA CORE PRINCIPLES



Respect

We reinforce children's and parents' sense of self-worth by treating them with respect and having full regard for their feelings, desires and rights.

Understanding

Empathy and positive reinforcement help children to achieve, progress and develop a secure parental attachment.

Curiosity

We build on children's natural desire to learn and explore, which helps develop their agency.

Context

We constantly provide context through our activities and interactions. This develops a child's sense of belonging.

BAYTNA IN 2018

Expansion: The Baytna Manuals

In 2018, we realised our ambition of preparing the Baytna model for national expansion. Working with expert consultants in early childhood education and programme design, we developed the Baytna manuals, a curriculum for training future Baytna leaders at centres across Greece. The Baytna model gives aid workers at partner organisations the tools they need to give trauma-informed psychosocial support to refugees, and the systems needed for us to review and maintain the quality of that support. The model is flexible, meaning Baytna can be created in any environment, be it a community centre, a kindergarten or a refugee camp.

Training Initiatives

In 2018, we explored some of the many applications for the Baytna model. We worked in partnership with the Greek government and global leaders in Early Childhood Care to train school teachers working with refugees about psychosocial principles and trauma-informed approaches to working with children. We also trained volunteers working in a local partner centre; our training models can be adapted to give even those with prior knowledge a toolkit to improve the quality of the care they provide.

Programmes for Women and Girls

We continued to offer one-to-one counselling and psychosocial support groups for women and girls, and we introduced Body Mind, a dance and relaxation session for women. Non-verbal exercises such as movement therapy offer a powerful means to express complex emotions, address anxiety and deal with trauma through mindfulness and relaxation.

In 2018, we ran 187 Baytna sessions at a total of three community centres in Thessaloniki, supporting 426 children and their parents.

CASE STUDY: LORA'S STORY



Lora, 6, is from Syria. She joined Baytna 2 months ago together with her three brothers and sisters. When Lora first joined Baytna, she was mostly calm and happy

to engage with the other children, but sometimes she would close herself off from the rest of the group. One day, she was calmly participating in an activity with the other children

when she suddenly got up and left the room. A Baytna facilitator followed her outside and found her crying. Through her tears, she said:

“I really need to tell you something. My uncle was recently killed, and I feel bad for my father because it is his brother, and now he will be sad and crying.”

She then told us that she lost two siblings in the war, that their house was bombed. She showed the facilitator her scars and wept, saying **“blood is dripping from their bodies, I can see blood all over their bodies”**.

We listened closely to Lora and comforted her. We told

her that it's okay to be sad and cry when you lose someone you love. We then encouraged her to take some deep breaths and to think about the happy moments that she wants to treasure, and reminded her that now she is safe in Greece with other children and in a space where she will be protected - she doesn't have to worry about the bombs anymore. Lora closed her eyes, and repeated to herself,

“I want to remember the happy moments”.

She smiled again and asked to go and play with the other children.

Many children have the same memories as Lora, and they relive them at the most unexpected times.

The Baytna team supports children like Lora by building their resilience and teaching coping mechanisms that help them overcome their past and be brought back to the present.

CASE STUDY: SAFIYA'S STORY

Safiya arrived in Greece from Iraq in winter 2017 with her husband and their son Rami, 5. There were no more houses available to accommodate them, and they ended up on the street for three months,

moving between train and bus stations and some of the warmer street corners. Safiya and Rami both looked exhausted when they first came to Baytna, but Rami was excited to see all the toys and

colouring pens we had. Safiya was just happy to have a safe, warm and welcoming space where she could spend time with her son.

One day, while Rami was happily playing, Safiya suddenly started crying. She said:

“I am so happy that you are here and that I can bring my son to you,” she said. “He is very happy here. He asks about you every day and waits impatiently for Friday to come so that he can see you. Things are very difficult at home”.

The Baytna team assured Safiya they would support her. With her permission, we turned to the responsible parties and informed them of her situation. We got in touch with her husband and they received the

care and support they needed together.

Two weeks later, Safiya came to Baytna with tears in her eyes said:

“Thank you so much for helping us. Our lives have changed so much since we started receiving support. My husband has even started playing with Rami again.”

The next day Safiya's husband brought Rami to Baytna. He stayed with him for 2 hours and they happily played together and enjoyed their time. Since then Rami's father has come

with him to Baytna a few times. One time, they drew a picture together of their family playing happily outside their old house in Iraq.

War can cause a lot of frustration and anger. With a little help understanding how to manage that negative emotion it can slowly fade.

Baytna brings families together in a space where they can forget just for a little while the horrors of war and feel safe. A space where they can spend time together as a family, learn together, play together, and bond.



DINAMI YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Dinami – Δύναμη - Power

Dinami brings young refugees and Greeks together to learn, create and connect. The programme is youth led: participants select areas of interest and gain knowledge and skills through project-based learning. In parallel, the RTI team provides specialist coaching in essential life skills, and offers

psychosocial support focused on fostering agency, building confidence and developing support networks. Our goal is long-term support, both through continued access to our expert team, and the opportunity to benefit from a diverse community of friends with shared goals and interests. We started Dinami in

response to a huge demand for psychosocial support, education and work experience from young people 18-26, who remain one of the most underserved age groups. Without opportunities for employment, education or social activities, they are particularly prone to discrimination, social isolation, and exploitation.

Developing The Programme

From December 2017 to June 2018, we ran and managed a youth shelter with a local partner as a 6-month pilot project.

The programme gave 9 unaccompanied young male adults safe accommodation and a comprehensive programme of support that included one-to-one counselling, help developing educational and career goals, and training in basic life skills. At completion, all the young men were in education or employment or attending classes in local community centres. All participants reported better emotional wellbeing.

Working in a shelter limited the number and diversity of young people that could benefit, so we conducted further research and community engagement, and re-designed the programme to reach more people. By creating an inclusive learning environment that values trust and teamwork we can provide useful skills, strengthen support networks and foster positive attitudes that help build brighter futures for the local youth community.

In 2019, we will work with experts in programme design to prepare Dinami for scale and replication. As with Baytna, we want to make Dinami available all over Greece.

DINAMI IN 2018

Independent Projects

Dinami alumni have already started independent projects. One group submitted an application to UNHCR for an advocacy project on youth protection, and another is using the skills learnt on our course to produce their own film.

In 2018, Dinami supported 40 young people and reached a further 116 people through outreach, events and focus groups.

Empowering Young People

Feedback from our courses has been overwhelmingly positive. All participants reported gaining confidence, making friends and learning useful skills, and many are keen to participate in future courses. We have begun to create a resilient Dinami youth community that we hope will inspire others to pursue their goals of further education and employment.

Dinami Trainee Scheme

Starting in September 2018, RTI welcomed its first of two paid, part-time trainees. For 6 months, trainees work closely with the project lead to coordinate activities for participants, assist in running focus groups and maintain relationships with Dinami alumni. Besides giving useful work experience and an opportunity to improve language skills in Greek and English, the trainee scheme teaches about community engagement, organisational management and leadership. Through empowering young people in Greece, we hope to build local capacity and resilience both for Greeks and refugees.



CASE STUDY: FILM MAKING COURSE



In October 2018, we ran a film-making course in response to high demand from the local youth community. Over four weeks, 12 participants worked with a professional filmmaker to produce, shoot and edit two short films and organise

two public screenings at the Thessaloniki Film Festival. The teaching was complemented by a series of workshops on communication skills, trust and teamwork. We maintained a 100% retention record, and all reported that they had

learned new skills and enjoyed themselves. The film screenings were attended by over 100 people, including refugees, host community members and representatives from humanitarian organisations.

Dehab, 19

“My name is Dehab and I come from Eritrea. When I first came I had no experience and I didn’t know anything about cameras or filming. But coming here I have learnt a lot of things. It was really helpful. Of course at the beginning it was difficult because it was my first time, but after a while it was really nice.”

“I am really, really happy about this project and I am very proud of myself, because from zero, from nothing...to something! I cannot explain how proud I am of myself. I also made friends with the people in my group and I am really happy with this as well. In life, wherever you go, it’s really

nice to have friends. They are all very nice and I will keep in touch with them. I am really happy for the opportunity that RTI prepared for us.”



CASE STUDY: BAGHER, RTI TRAINEE

Bagher, 19, from Afghanistan, joined the RTI team in Autumn 2018 as a Youth Leadership Trainee

When my brother and I arrived in Greece three and a half years ago we did not have any accommodation at first, and for our first 5 months in Thessaloniki we lived in a squat that was an abandoned orphanage. Things got a lot better when a Greek NGO found space for us in a shelter for unaccompanied minors

and we started to make new friends.

I first heard about RTI in 2017 when I turned 18 and I had to leave the minors' shelter. I moved into the RTI/Ethos young adults integration programme, where I was provided with safe accommodation and the opportunity to continue my education and develop social skills. When the opportunity to apply as a volunteer came up, with the chance of becoming

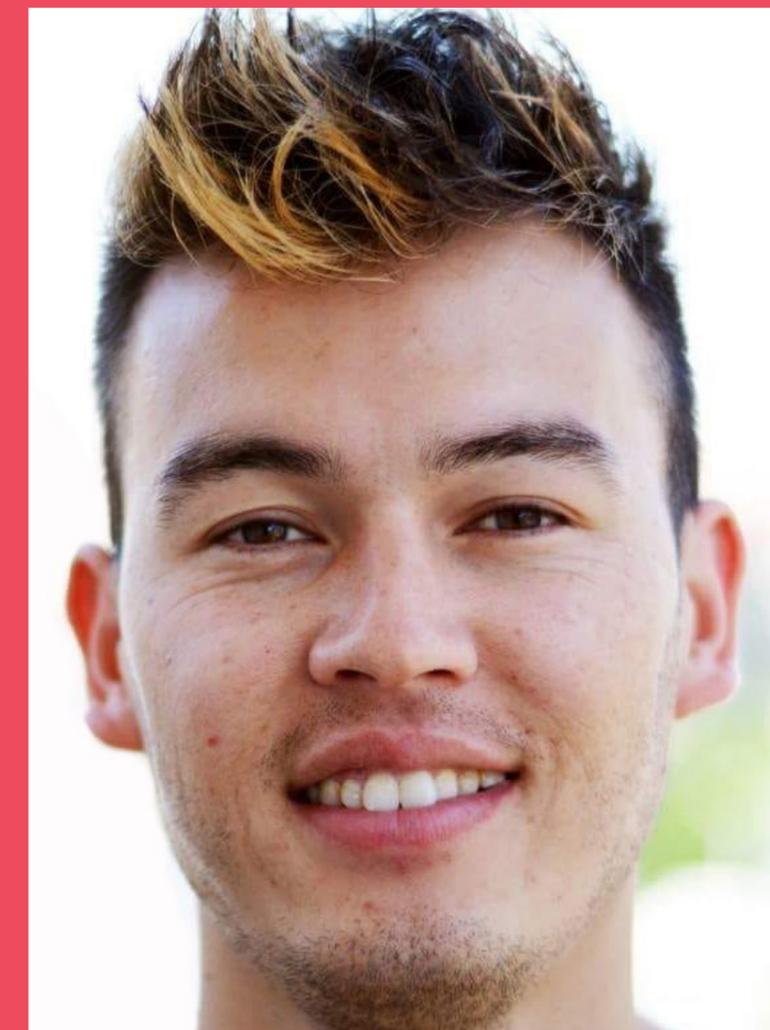
a part-time trainee, I was very excited to apply. It is my first job in Greece.

Working as a trainee at RTI I have the opportunity to improve my Greek and my English, and I am learning to communicate professionally with different actors and organisations. I have also learnt that I am good at talking and sharing my ideas in a group.

We recently ran a film-making course for Greek and migrant youth. My role was to

document the project and film some of the presentations. I learnt a lot more about using the camera, and we had a professional filmmaker in the office, which was really good, since my dream is to be a photographer and make documentaries.

I hope that the experience I gain at RTI will enable me to run my own project here in Thessaloniki.



CAPACITY BUILDING

RTI has become an innovator in psychosocial support for refugees. Our goal is to take those innovations to other actors. By partnering with local and national government, our hope is that trauma-informed practice and psychosocial support will one day become globally available to refugees.

Working with Humanitarians and Educators

In 2018, our team provided training in trauma-informed psychosocial support to volunteers, aid workers

and teachers in Athens, Thessaloniki and Kilkis. We also invited specialists to conduct workshops in conflict resolution and safeguarding, helping to ensure high-quality care and professionalism among those who serve refugees.

We also provided resilience training and psychosocial support to humanitarians, in partnership with Help Refugees. Working in poorly resourced, high-stress environments involves a heightened risk of burnout and secondary trauma. Knowing how to look out for

yourself and those around you can prevent that from happening. In 2018, we ran group debriefing sessions and self-care workshops to support a total of 112 aid workers and volunteers.

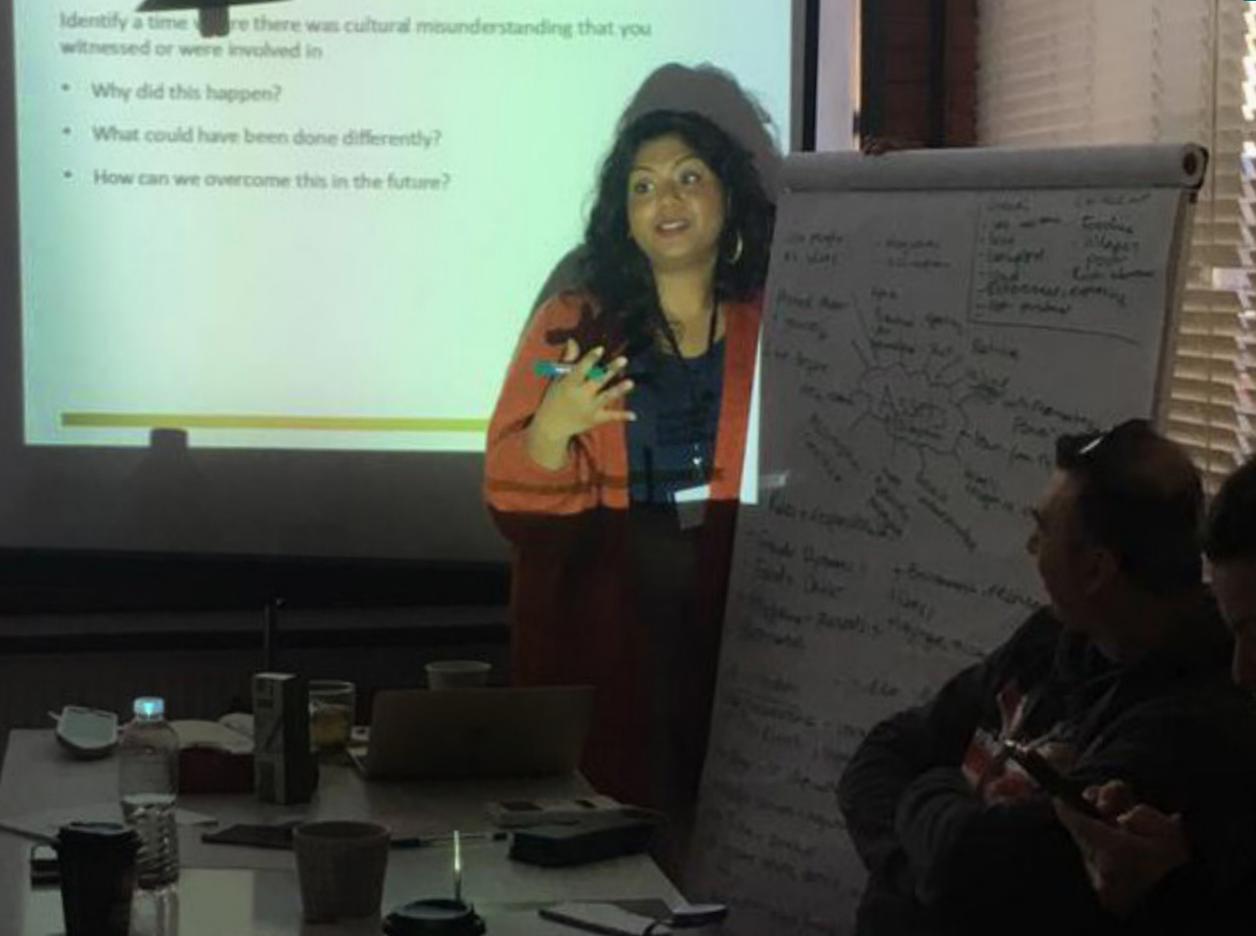
Working with Organisations

RTI is now experienced in the specific demands of delivering psychosocial support in the context of the refugee crisis in Greece. In 2018, we began putting that experience into training models that build the capacity of other organisations.

We know from our own practice and from organisations that we work with that staff working with refugees and in emergency settings face many challenges. Often under immense pressure, organisations can struggle to provide care in the most efficient and effective ways, as they are continually having to meet the demands of the context. We also know one size does not fit all and that different solutions work for different organisations.



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY OF CARE AT OMNES



Omnes is a Greek volunteer organisation that prioritises psychosocial wellbeing and long-term inclusion for vulnerable populations. The organisation provides housing

for 571 people pending their request for international protection. Starting in Summer 2018, we worked closely with Omnes to assess what trainings would be complementary to

their existing services and designed a three-month programme of collaboration, through in-depth consultations with staff members and a series of focus groups.

Based on our diagnostic exercise, we determined that Omnes would benefit from:

- A collaborative and internally-led review of staff care and self-care policies.
- Training in identity-informed practice addressing unconscious bias and the impact of the power dynamic inherent in working with vulnerable populations.
- Assistance in conducting specific focus group discussions with programme service users.
- Guidance on addressing specific psychosocial support concerns and general enhancement of psychosocial support strategy.

Responses/Feedback

“I really liked talking about identity. I learned that you need to take a second look when you are working with people from different cultures.”

“Before RTI came we had not run focus groups for men and fathers, as most of refugee services centre on provision for women and children. One of the fathers from the group approached me after one of the groups and said, ‘this is the first time that anyone has asked us men about how we feel. We also have a lot of concerns for our children and we appreciate feeling that we are being listened to.’”



RECOGNITION

In 2018, we were delighted to be recognised internationally for some of our achievements over the past two and a half years. Here are a few of our highlights:

Obama Foundation

Our Director, Zarlisht Halaimzai, became an inaugural Fellow of the Obama Foundation. Selected from more than 20,000 applicants from 191 countries, Zarlisht joined the two-year programme, which brings together 20 leaders representing 11 countries around the world who are creating transformational change on many of the world's most pressing problems.

UN Global Education Monitoring Report 2019

Baytna was featured by UNESCO and the Global Education Monitoring Report 2019. The UN GEM Report 2019, which focuses on migration and displacement, identified the Baytna programme for its impactful and innovative approach to education, and its potential to be scaled up and adapted to multiple and varied settings.

Nurturing Care Framework

The Nurturing Care Framework has been developed by the World Health Organisation, Unicef and the World Bank, among others, to support the healthy development of children through good health, nutrition, security, early learning and responsive care. The framework uses Baytna as a model of good practice, giving particular attention to our work on the specific social and emotional needs of displaced families.

SPREADING OUR MESSAGE

Our vision is to transform social and emotional support for refugees all over the world. In 2018, we were fortunate enough to introduce our programmes to global changemakers and supporters of innovation in mental health.

Global Annual Zero to Three Conference

We presented Baytna at the Annual Global Zero to Three conference in Denver, Colorado. Zero to Three is a global thought leader on early childhood care.

King's Think Tank

We were invited to contribute to a panel discussion on improving migrant access to mental health care organised by King's Think Tank at King's College, London

KCL STAR

Student Action for Refugees (STAR) is a UK-wide body of students that advocate for the rights of refugees both nationally and globally. We presented RTI to STAR at King's College, London.

A Fresh Narrative for Refugees

We continually work to lift the voices of the people we work with. In 2018, we have worked with writers and filmmakers to tell stories that shed light on the individuals caught up in the crisis- not stories of suffering and victims, but stories that highlight the incredible bravery, resilience and hope of people trying to build new lives for themselves and their families.



OUR PARTNERS

We are proud to collaborate with a diverse network of partners, from local grassroots organisations to government ministries and global thought leaders in early childhood care and mental health service provision for people on the move. In 2018, we have worked with:

- Help Refugees
- Open Society Foundations
- International Step by Step Association
- Moving Minds Alliance
- InterVolve
- Alkyone Refugee Day Centre
- Omnes Voluntary Association
- United Societies of Balkans
- Aniko
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Caritas Hellas
- Headspace
- Thessaloniki International Film Festival
- Greek Ministry of Educational Policy

GET INVOLVED

Become a Friend of RTI

Regular donations from our friends make-a huge difference. For as little as £25 per month, you can join one of our Giving Circles. In return, we will give you regular updates from team members on how your donations are changing the lives of the people we help. For more information, please see our website or contact info@refugeetrauma.org

Fundraise

RTI relies on enthusiastic people who really care about the refugee crisis to fundraise for us by running events, getting sponsored, or just asking for donations from their friends. As a small charity with grassroots values and very low overheads, you can guarantee that the money you raise is going to where it is really needed.

Campaign

Become an advocate for refugees! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to help spread our message further. We are always looking for people with experience and knowledge of issues affecting refugees to collaborate with on advocacy campaigns. Please stay tuned to our social media for updates on upcoming campaigns and how you can help.



Refugee Trauma Initiative

www.refugeetrauma.org

www.facebook.com/RefugeeTrauma

www.twitter.com/RefugeeTraumaUK

www.instagram.com/refugeetrauma

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