

Ciyako

ADVENTURE THERAPY PROPOSAL



ACROSS

The Nations



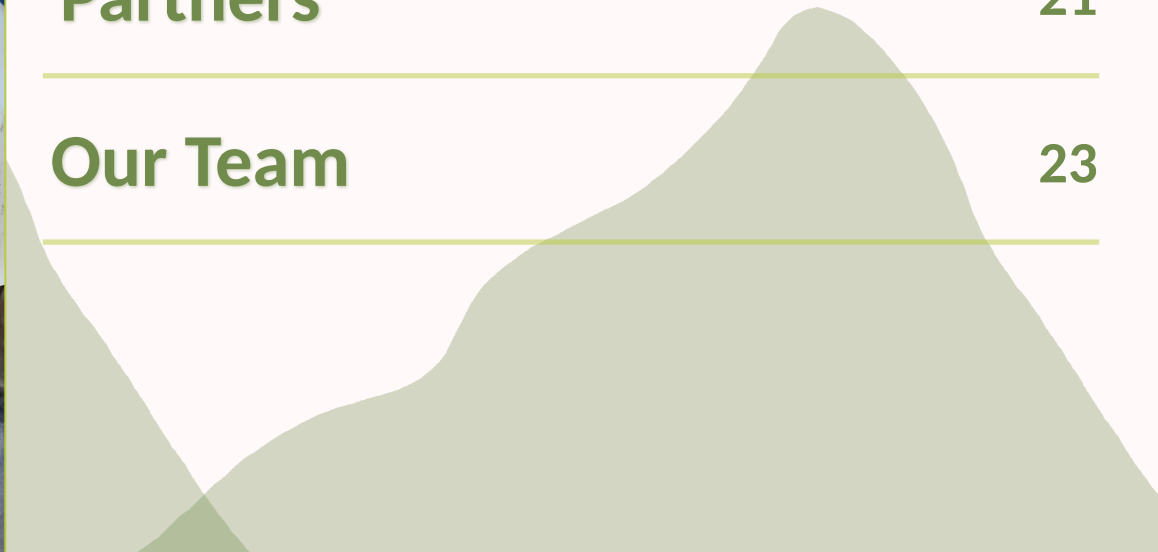
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HOMEGROWN SOLUTIONS

We believe in a world that welcomes and values minoritised communities.


WHO ARE WE?

Across The Nations is a charity that partners with local organisations to develop **innovative** and **sustainable** programmes **promoting the well-being of marginalised communities.**


AtN was formed to fill a **much needed gap** in the mental well-being sphere, in places where it continues to be stigmatised, and **creative solutions are needed.**




THE NEED




Displaced people need hope as much as anyone else, however, their starting point is much further back than that of your typical host community member.



There is no single approach that is going to fix the 'problem', and a multi-layered approach is needed to help build hope for those affected by a crisis and displacement.



This project aims to build an Adventure Programme while documenting learning to show the impact of adventure therapy on mental health and well-being in humanitarian and development contexts.



It aims to show that Adventure Therapy can be part of a suite of interventions that can positively impart hope in young displaced people.



THE NEED

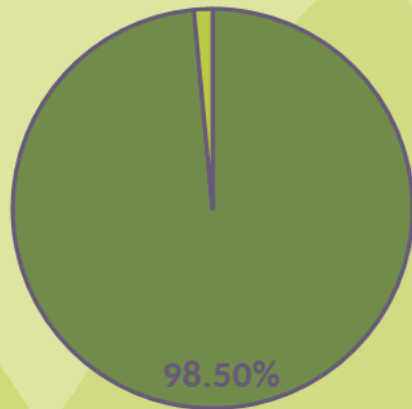
In Kurdistan we work among young displaced people from Syrian and Iraqi backgrounds.

The majority of these youth have experienced a **traumatic** event during their **displacement**, with many of them experiencing both **PTSD** and **depression**.

Of the people we work with:

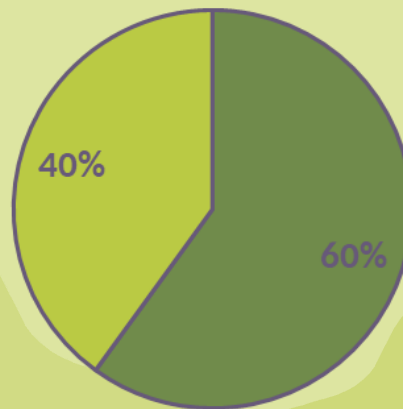


Have experienced at least one traumatic event



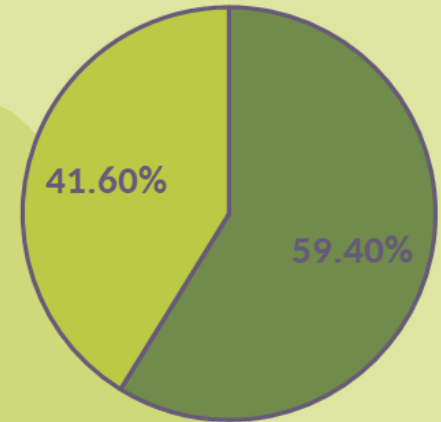
■ Yes ■ No

Experience PTSD Symptoms



■ Yes ■ No

Experience Symptoms of Depression



■ Yes ■ No



OUR APPROACH

We strive to understand and respect the diversity of cultures and circumstances we work with.

FILLING THE GAP

As a people-led organisation, we respond to the needs of the communities as voiced by those we work with, and the local organisations we partner with.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Sustainability is at the core of everything we do, with the ultimate goal of creating local programmes in response to local issues led by local teams.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

By working with existing local organisations, we aim to implement best practice by providing innovative solutions rather than 're-creating the wheel'.

By working in **partnership** with other organisations, Across The Nations has developed extremely **cost-effective** programmes.

Currently, the majority of those involved give their time and resources freely, including experts in the field, **with everyone working towards the same goal of turning problems into solutions.**

OUR SOLUTIONS

ART THERAPY

We implemented this practice in the Middle East for the first time in partnership with STEP, a charity working in the field of child protection.

Our Art Therapist has provided professional therapeutic support for children and their families in the Arbat refugee camp.

ADVENTURE THERAPY

Another pioneering initiative in the region, The Çiyako programme promotes accessibility to the wellbeing benefits of outdoor activities.

Our Mountain Instructor has been developing outdoor activity programmes for displaced people since 2017.

HEM.HEALTH

This healthcare initiative connects health and education mentors with local practitioners to effectively address identified local challenges.

HEM.Health's goal is to build holistic healthcare systems for marginalised communities by building these partnerships.

OUR IMPACT



180

Young people on the Çiyako Programme were trained in climbing essentials.



3

Organisations were facilitated with relationships and HEM. Health mentors.



2032

Therapeutic art sessions were held for displaced people by our Art Therapist.

OUR IMPACT

HEM.HEALTH

HEM.Health has been instrumental in connecting me with several people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, facilitating cross-cultural collaboration and community-engaged scholarship.

- Sophie Brown
PhD Student

We look forward to ongoing support, and really appreciate your work and projects in KRI.

- Dr Zamdar Karim
Head of Sulaymaniyah Mental Health Unit



ART THERAPY

*I love this space, and I love painting. That's why I come here, to paint what I like. **

*This place is beautiful and has lots of colours, so I can paint whatever I like. **

*** Names removed in compliance with Safeguarding Policy*

OUR IMPACT

ÇIYAKO PROGRAMME

I've never seen or heard of anyone doing an activity like this in Iraq.

Many of the children (on the programme) face horrible circumstances, even in the home. All of them are part of the UN child protection system, and some of them have additional needs.

Since the activity started, I've seen such progress in the children's behaviour, in a really positive way.

- Ahmed Akram
Child Support Worker

We've seen kids reconnecting with nature, overcoming their fears and rebuilding their confidence in the mountains.

They have celebrated their success with things they were previously struggling with, academically or with "fitting in".

Watching how these activities transform some of these young people lives is inspiring.

- Matthew Low
Programme Supervisor

The Çiyako Programme



Since 2017, Across The Nations has been delivering rock-climbing programmes in partnership with STEP in the Kurdish Region of Iraq.

In this time, we have observed positive therapeutic benefits for the young Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee participants.

These observations have encouraged us to adapt the project into an Adventure Therapy programme.

This will more intentionally promote the therapeutic benefits, and form the basis for research that aims to provide evidence of its impact.

At the start, I had a phobia of climbing and heights. I faced it, I beat it, and now I teach it to others.

- Jwan Fathi

Climbing Apprentice

'Çîyako' has a profound meaning in Syrian Kurdish. It expresses the liberating release of emotions through the act of 'calling out to the mountain'. Çîya means mountain, and 'ko' to call. This expression has several meanings in the region, such as:

- When a person needs to speak loudly, freely and without fear because of an experience of injustice or hardship
- When a person contemplates nature, and derives strength from the mountain, feeling psychologically supported
- When a person reproaches the mountain, needing it to provide more help and support

*We wish to emulate the **freedom** of expressing oneself and one's feelings **without limitations** through the **healing powers** of the mountains and Adventure Therapy.*





We aim to develop the **first** Adventure Therapy Team in the Middle East.

OUR AIMS

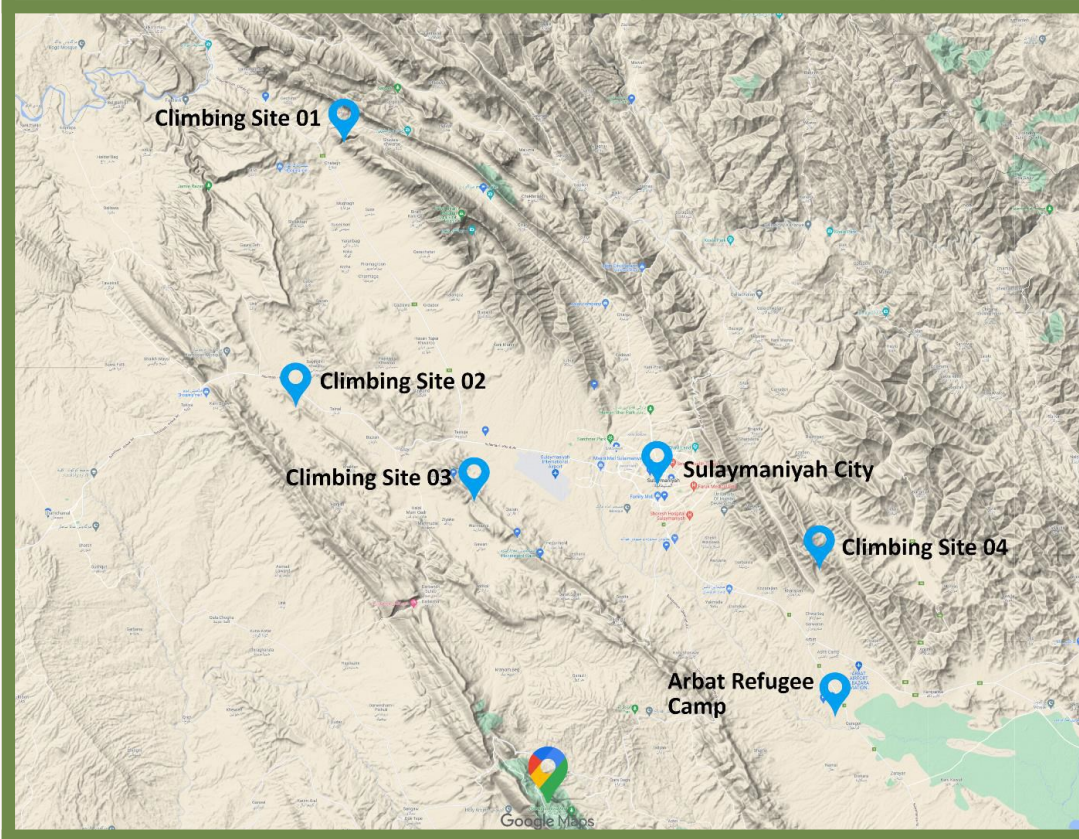
Building on the work that we have already achieved, we intend to expand our provision of outdoor activities and therapeutic support.

Outdoor Activities have been used for many years in an Adventure Therapy context, with **significant** research showing that it consistently **positively impacts participants**, alleviating symptoms of anxiety, anger, PTSD, and depression, to name a few.

Local outdoor instructors and mental health experts will form the multi-disciplinary team and operate under the direction of a professional mountain instructor.

Alongside rock climbing, other activities will be developed to provide **accessible opportunities for therapeutic support for all participants.**

WHERE ARE WE?



In the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI), nestled in between ridges of the Zagros Mountains, and near the city of Sulaymaniyah, we have been operating out of the Arbat Refugee Camp since 2017. We have developed numerous sites and there is potential for many more.



Iraq

NbA2106210393

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THE PROGRAMME

We have undertaken significant endeavours to establish this climbing project in KRI, including:

- Training staff
- Locating suitable climbing sites
- Developing appropriate risk management procedures

We are recognised by the Kurdish authorities, and have permission to operate in the region.

We work mainly with displaced young people, with over 50% of participants being female, and have also worked with the local visually impaired community.

Currently, we are collaborating with the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation to develop a recognised award scheme for the region.

Gain an insight into our activities through the YouTube videos produced by our partner STEP.



THE BENEFITS



Promotion of wellbeing and mental health



Decrease in symptoms of trauma



Increased social cohesion between different communities



Decrease in vulnerability to extreme groups



Increased integration into professional life



Decrease in drop out rates in education

THE RESEARCH

During the course of the programme, we will be researching the efficacy of the activities and therapeutic support by analysing the impact on the participants.

This research will be overseen by Carmarthen University as part of a PhD program.

Ultimately the research aims to show:

- How to adapt activities to be culturally appropriate
- What the best evaluation methods are to effectively capture the desired data
- What methods are best to use in the therapeutic processes
- Training methods for outdoor activities alongside psychological support for young people
- How to deliver Adventure Therapy activities to meet the desired outcomes

*We aim to show that Adventure Therapy is a **cost effective** way to provide support for displaced people in **humanitarian** and **development contexts**.*



THE TRAINING

We will be working with the International Mountaineering Federation to establish recognised climbing qualifications.

This will help in the process of localisation, reducing, or ideally eliminating, the need of external intervention. More widely, it will help develop the outdoor industry in the region.

We will also be working closely with the local government's Mental Health Unit to train staff working with the Adventure Therapy team.

Our aim is to show that this is effective, cost-effective, sustainable and reproducible project, hoping to see similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

*We understand the importance of sustainable wellbeing programmes, especially with **displaced participants involved**.*



THE ASK

None of the Çiyako Project's achievements would be possible without the support of our partners and voluntary team.

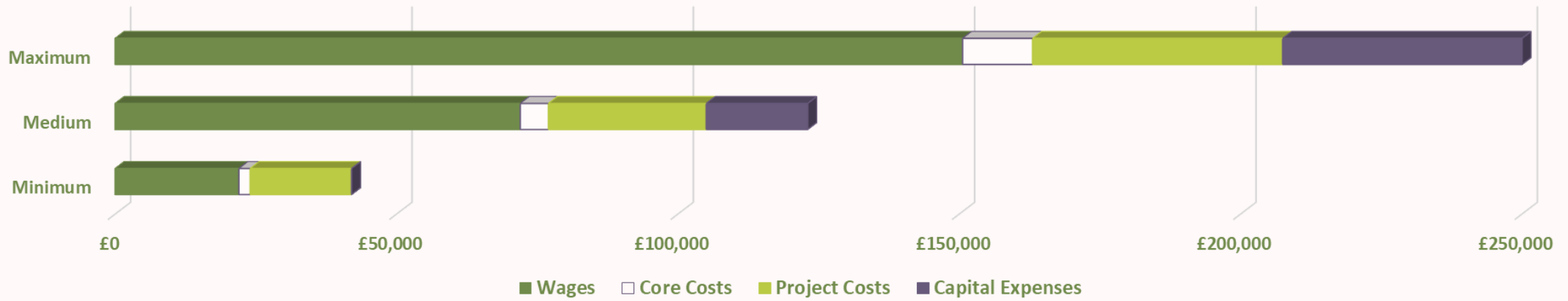
In order to continue this program, however, we need funding to sustainably deliver and grow the programme's activities, and continue promoting the wellbeing of the displaced youth we work with.

We have broken down the costs of the programme ranging from a minimalist approach to keep the current programme going, to the amount we would need to deliver it in its fullest form - delivering Adventure Therapy to Internally Displaced People and refugees in the region with a fully equipped team to meet their needs.



THE ASK

Çiyako Annual Budget



£250,000

Per annum is what we need to fund all Adventure Therapy activities, including wages for Outdoor staff, Mental Health professionals, equipment, research, and capital expenses such as climbing walls and vehicles.

Millennium Relief and Development Services is an international humanitarian organization based in the United States.



“We are committed to providing intelligent compassion to people in complex situations and have been active in the Kurdish region of Iraq since 1998.

“As an organization we acknowledge that those impacted by war suffer not only material loss and physical trauma but emotional trauma as well.”

MRDS is honored to partner with STEP and Across the Nations on the Çiyako project as we seek to provide a supportive and encouraging environment for the children impacted by the war against IS to heal from the emotional trauma they have suffered.

STEP is a British registered charity that has worked in Iraq since 2001, specialising in working with vulnerable children.

STEP implements projects focused on providing child protection interventions and running safe spaces where children and teenagers can learn, develop, and receive psychosocial support.



STEP was the **catalyst** and **incubator** for this whole project.

With support from all levels of the organisation, from the Country Director through to those working directly with displaced people, this project has grown into what it is today - *a meaningful wellbeing intervention for displaced people.*

Our Project Supervisor, Matthew Low, is a UK-qualified Outdoor Instructor.

He ran an outdoor adventure business in Morocco for 20 years, and founded Across the Nations in the late 90s as a grassroots project responding to community needs.

He moved to the Kurdish Region of Iraq in 2017 to work in partnership with STEP to build an outdoor activity programme for young refugees and IDPs, which has now become the Çiyako Adventure Therapy programme.

Matt is passionate about demonstrating the benefits of the outdoors, and increasing accessibility to it for all, especially those most in need.



Project Supervisor

Matthew Low

Co-Founder of STEP, Rahem, is the Director of a child friendly safe space drop in centre for working children, and President of the entity that runs the activities

Rahem had experienced child labour himself, as a Peshmerga soldier in the 1980's, heavily involved in the Kurdish struggle for freedom from Saddam Hussein's regime.

He has become father and grandfather to hundreds of displaced children and now adults that have passed through the Drop in Centre over the years.

Rahem uses his lived experience to encourage children and parents to learn skills that will help them escape cyclical poverty.



Rahem Amin

Project Lead in Kurdistan

Bryony founded HEM.Health in 2014 with a small group of healthcare professionals to support local clinicians in Jordan.

She has 25 years working in the Third Sector, primarily in the UK and the Middle East, now working as a Social Researcher alongside her work with HEM.Health.

Bryony's main role with HEM.Health is networking to facilitate partnerships between healthcare professionals specialising in suicide prevention and person-centred care within clinical health settings.

Passionate about levelling the playing field for all, Bryony uses these skills in her everyday life as well, matching people with opportunities for growth in many avenues of life.



Bryony Wilson

HEM.Health Lead

Gail is an HCPC registered Art Therapist and Psychosocial Consultant in the UK.

She worked for many years as a teacher, specialising in work with children with additional educational needs.

Gail is the founder of the Redouane Centre, the first school for children with additional needs in Marrakesh in 2006.

Passionate about good mental health care, she undertook training to change her career in 2017, and worked as an Art Therapist and Psychosocial Consultant with Across the Nations in partnership with STEP until 2022.

Now, she is searching for opportunities to serve the refugee community in Wales.



Gail Low

Art Therapist

As a social worker, Hero has worked in the IDP camp near Sulaymaniyah providing psychosocial support for children and young people, with a particular focus on young girls.

She has worked with Arabs, Kurds and Yazidis and is now working in the Arbat Refugee Camp.

She continues to provide support for children and supervises a small team of Syrian Refugee volunteers providing after school academic and language support to young children and adolescents.

As our Programme Manager, Hero has played a key role in encouraging female participation in the climbing program. She has been involved in the project since the beginning and, alongside her many other responsibilities, oversees our two apprentices.



Hero Mohamed Salih

Programme Manager

Sherwan provides psychosocial support to IDPs and refugees in Kurdistan, and has instigated a number of innovative training programs for displaced people, and is currently working on a life skills project.

He believes in the power of education in promoting peace and justice to his country, Syria, and other countries affected by conflict.

His experience is that young people play an important role in writing humanity's history.

Sherwan has been a part of the Çiyako team from the start, and has been instrumental in its development. He is currently investigating the impact of learning processes on the brain, and is convinced that outdoor activities have a key role to play in stimulating learning.



Sherwan Ibrahim

Programme Volunteer

At the start, I had a phobia of climbing and heights. I faced it, I beat it, and now I teach it to others.

Jwan's first trip out with the Çiyako programme was as a beneficiary in 2019, where he fell in love with the outdoors.

Now, he is learning how to manage groups of young people as our Apprentice Outdoor Instructor.

War drove Jwan and his family to leave their home in Syria, eventually landing in the Arbat Refugee Camp, where he became his family's main breadwinner at only 16 years old.

Jwan brings fun and joy to all of the outdoor trips and activities, as well as working hard towards the goal of becoming a professional Outdoor Instructor.



Jwan Fathi

Apprentice Outdoor Instructor



After my first climb, I cried with joy. I started to say that nothing in life was too difficult.

Noor came to the Arbat Refugee Camp at 11 years old from Qamishli in Syria, leaving her friends and family to join her father and escape the war.

Noor started her apprenticeship with the Çiyako Team in 2022 and now trains the girls that participate in the programme.

Noor experienced a breakthrough moment during her first climb after having pushed past her fear of heights and reached the top of the mountain.

She is excited to impart the feelings of power and strength she gained to other young girls with the skills she's learning.



Noor Anwar Mohammad

Apprentice Outdoor Instructor

Contact us



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