

IL BAOBAB DELL'ACCOGLIENZA E DELL'INTEGRAZIONE / The welcoming baobab of integration



BAOBAB COMMUNITY LUNCH
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Location

6500 Bellinzona (canton Ticino)

Country

Switzerland

Short summarizing description

Through an interdisciplinary and multi-sectorial work, the Babobab Association favors on one hand the integration of migrants in the Bellinzona region thanks to a socio-cultural and therapeutic work and, on the other hand, brings the local population closer to the reality of migrants through community lunches, word groups for young Ticinese and migrants, cultural events, information and fundraising dinners, participation in fairs, conferences.

Key Terms

WELCOMING ATTITUDE, integration, inclusion, equality, reciprocity

Context and background, Which problems/challenges does your measure try to solve/cope with?

Babobab intervenes in favor of migrant families in Ticino (with permission N or F) arriving from the war zones of the Middle East and Africa, mainly Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia. In Bellinzona, unfortunately, the necessary resources are lacking to effectively help these families who live in precariousness and loneliness due to different causes: difficulties related to language and consequent inaccessibility to state services and care, high risk of neglect of children and psychological injuries due to war traumas that are transformed, very often in psychiatric symptoms.

Furthermore, in Switzerland, the cost of interpreters is not recognized by health insurance companies. This greatly limits the use of psychotherapy for migrants with complex traumas. Specialist literature makes it clear that if these people are not treated, they can hardly learn the language, follow their children by encouraging their academic performance and integration.

Young mothers with young children do not have the right to attend Italian courses paid by the canton and therefore their insertion, without learning the language, is delayed.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

- Give stability, trust and hope to asylum seekers, shaping a welcoming attitude
- Allowing a re-elaboration of traumas due to war and exile with the help of interpreters
- Propose two Italian courses per week (in groups and individuals) especially for mothers
- Increase the awareness about migration issues in the local population through socialization and events that give the chance to stay together, know each other
- Create a relationship between the Babobab Association and its target groups: we offer services and migrants prepare community meals, catering and offer help for cultural events and fundraising.
- Do intense and continuous networking activities with public and private bodies in the interest of patients, so that they know that we exist in order to become a reference point and make real prevention.

Who are the main target groups and beneficiaries of your measure?

Asylum seekers (F or N permit) women, men and children. Ticinese teenagers with social and psychological difficulties. Local population, we seek to raise the awareness through our initiatives.

Which actions have already been implemented and which results have been achieved so far?

We have completed the pilot project "Améliorer l'accès à la psychothérapie pour les personnes traumatisées de guerre" (Improving access to psychotherapy for war-related traumatized people) thanks to the financial support for interpreters offered by the Secretariat of Migration (SEM). This success gave us great satisfaction and helped the most suffering migrants to elaborate their traumatic experiences and find a little serenity, becoming more receptive to learning the Italian language, more open to participation in events addressed to them and more capable of fulfilling their role as parents.

Spreading our work, through press and television, public events and above all through the networking activities with the institutions present on the territory has allowed us to build a positive reputation and raise the awareness in the local population to such a point that we have become a reference for the various institutions operating in the Canton: Soccorso Operaio (SOS) that deals with asylum seekers, ARP, UAP, schools, the Midwives Association of the Bellinzona region.

We can cite examples of families who have managed to recover from depression and isolation thanks to the Babobab network: mother-child socialization in the morning from Monday to Thursday, community lunches, sewing workshops, gym classes, Italian courses, groups speech for young men (migrants and natives), psychotherapy sessions, home care for mothers, support for school homework, employment program, (Syrian family of H.K., Syrian family of I.M., young Eritrean mother G.B.M., among others)

Which were the main problems and challenges you were/are facing when implementing the project and how did/do you (try to) overcome them?

Migrant men are often more reluctant to seek help and therefore to be integrated. They suffer in silence because of war-related traumas, lack of cultural references, the loss of their social status in the host society and because of the fact that their wives / partners / daughters integrate more easily. In fact, through pregnancy, the needs of the children and the monitoring services offered by the schools, women are more "visible" and more ready to be helped. Our goal was to bring men out of isolation, organizing small conversation groups and occasions for socialization organizing for examples football matches, etc.

All the activities of Baobab are free of charge (apart from psychotherapy). Finding funds to financially support our projects and community interpreters is a big challenge.

We introduce the migratory reality in Ticino, organizing events and encouraging the encounter between natives and migrants.

Link to website

<http://www.cooperativabaobab.ch>

Starting date

2017-02-01

Duration

22 months

Regional scale

2 - small region (some municipalities, a mountain valley etc.)

Contact person

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Category 1, Managing social change

The multidisciplinary work and the networking activities have allowed us to intervene effectively in the moments of crisis for asylum seekers, to favor new ties in favor of their families and often to avoid the worst (hospitalizations, acts of violence, more severe depressions, sending children to institutions for minors). Baobab socializing mornings represent a very popular meeting point for users and a way for us to monitor their psychological state of health. Italian courses (in groups and private, peer to peer), sewing workshops, gymnastics courses, community meals, meetings for pregnant mothers or small children, social counseling, conversation groups for young natives and migrants have helped to fill their spare time with worthy and interesting activities, while waiting for the decision regarding their future. In the event of great psychological distress, we have promoted some sessions of psycho-therapy with interpreters who have favored the elaboration of traumas and greater serenity: a necessary basis for language learning and participation in events that interest them. But above all, this has favored a better atmosphere in the family, with positive consequences on the children's academic performance.

In some cases, after having worked on this plan, we have been able to offer an employment program to some asylum seekers with great satisfaction on both sides.

We have organized some public events to promote knowledge about the situation of migrants living in Ticino:

Four Dinners - fundraising at the Baobab Association, to raise awareness about our work and the people who benefit from these projects.

June 2017, evening event with Syrian dinner and guided tour in Monte Carasso of the Syrian war exhibition "Resistenze", by journalist Gianluca Grossi in collaboration with SpazioReale. The dinner catering was made by a Babobab interpreter, who was helped by some asylum seekers. A high number of the Ticino population participated in the event and was able to meet the Syrian victims who had fled the war personally.

July 2017, special recognition by the ArgeAlp commission for our commitment to integration and hospitality, as the only project awarded in Ticino out of 17 that competed. (see IL Quotidiano, 2 July 2017, RSI)

September 2017, *Tim en Voyage* concert at the Woodstock venue in Arbedo

September 2017, in collaboration with the Amilcare Foundation and the Cantonal Family and Youth Office, we organized a training session on psychosocial suffering with our psychiatrist Jean Furtos.

Several interventions in RSI programs and newspaper articles, in which we were had the chance to spread the work of the Baobab Association and talk about our activities to raise public awareness.

Further Information



DINNER AND GUIDED TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION "RESISTENZE"

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