

# Lesvos 2020

## annual report

Because access to clean water, good sanitation and shelter is vital for everyone.





**2020: A new decade, with brand new challenges, new norms and daily realities and a new camp on Lesbos, Greece.**

# 2020: A year that challenged us all

This year has been notorious across the globe for its numerous struggles, quarantines and lockdowns; as the entire world faced the Covid-19 pandemic. Watershed, much like the rest of the world, has had to adapt to this new reality, in the midst of a highly charged political microclimate on Lesvos which presented us with a whole host of challenges.



At the beginning of 2020, we were still coming to terms with the happenings of the latter half of 2019; which included the extreme overpopulation of Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). In January, the population dipped just below 20,000 people living in a camp with an infrastructure built for 3,000. Electricity and water shortages were commonplace, shelters sprawled even further into the surrounding olive groves, living conditions were severely cramped and the WASH facilities were simply insufficient.

Much like the capacity of the camp, the people of Lesvos were also at breaking point, resulting in a general sense of animosity felt towards migrants, NGO staff and international volunteers. A small group of extremists decided to act upon this sentiment and there were localised attacks, defining February as a period with a hostile environment and high alert security measures. However, global news was now focussed on the emerging pandemic, which acted like a sedative to the local tensions, as people were told to stay at home. Despite a few local cases in the initial breakout phase, Lesvos, and more generally Greece, fared well through the first lockdown thanks to prompt government action; starting on March 22nd.



For the residents of the RIC, a vulnerable demographic who had already endured many hardships, Moria, like all other refugee hosting facilities in Greece, was placed in a precautionary quarantine prior to the national lockdown, this continued after restrictions to the general public were lifted. A predefined number of people were able to leave the camp on a daily basis, meaning that some residents, particularly women and children, didn't leave the confines of the camp for months on end. In this context, it cannot be understated how fortunate we were to have continuous access to the camp as "critical workers." Our technicians were able to maintain the WASH facilities and the sewage network at a time when personal hygiene was more



important than ever. Nevertheless, we witnessed the psychological strain caused by the constant lockdown and at times elevated tensions erupted into outbreaks of violence. Contrastingly, there were also self-organised initiatives among camp residents, and Watershed formalised working relationships with community volunteers for the first time to ensure WASH maintenance would continue if our access to the camp was restricted.

Although the summer allowed a reasonable amount of liberty across Europe in terms of the pandemic, this was not apparent in Moria. The only redeeming feature was that new arrivals to Lesvos were drastically lower than in 2019, so the camp population decreased steadily and significantly throughout the course of the year, which relieved some of the pressure on the infrastructure and facilities. Between March and the end of August, 6911 residents were able to move on from Moria, many of whom did so as a consequence of the Greek Asylum Service issuing an “open card,” which meant that their asylum claim was no longer limited by geographic region to the Aegean islands, giving individuals the opportunity to move forward in their journey.



In September, alongside the news of a much-feared yet long anticipated outbreak of Covid-19 within the camp population, the state of affairs reached a climax. Moria RIC was set ablaze and, over the course of two consecutive nights, the camp was destroyed in its entirety. A state of emergency was declared on the island whilst Moria’s 12,646 former residents had nowhere to go and consequently resided along one of Lesvos’s main thoroughfares. In a matter of days, vulnerable individuals were evacuated off the island and ultimately, the rest of the population, over 9000 people, were moved into a new, temporary camp;

Mavrovouni RIC, an area previously used by the Greek military as a shooting range.

The emergency meant that several international organisations directed new missions or reinforced their existing teams here and the central government’s Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MoMA) gained greater jurisdiction for decision making in the new camp. These factors, coupled with the general lack of infrastructure, such as fresh water, sewage and electrical networks, created a dramatically different working environment for us. As the evacuation of vulnerable groups continued, the population of the RIC decreased to just over 7000 residents, where it has remained relatively constant for the final months of the year. We have adapted our operations to suit the challenges that the new site presents us; the first and foremost being the lack of mains water infrastructure and consequential lack of robust, permanent WASH facilities, the second being the unsuitability of the site in terms of rain water drainage and flood management, which has since consumed a lot of our efforts.

Although a location for the development of a permanent facility to host refugees on Lesvos has been decided





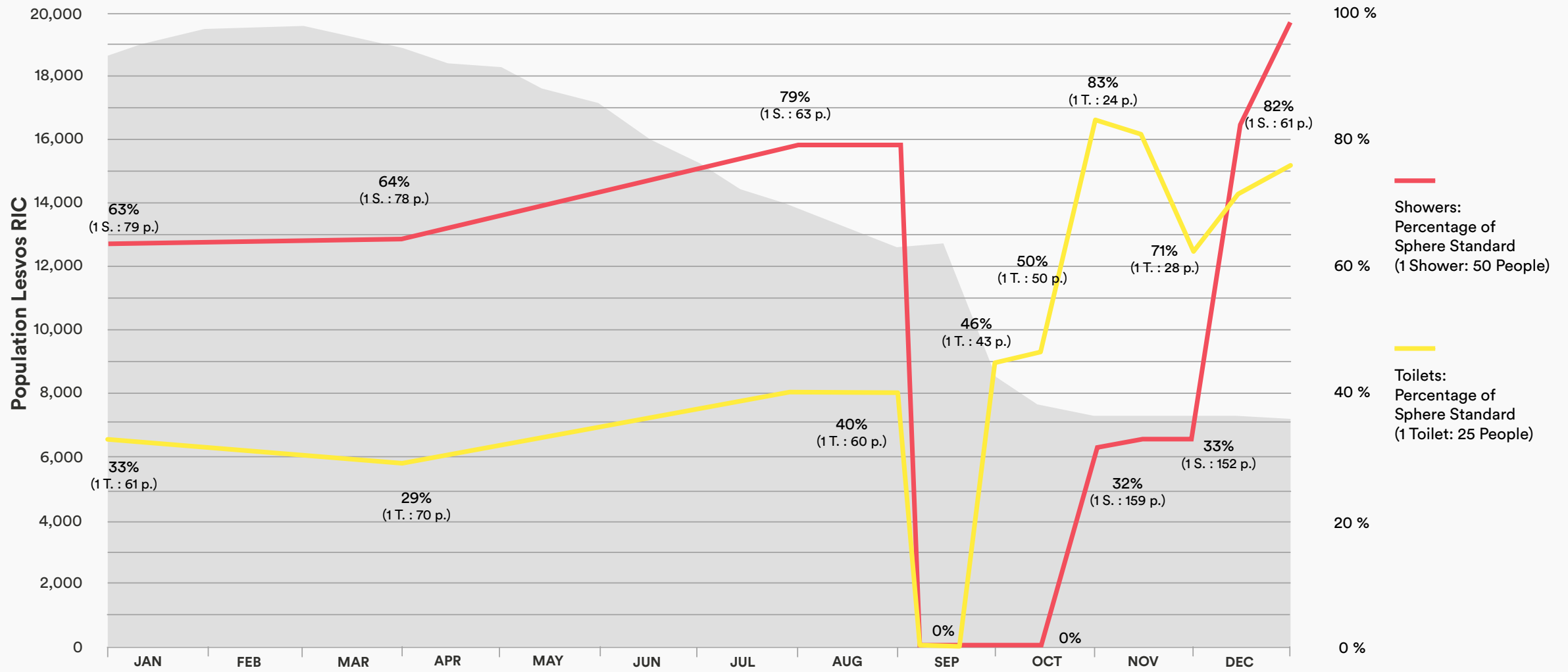
upon, there continues to be local opposition and it is questionable whether the authorities will meet their target of opening an alternative camp in Autumn 2021. As we end the year, Mavrovouni RIC is undergoing infrastructural works, with plans to install numerous WASH containers, intended to help reach EASO standards, which in itself raises questions about the longevity of the “temporary camp.” Simultaneously, Greece has entered a second national lockdown and restrictions on RIC residents persist.

**It has been an unprecedented year on a global scale and the circumstances have, at times, pushed us to our limits. Yet, challenges are always accompanied by opportunities to learn, of which we have done a great deal. Through embarking on new collaborations, maintaining existing partnerships and welcoming specialised international volunteers; we are honoured to be working with such a high calibre of humanitarian professionals. As we reflect on our achievements this year, we remain ever grateful to our network of donors, partners and mentors, without whom the impact Watershed has made would not be possible.**



*Population data based on “National situational picture regarding the islands at Eastern Aegean Sea” as published daily by the Ministry of Citizen Protection of the Hellenic Republic. UNHCR data publications used for comparison.*





19,419 residents, of which 42% are children, live in Moria RIC  
 Frequent power and water shortages are the norm  
 Rising political tensions lead to a local general strike and attacks on NGO workers

The first positive Covid-19 case on Lesvos  
 Greek refugee camps are partially locked down  
 A fire destroys part of Level 2 in Moria and takes a life

Greek national lockdown commences  
 End of the Greek national lockdown, camp lockdown continues

New outbreaks of Covid-19 on Lesvos  
 Over 100 Covid-19 cases confirmed on the island  
 Watershed implements Covid-19 contingency plan

First confirmed Covid-19 case in Moria  
 Moria RIC is burnt down, leaving the population sleeping rough without access to toilets, showers or running water  
 POCs are moved to a site with no infrastructure and only a few chemical WCs

We install the first cold water bucket showers  
 Hot water shower container project gets approved

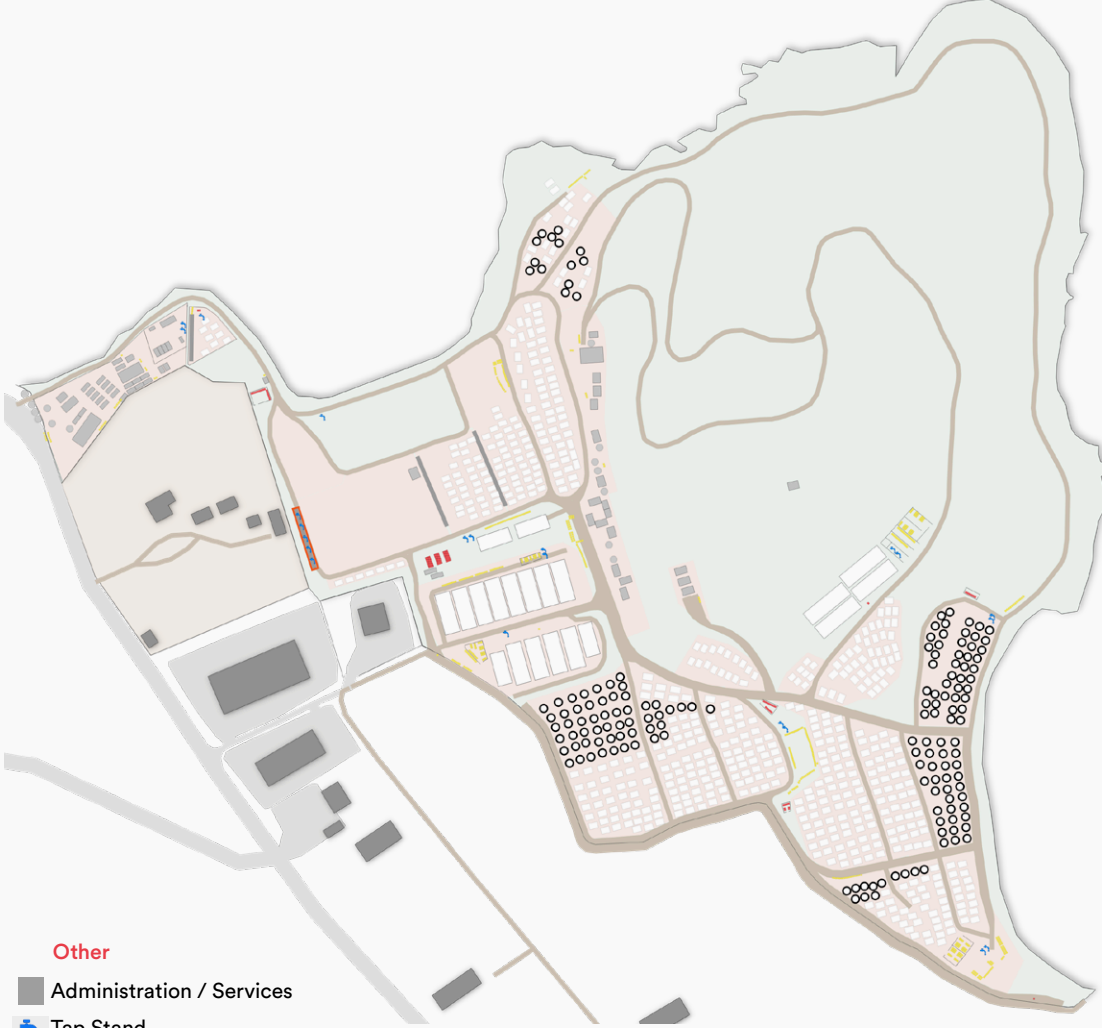
3 hot shower containers are open. Red Cross start providing hot water to some bucket shower locations

**2020**

# Moria RIC



# Mavrovouni RIC



- WASH Facilities**
- WASH Facility
- Watershed Project
- Shelter**
- Accomodation / Tent
- Watershed Project
- Other**
- Administration / Services
- ⤵ Tap Stand

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# Context and Definitions

For a thorough understanding of Watershed's activities and impact, it is useful to first understand the general context, infrastructure and terminology.



## WASH:

One of the most commonly used abbreviations across our organisation and work is the term 'WASH,' meaning Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene. WASH is the name of a humanitarian cluster as designated by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Although all humanitarian work requires coordination between all organisations involved within the context, the actors in the WASH cluster are specifically responsible for the provision, maintenance, and improvement of toilets, showers, drainage, clean water access and general site hygiene. Beyond that it is also about more indirect aspects that have a profound impact on 'WASH'. This includes notions of dignity, safety, and awareness of varying cultural backgrounds. Whilst we acted as the key WASH organisation in Moria, we have since taken our place in a collaborative WASH cluster in Mavrovouni RIC. Success in our activities requires close cooperation with our partner organisations in the Shelter and Health clusters as well as the Greek government.

At Watershed, we have developed our own WASH terminology to refer to facilities and tasks, used in our daily operations. In this report you will commonly

come across the terms 'WASH container' and 'wash pad'. A WASH container refers to a container or ISO-box that serves as a water, sanitation and hygiene facility in the form of toilets, showers, or all-in-one. A wash pad is the name we have given to our custom designed slabs of concrete that are gently sloped towards a floor drain with a number of fresh-water taps installed on a surrounding brick wall. Wash pads are multi-purpose, easy to maintain outdoor WASH facilities for household activities such as washing clothes, cleaning dishes, preparing food, personal hygiene and sometimes ritual washing. We also make distinctions between WASH containers serving as showers and what we call 'bucket shower cubicles,' which are chemical toilet type cubicles, that have a shower tray plumbed in order to serve as a private area in which to wash and change, however the user must bring their own water from nearby taps.

In terms of accessibility to the various WASH facilities we differentiate between communal and shared areas. The majority of facilities are communal (in fact, in Mavrovouni, all facilities are) meaning they are readily accessible to anyone in camp. Shared facilities are those that are built directly adjacent to,





or within, housing structures and are therefore only accessible to those living in that unit. For example, in Moria, this is the case in the Levels and in Sections A – C where bathrooms are directly connected to the accommodation. Finally, regarding terminology relating to WASH infrastructure, we abbreviate Moria's pump stations to LPS; lower pump station and UPS; upper pump station.

### General orientation around camp:

For coherent communication across the board of actors involved in the RICs, the dominant and most widely used method for orientation is by referring to 'Zones'. The majority of the zones are not physically separated spaces, but rather imaginary splits of the camp and its overflows in the surrounding olive groves into general housing areas that make communication and orientation easier. In Moria, zones 1 – 5 laid within the boundaries of the official RIC, all remaining zones (6 – 12) encompassed the surrounding areas, which we consolidated under the name 'Olive Grove.' In Mavrovouni, the camp has been divided into coloured zones in which the population is housed according to nationality, with single men being separated from families.

### Housing:

Throughout the varying spaces in the RICs, we have encountered a range of housing forms that differ in the quality of living conditions they offer. From the most stable, safe, and sheltered housing structures to the least, there are:



### Pre-fabricated buildings:

In Moria, these were part of the original military base infrastructure. (There are 4 rows in the Levels and 3 in the Sections);

### ISO-boxes:

Container-sized, movable accommodation units;

### Rubb halls:

Large, marquee-like, moveable tents, that are often partitioned to form smaller family-sized rooms.

### Robust family tents:

Provided by international humanitarian assistance organizations such as UNHCR and the Red Cross.

### Makeshift structures:

Informal structures built by refugees from wooden pallets, tarps and scrap materials.

### Small camping tents:

Refugees have had to rely on flimsy festival tents, particularly in times of peak population in Moria.





**Overpopulated and overcrowded, the physical capacity of Moria RIC could not meet demand in many ways; including water supply.**

# Water

**At the beginning of 2020, Moria camp's infrastructure was strained beyond its limits and humanitarian services were completely overstretched, but we continued our relentless efforts to tackle the impact of extreme overcrowding. The critical challenge was that large parts of the camp were not provided with water for several hours every day: The demand was far beyond what was technically possible to supply.**

Our WASH assessment from early April demonstrates that around 60% of the facilities did not provide water for many hours per day, therefore making access to hygiene almost impossible. In the frame of the developing Covid-19 pandemic, regular hand washing in these conditions seemed a distant reality. We introduced a system to permanently monitor water flows, in order to analyse the data and enable further improvements. We successfully advocated the importance of replacing and extending the main water supply pipe and the installation of a booster pump, to confront the supply issue; which UNHCR agreed to fund and carry out.

In the meantime, we installed a motorised valve in the upper pump station (UPS) to eliminate gravity feed during the refilling of the tank, in addition to throttling flow rates to specific facilities to avoid excessive local water use, repairing multiple leaks on supply pipes, and switching four WASH containers and two wash pads from the overused UPS to the LPS. We continued with interventions throughout the summer to improve water supply such as installing 86m of new supply pipes, completely replumbing the interior water supply of three WASH facilities, and fitting a small booster pump.



Finally, in August the booster pump was installed by UNHCR to increase flow to the UPS. The completion of this project had been long awaited by Watershed, as the issue of insufficient water supply marked the single most grave WASH problem in Moria RIC, however the pump still required some adjustments to achieve the estimated 50% increase in water reaching the UPS every day. So, we persevered in our efforts to increase the water availability in all the WASH facilities: In retrospect, we were on the cusp of effectively responding to the water supply issue in Moria RIC and delivering regular access throughout the day, when the fire broke out.

In addition to our technical contribution, we have constructed a total of three wash pads in Moria this year (in zones 9 and 6, and on Level 1) and installed a tap stand with 20 water points in Mavrovouni RIC.



# Showers

Throughout 2020, we have continued to work methodically towards both our goals of improving the conditions and increasing access to showers.

During the first half of the year, this was carried out through a series of refurbishments and overhauls. Overhauls, which consist of deep cleaning and replacing all broken or damaged fixings, on shower



containers in zones 6 and 7 in Moria, ensured that cubicles which were avoided due to the bad state they were in, were again hygienic and functional.

A further two communal shower rooms in Level 4 were in such a serious state of damage from overuse, that they required full refurbishments, which involved fully dismantling the facilities in order to install false floors to add floor drains, fitting robust and waterproof chequered plate flooring, in addition to all new fixings, solar boilers and LED lighting.

Regarding the general maintenance of showers, 2020 saw us invest time deep cleaning Moria's main shower block, and reduplicate our regular cleaning efforts in order to keep the area as hygienic as possible, particularly given how ideal such an environment is for the transmission of viruses. With our focus on the same building, we were part way through the procurement process for specialised materials for our planned renovation of the entire shower block, when the fires unfortunately broke out.

Despite having to abandon our most ambitious project to date, we continued to prioritise projects focussing



on showers, particularly because, since the opening of the Mavrovouni RIC, numerous chemical toilets were installed by various WASH actors, however no provisions were immediately made in order to enable people to shower.

Whilst navigating the bureaucratic process and the problems created by the lack of a mains water supply to the camp (currently all water is delivered by trucks), we installed 46 “cold water bucket shower cubicles,”



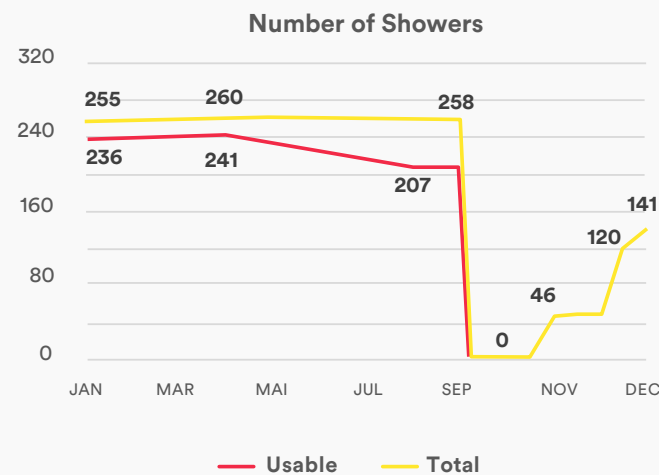
in four locations around the RIC as an interim solution. Due to the increasingly colder weather these cubicles were not received as well as anticipated and there is a continued effort among the WASH sector to guarantee hot water supply to these facilities.

In December, we opened three shower containers, with a total of 36 cubicles, that are supplied with hot water from a containerised, 200kW olive wood pellet burner and custom-made control system. Much of the equipment was luckily salvaged from Moria, before being overhauled, adapted for use and plumbed in at Mavrovouni RIC.

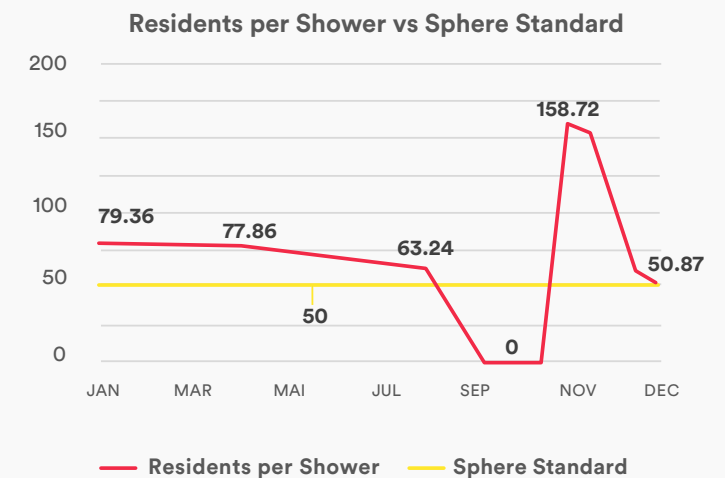


The overcrowding in early 2020 severely impacted the availability and function of sanitation facilities inside Moria camp. In January there were almost 80 residents per shower, whilst the water shortages, a result of an insufficient water supply to the camp, rendered a large number of showers unusable for many hours each day. This, in turn, led to overuse of the working facilities and acts of vandalism fuelled by frustration, both of which directly impacted the number of fully functioning showers. Only in August,

after intensive efforts by the Greek government to decongest the island, the camp came close to reaching the Sphere Standard again, just before the fire in September which destroyed almost all WASH facilities inside the camp. This left the former residents without any showers inside the new camp until we installed the first “bucket showers” in October, followed by the installation of the hot water shower containers in December.



The overall number of showers remained almost constant in Moria throughout 2020, whilst the number of usable showers decreased due to a combination of overuse, lack of water and vandalism. For the first weeks of the new camp residents did not have access to any showers.



In January, each shower was shared by 79.36 residents, after one third of the population was moved to the mainland, the ratio came closer to the Sphere Standard (one shower per 50 ppl.) The first showers in the new camp were shared by almost 160 residents, which reduced to 50.37 in December.



# Toilets

In contrast to 2019, we have focussed on ensuring the usability of existing toilets throughout the duration of 2020, rather than installing new toilet facilities.

Maintenance has always been Watershed's top priority, as we have witnessed how the simplest repairs and interventions mean the difference between somebody being able to use a toilet or not, 2020 has been no different in this respect. We have continued our daily maintenance activities, checking and repairing every communal facility in Moria RIC.

We have also become better and more organised at this task, by implementing a rota and a system to identify larger issues to return to. Additionally, we have been starkly aware of the risk of not being able to access the camp due to pandemic restrictions. Although, luckily, our fears never materialised, we implemented a series of "preventative maintenance" measures, in order to make toilet facilities more robust and therefore less likely to break during the potential



absence of our team. For example, we installed metal plates behind all of the fixings in the toilet (and shower) cubicles, making them much more resilient to damage through overuse or vandalism. Installing fully equipped maintenance lockers in four locations around the camp and providing the appropriate training to residents living nearby was another example of contingency planning in regards to limited access.

We also participated in several more intensive toilet projects over the course of the year. Firstly, we overhauled five containers in a deteriorated state due to high usage and implemented a pilot overhaul of shared toilets in the Levels. We also carried out two full toilet refurbishments in Level 4. These communal facilities were in an unacceptable state, so we dismantled the interior and fully rebuilt them, incorporating tough

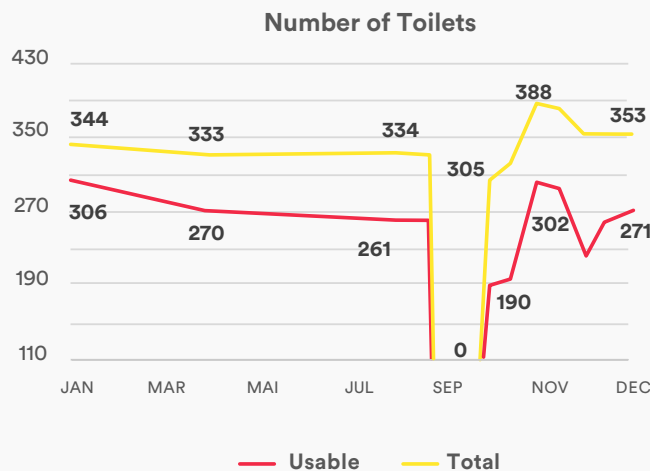


chequered plate flooring and an accessible toilet and shower cubicle for people with disabilities, the elderly and pregnant women. We invested time in developing a deep cleaning system in order to minimise daily blockages due to limescale build up and carried it out across all of the communal toilets. After the fire in spring and in conjunction with our shelter project on Level 2; we rebuild the two burnt down bathrooms and simultaneously added another one.

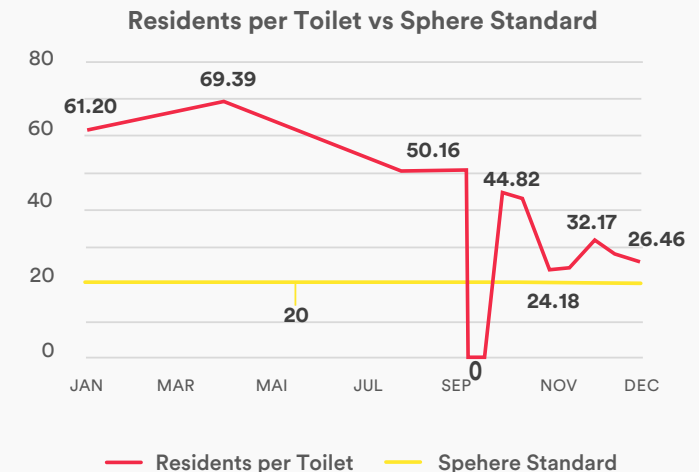
Since operating in Mavrovouni RIC, our attention to toilets has not diminished, but shifted, due to all of the toilets being chemical WCs. Whilst we are no longer carrying out the maintenance activities ourselves, we continue to assume responsibility for checking the toilets' state. Our WC monitoring sub team has presented data snapshots regarding toilet usability to the WASH sector on a weekly basis, in order to ensure organisations renting the WCs, and their contractors, are aware and increasing the likelihood of residents being able to find clean, usable toilets.

Despite intensified maintenance in the first months of 2020, the number of usable toilets decreased in Moria, whilst the lack of space inside the camp prevented the installation of additional facilities. In April, there were almost 70 residents per usable toilet, with large differences between areas in the camp. The intermittent water supply resulted in more blockages and broken facilities. Following the destruction of Moria by fire in September, the former residents, who had been living on the

streets for nearly 2 weeks, were moved to the new site where different organisations provided chemical latrines. However, whilst sufficient in number, a lack of coordination between the actors resulted in many being in an unhygienic or unusable condition. Therefore, we implemented a monitoring system, with the donor organisations, and worked towards decreasing the number of residents per usable toilet to 26.36 in December.



Due to a combination of overuse and insufficient water supply, the number of usable toilets decreased in Moria, whilst it was not possible to increase the overall number of facilities. In the new camp chemical WCs were supplied in sufficient numbers but not necessarily in usable conditions.



In April, one usable toilet was shared by 59.36 residents, but even after many residents were moved to the mainland, the ratio was far above the Sphere Standard (one toilet per 20 ppl.) In the new camp, the number of residents per usable toilets was 26.46 at the end of December, monitored twice per week by us.



**With your support we are able to carry out WASH and shelter projects to support the residents of Lesvos RIC**





# Shelter

In previous years, shelter has been an aspect of our work which has supplemented our focus on WASH. This year, however, we have led and participated in more shelter related projects.

Early in the year, we managed a collaboration to build and install 26 accommodation chalets, which could house approximately 150 individuals in total, in Section C and D; closed areas reserved for lone women and their children. The chalets, constructed from insulation panels with linoleum covered timber floors also incorporated two shared kitchen areas.



After a fatal fire in the spring, we collaborated with several organisations in order to rebuild two multi-family rooms in Level 2. Luckily, the frame of the building maintained its structural integrity after the fire, so we were able to completely reconstruct the destroyed accommodation units, and went on to build adjacent bathrooms. In response to having witnessed one too many fires in Moria, we carried out a large fire infrastructure project with the aim of protecting shelters (and fundamentally, lives) from the danger of fires in such cramped living conditions. We refurbished the whole fire system within Moria, from pumps to hydrants, to hoses and nozzles, to ensure these

facilities would be available when needed. A whole host of minor projects, which contribute towards supporting people's shelter needs, took place over the summer, such as fitting battens to make walking up and down the steep hill less dangerous, installing and repairing sunshades, and gravelling damp and waterlogged areas around people's homes.

In Mavrovouni RIC, the population's shelter situation has dramatically shifted. Although Moria was severely overcrowded, its housing infrastructure was arguably better for the many people who resided in pre-fabricated buildings and partitioned Rubb halls.





Mavrovouni, however, currently only provides the opportunity for the significant majority of residents to live in family tents; which are much more susceptible to the elements. Therefore, two of our most significant projects in Mavrovouni relate to protecting the tents from the winter weather. Firstly, we led a two-week flooring project task force, with support from other actors, in which we installed 156 pallet and OSB floors

under the erected Red Cross dome tents. Secondly, we have invested much of our time and continue to focus on rain water management; through installing and maintaining a network of sandbag bunds, drainage trenches, sump pits and dewatering pumps, we are able to prevent people's accommodation from flooding in wet weather, during which times we deploy a round-the-clock response team.



© Yousif Al Shewaili / Choose Love





Since the first rainfall of the autumn, we have been learning from our experiences and adapting our response, to best protect the living areas from flooding in Mavrovouni RIC.

# Partnerships

Throughout the year 2020, we have maintained healthy existing partnerships and embarked on new collaborations, with the aim of delivering quality projects together.

Every month, we have consistently been working towards at least one joint project, meaning that with each year that Watershed operates, we are successfully growing our network and ability to collaborate.

Some of the more ambitious and large-scale projects would not have been possible, were it not for cooperative efforts. The chalet build in the single women's section was carried out in collaboration with Christian Refugee Relief, as the post-fire rebuild of Level 2 was completed with support from Global Aid Network (GAIN) with additional contributions from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) for the adjoining bathrooms. AidHoc funded our project to overhaul the fire safety infrastructure in Moria RIC, unfortunately the extent and circumstances of the final fire rendered our efforts inadequate.

Our reliable friends and colleagues with whom we work closely inside the camps continue to be a strong source of teamwork. On a regular basis we partner with Refugee 4 Refugees, EuroRelief and Movement on the Ground. We have also supported Better Days with their holistic educational programme by providing basic electronics workshops.

With the inception of Mavrovouni RIC, we have also increased our capacity for collaborating within the WASH cluster; working closely with humanitarian organisations such as the International Federation of the Red Cross, the International Organisation

of Migration, the International Rescue Committee, UNICEF, UNHCR and, of course the Greek RIS and MoMA authorities. We are grateful for the opportunity these cooperative efforts have given us and look forward to continuing these fruitful partnerships in 2021.

A special thank you to our donors; from funding organisations: Choose Love and Caritas Austria, to private donors who support our projects. Thank you for your confidence and trust, and for supporting our work to meet the sanitation needs of people on the move.



The end of 2020 leaves us hopeful for the coming year. Despite a politically charged environment on Lesbos, we will strive for more sustainable and appropriate WASH solutions.



**If you need any further  
information, please  
don't hesitate to get in  
touch with us.**



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