



Volunteer Information Guide - Imece Village

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Imece Inisiyatifi. Volunteers are integral to the work that we do and we want you to be as informed as possible before your visit to ensure a safe and positive experience. Please read this document carefully, let your volunteer coordinator know if you have any further questions and whether you would like to proceed or not with your visit.

Who We Are

Imece: Collaboration or solidarity - to work together to achieve a common goal

Inisiyatifi: Initiative - to act or take charge to resolve a problem or improve a situation. To use initiative, imagination and common sense to take responsibility

Founded in Cesme, Turkey in 2014 Imece was created with the intention of providing local community aid but was forced to shift focus at the onset of the so called "European Refugee Crisis". Though Çeşme and Chios have always been important points for population movement, the security



situation of the Middle East in 2015 created a massive influx of people trying to cross into Europe.

Most of the help we provided was emergency distribution of the goods needed to ensure these families' survival (food, water, medical rescue, etc).

Prior to the EU-Turkey Agreement of March 2016, many people were crossing illegally into Chios, where they could easily arrange legal and secure transport onto European soil. Since the Agreement, refugees now need to complete all their administrative authorisations within the Greek islands, which can take up to two years to complete. During this time, many are staying in camps with very poor conditions. Because of this, many refugees have opted to stay in Turkey.

Currently there are an estimated 4 million refugees residing in Turkey however only around 5% are living in official camps that are supported by multinational humanitarian aid organisations. The remaining 3.8 million live in thousands of unofficial settlements dotted across the country with no official support and no way to gain legal employment. It is these unofficial settlements, where the living conditions are the most severe, that we focus our efforts.

While we still collect and distribute donations of emergency items like clothing, cookers and hygiene supplies and we realise these distributions are necessary and indispensable, they do not promote autonomy. Because of this, we decided to develop the Imece Village Project which includes our Education Programs and Imece Solar Program.

For more information on the current refugee situation in Turkey please visit these websites:

[ACAPS](#), [Relief Web](#) and [UNHCR](#)

For more information about Imece association :

Website: <https://imeceinitiative.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/imeceinisiyatifi>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/imeceinisiyatifi/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/74544424/admin/>

Documentaries of TRT about Imece:

[16mn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e_1O-wcLA&t=611s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e_1O-wcLA&t=611s)

[5mn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8SauwGQHW0&t=13s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8SauwGQHW0&t=13s)



Our Staff

Besides the volunteers, there is 3 persons living in Imece Village permanently :

Ali : He is the director and founder of Imece Inisiyatifi, you might see from time to time when he has no meeting or phone call.

Elif : She is the administrative manager of the organisation. You will see her occasionally, she is not shy or wild, just introvert.

Mine : She is our Solar Mama, solar energy teacher. She loves animals, nature and handicrafts. She will be managing the Solar Age program in Izmir from September 2021 onwards.

The team is completed by many people. Living permanently in Turkey (Irem, Kesire, Mehmet, Ezgi, Sevil, Salih...), in Germany (Bahar, Oguzhan, Teresa, Carolina...), in France (Lucie, Léa, Florian, David, Timothée, Thibaut...) and all over the world (UK, Spain, Malaysia, South America, Japan...).

How We Work

Solidarity, sustainability, empathy, empowerment and dignity are at the core of everything we do. We wish to enact meaningful, lasting change - sometimes this will require you to use your initiative and take responsibility for completing a project independently and other times it will mean being a team player and mucking in on less glamorous jobs and following instruction. We have a strong village mentality.

Important: This is not a voluntourism project nor is it a photo opportunity. We are a global team of individuals who dedicate whatever skills and resources we have, even if all we have to give is time, to improve the lived experience of people who only by the happenstance of where they were born experience incredible hardship.

Projects

• Distribution

The living conditions in the unofficial camps are difficult to believe until you experience it for yourself. These families receive no official support and it is incredibly difficult for them to gain legal employment. We collect donations and raise funds to purchase items of basic human need such as clothing and hygiene supplies and distribute these to the camps. Desperation in the camps is common, the situation is constantly changing and can quickly become volatile. Compassion and respect are crucial when in the camps as is the need to pay attention and follow the team leader's instructions without hesitation. Not everyone is suited to this work and while you will receive more guidance on arrival, it is OK if you are not comfortable with participating in distribution days - please just give your field coordinator plenty of notice so we can plan accordingly.



- **Solar Engineering - Energy For Everyone (EFE) - From September 2021 onwards, the Solar Age program will run in Izmir city.**

In a bid to create a sustainable project that both empowers women and provides a sustainable means of income, in 2018 we partnered with Barefoot College to create our Solar Age Project. Refugee women come to our community center in Izmir and attend a course to learn about solar engineering and solar energy systems. They have the opportunity to learn how to make the EFE (Energy For Everyone), which is a solar-powered power bank with built-in lights. This product was designed for use in the camps, for support during long journeys and to aid refugees in emergency situations. It's also an incredible product anyone can use! Proceeds of sold EFE's directly benefit the women who make them. To understand the long-term inspiration and objectives of Imece Solar, we advise you to watch these videos: [Barefoot College](#) & [Imece Solar Age](#)

Important: Many of our projects have had to be altered to ensure everyone's health and safety in regards to the outbreak of Covid-19. Your volunteer coordinator/field coordinator will be able to explain the current situation.

- **Children Education Programs - TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Whilst the women are at the village and in classes, it is the role of the volunteer team to entertain and provide basic Turkish education to their children. We also have mobile education projects within the camps that teach basic Turkish to the children; songs, numbers etc. This program is not made to replace schooling, but to facilitate the integration of the children into Turkish schools. We also offer adult-focused health programs for anyone who is interested - a part of the program is dedicated to women's reproductive health and integration into Turkish society.

- **Imece Cafe - TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In Cesme township, we have a not-for-profit cafe with a large space for events, workshops and an area for locally sourced health foods. It is our aim to begin educational workshops and cultural exchanges here for the wider community.

Volunteer Tasks

We plan the tasks once a week. Please be ready to be very flexible, as planned activities can often change at short notice depending on what comes up.

From September 2021 onwards, the weekly planning will be divided as follow:

- **2 days of distribution in the settlements:** early morning (7:30) we leave Imece Village for the Cafe. There we pack the van with the distribution items. Then we drive 1:30, distribute the items and come back. Due to the pandemic we had to temporarily suspend the mobile education program so we unfortunately cannot do activities with the children in the settlements.
- **1 day to prepare the logistics of distributions:** making food packs, counting it, cleaning



and preparing the van, cleaning and preparing the warehouse, etc.

- **2 days for diverse activities linked with nature:** beach cleaning, picking up olives and wild thyme, etc.

The volunteers' tasks are as follows:

Fill out this form as soon as you arrive at the village <https://tinyurl.com/yxnoaoxw>
Complete daily tasks, including breakfast prep, clearing up, bathrooms clean, laundry etc
Clean-up of all spaces - we don't have a cleaner on staff so volunteers are responsible for communal areas, used dishes or tools and the van after distribution days.
Participate in camp distribution
Support the coordination team
Work on the land; growing, cultivating, harvesting food for our kitchen
Beach cleaning
Picking up olives, wild thyme, etc.
Help with building projects when necessary
Prepare the vehicle and warehouse before and after distribution
Maintain current inventory and cleanliness of the warehouse
Carry out maintenance and beautifying projects around the village
Conduct activities specific to your skills as approved by field coordinator

Working Hours

Flexibility is important as very few days are the same at the village but we work roughly six hours per day, five days per week - weekends usually being our free days, but not always. Some days are more intensive and include travel out to camps while others are more relaxed but there is always plenty of time for tea.

Adjustments due to covid-19 pandemic

Protecting our beneficiaries is our major concern. Most of the persons living in the settlements could not get vaccinated and cannot access public hospitals. Be careful to always wear your mask and disinfect your hands, especially during distributions. Also in order to come volunteering please send us a 72h- negative PCR or antigen test, or vaccination proof.

Accommodation

We provide basic twin and triple share accommodation in our volunteer buildings on site at the village, separated into men's and women's rooms. Rooms come with sheets, blankets, pillows and towels along with heaters in winter. Wifi is available. We have communal ablutions in container blocks with solar-heated showers and one washing machine on site. We have a shared kitchen and while most of our lunches and dinners are prepared by our incredible Turkish cook, volunteers will share in prepping breakfast and some other meals on a rotational basis.



Fees

Unfortunately, we cannot let you live in the village for free as it costs a lot to pay for water, electricity, food etc. Especially with the current economic crisis in Turkey (prices have been x 4 the last years), even basic food became very expensive.

We ask you to pay a certain daily amount based on how long you will stay with us. That includes housing, food, heater, hot water, everything. The prices are the following: € 14 (1 month or less), € 12 (1-2 months), € 9 (3 months - 6 months). Since the expenses are ongoing daily, once you arrived the village please pay the total fee of your volunteering duration to the person in charge. Please note that if you break the deal and leave earlier than your expected departure original prices will be applicable. We expect you to stay the full time you initially told us. Sometimes we cannot accept all applicants, for them and us it is not fair if you leave without a serious reason before your planned departure

Code of Conduct

At Imece, we respect everyone and have a zero tolerance policy for discrimination on any basis. You will be asked to sign a more detailed code of conduct and media policy on arrival but these are a few important points.

- **Drugs and Alcohol**

The village is a 100% drug and alcohol-free space and consuming alcohol outside the village should be avoided on days before we run activities. Smoking is restricted to a designated smoking area to avoid uncontrolled fires.

- **Clothing and Cultural Respect**

We respect everyone at all times. You can dress as you want in Imece Village, but please be careful while visiting the settlements by covering your legs and shoulders.

- **Photography**

Photographing vulnerable people is a very sensitive issue and we ask you to refrain from taking photos or videos in the camps or of our visiting women and children unless express permission has been given by the field coordinator.

Practical Information

- **Travel to the village**



The best way to get to Cesme is to fly into Izmir Airport (ADB). From Izmir Airport, you can take a HAVAS bus to Cesme for TL30 (1.5 hour drive). You will find the HAVAS busses to the right of the airport exit. Provide your arrival details to your field coordinator and we will arrange for someone to collect you from Cesme bus station. For bus timetables: <http://www.havas.net/en/>

● Communication

We communicate in Turkish, English and Arabic. It will be easier for Arabic and Turkish speakers to integrate but it is definitely not necessary to speak these languages. We do however highly recommend you try to learn some basic phrases before you arrive.

● Communication with the volunteer coordinator

Please always inform the volunteer coordinator about your situation - where you are, when you leave the village (even for a walk), etc. We are legally responsible for your actions and security so we need to know.

● Packing List

Summer in Cesme is very hot and winter can be very wet. For average temperatures please see [HERE](#). You can dress as you like in your private time but we expect modest, professional attire in the refugee settlements and in the village when we have visitors.



Essentials

Passport and travel documents
Soap, shampoo, toothpaste
Clothes you don't mind getting mucky
Good shoes you don't mind getting mucky
Long, light trousers
Long-sleeved shirts
Personal medication
Personal first aid kit
Reusable water bottle
Motivation/laughter/ideas/flexibility :)
Flip flops for the showers

Summer:

Sunscreen
Sunglasses
Hat
Insect repellent
Swimsuit

Winter:

Rain jacket
Rain boots

Before You Leave

● Social Media

Head torch
Card games
A good book
Earplugs/eye mask
Laptop/photography equipment if you will
be working on a specific project

Non-Essential

To get an understanding of what we do day-to-day please follow us on social media:

Facebook - facebook.com/imeceinisiyatifi

Instagram - instagram.com/imeceinisiyatifi

YouTube - youtube.com/channel/UCAxAVr7HGtXUzFboQgPH0NQ

● Fundraising

Volunteering abroad is an exciting adventure, especially when you're working with an NGO and you know the time and effort you invest will make a tangible difference to many people's lives! In the past our volunteers have set up fundraisers to raise awareness of Imece and the work they will be doing before they arrive. If you would like a media pack that includes images and links for you to use in your social media posts, please ask your volunteer coordinator.



Important: This is not necessary or expected but if it's something you'd like to do, we'd like to support you by supplying everything you need to be successful.

After you Leave

You will be sent a feedback form to complete regarding your experience with us. This will help us improve our operations for future volunteers and reviews may be used as testimonials in our promotional material.

We have an 'Imece Support Group' Facebook group which you will be sent an invite to, should you wish to join. This is a community where previous volunteers can share experiences and stay up-to-date with ongoing projects.

Returning home may be a difficult process as many of your family and friends might not understand how your experience has fundamentally changed you. Reach out to fellow volunteers and the Imece team but remember you will always have a home in the village and we'd love to have you back!

Next Steps

If you have any follow-up questions, please direct these to your volunteer coordinator. If you would like to proceed with your stay at Imece Village, please respond in writing with confirmation of your preferred dates and any other relevant information.

If we think you'll be a good fit and we have space on your dates you will have a WhatsApp or Zoom call with your volunteer coordinator. If accepted, please remember to confirm in writing your arrival and departure dates after the WhatsApp/Skype call, otherwise you will not be registered