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# #OPENEUROPE

*Project In Itinere Review*

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The present report is the result of a review process of the #OpenEurope project implemented in Sicily by Oxfam Italia, aimed at analyzing the project progress and reflect on the key effects generated on beneficiaries and partner organizations. An exercise oriented to the results achieved during the implementation of the action that produced useful information and insights for decision making and learning at different levels. #OpenEurope has guaranteed to migrants out of the system, i.e. the most vulnerable among the disadvantaged, an assistance aimed at ensuring the fulfillment of the fundamental rights of migrants and asylum seekers arriving to Sicily and a facilitated access to the available services to meet their specific needs.



# INDEX

Index	2
Acromyms	2
Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Methodology	6
3. Humanitarian context	7
4. Achievements	8
5. Efficiency and effectiveness	11
6. Good practices and lessons learned	14
7. Summary of key findings	15
8. Conclusions and recommendations	18

# ACROMYMS

CARA: Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (Reception Center for Asylum Seekers)

CIE: Centro di Identificazione ed Espulsione (Identification and Expulsion Center)

CL: Caltanissetta (Sicily)

CT: Catania (Sicily)

HPM: Humanitarian Program Manager

IOM: International Organization for Migration

MEDU: Medici per i Diritti Umani (Doctors for Human Rights)

MSNA: Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati (Unaccompanied Foreign Minors)

OIT: Oxfam Italia

GHT: Global Humanitarian Team

Sitrep: Situation report

SPRAR: Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees)

EU: European Union

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#OpenEurope is Oxfam's protection response to the migrant crisis in Sicily, which deteriorated in 2014. The intervention aims to ensure a broader respect of the fundamental human rights of migrant women, men and children. In particular, #OpenEurope works with people out of the system, i.e. the most vulnerable among the disadvantaged, to guarantee their access to rights through adequate legal assistance and respond to their basic needs. The initiative is promoted by Oxfam in partnership with Borderline Sicilia, AccoglieRete, Diaconia Valdese and Doctors for Human Rights (MEDU). To reflect on the effects produced by #OpenEurope and on the main lessons learned from project implementation, Oxfam Italia decided to analyze, through an *in itinere* review, the progress of the program and the key results over the first 16 (sixteen) months of implementation. Key information will orient the partnership in order to make more informed decisions, but also to strengthen the dialogue between national and international institutions and donors.

2,345 are the total beneficiaries (2,157 males and 188 females) assisted by the program in Sicily: 1,495 migrants have received legal information, guidance to basic services and material support; 75 asylum seekers excluded from the protection system received legal assistance and gained access to the international protection procedure; 219 migrants victims of torture, detention, inhuman and degrading treatments received psychological support and medical treatment; 20 vulnerable migrants were hosted in the temporary shelter in Pachino; 536 unaccompanied foreign minors have received legal assistance. It is also worth mentioning that #OpenEurope has the operational capacity (with its two mobile units) to cover several provinces of the vast Sicilian territory, being able to effectively respond to emergency situations in Catania, Caltanissetta, Messina, Ragusa and Syracuse, when necessary. Mobile teams are composed by a socio-legal operator and a cultural mediator conducting outreach activities in urban areas with migrants outside the system, therefore in condition of marginality. The program also raised public awareness through the elaboration and dissemination of 3 (three) specific advocacy papers on migration policies with significant media coverage, at national and international level.

Networking and partnership work represent the strength of #OpenEurope and are aimed at reinforcing the link between practices and policies, and still constitute a future challenge: since August 2017, #OpenEurope is widening its engagement by scaling up on a national dimension with the startup of legal information and the provision of basic services in Ventimiglia, Italian border town with France. Therefore, building on the partnership approach and the coordination actions already developed is key for the future effectiveness of the program. Equally consistent is the choice of Oxfam to carry out a protection response with a legal focus. In parallel, field work and evidences collected through programme activities are linked with the advocacy to raise concerns about national and local policies on migration and put forward alternative solutions.

Advocacy and campaigning work need to be further supported in order to positively influence policy makers, as well as to consolidate the basis for an increasing pressure at the European level. Internal and external communication of the program can also allow partners to increase their visibility along with access to

relevant information so to implement activities more effectively. In addition to the emergency situation that Italy is cyclically facing on migration, resilience and integration are two other significant axes of work to enable positive, lasting and sustainable social change.

The future strategy of #OpenEurope is based on a rather consolidated and mature partnership approach. Moreover, evidence of the work carried out can be used to help improve the overall performance and to maximize the efforts to guarantee the fulfilment of the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable migrants.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

#OpenEurope is the program that Oxfam has put in place to cope with the migrant crisis in Sicily which has arisen since the beginning of 2014. The initiative is part of the EU Migration Crisis Response of the Oxfam Confederation, providing humanitarian assistance not only in Italy, but also in Serbia and Greece, as well as promoting advocacy actions towards the European Union and some Member States, including Italy.

The overall objective of the humanitarian program in Sicily is to contribute to the fulfilment of the fundamental human rights of migrants – women, men and children – excluded from the protection and reception system through an enhanced access to their rights and to asylum procedures as well as through the improvement of their life conditions and dignity.

Local partners (namely, AccoglieRete<sup>1</sup>, Borderline Sicilia<sup>2</sup>, Diaconia Valdese<sup>3</sup>, Medici per i Diritti Umani<sup>4</sup>) were actively involved in the design and implementation of specific activities, according to their expertise. Launched in the spring of 2016, #OpenEurope was extended until the end of December 2017, when the future strategy of the program is expected to be revised to better respond to the fast-evolving migrant crisis in Europe.

In order to reflect on the effects produced by #OpenEurope and on the most salient lessons learned from the implementation phase, Oxfam Italia decided to analyze the progress of the program and the key results over the first 16 (sixteen) months, i.e. in the reference period between 1 June 2016 and 30 September 2017. Based on the empirical evidence explained in the next sections, Oxfam and its local partners will be guided in the decision-making process, and will strengthen the dialogue with national and international institutions and donors.

The abovementioned evidence-based approach was utilized to develop the ongoing review of #OpenEurope. This report, therefore, summarizes the main findings and key figures of the initiative examined. The review process was carried out in November 2017 by Oxfam Italia, appointing (2) internal staff not involved in the direct management of the action and in activity implementation.

The report outline is the following:

- Methodology
- Humanitarian context
- Results and achievements in the reference period
- Effectiveness and Efficiency
- Good practice and lessons learned
- Summary of key finding
- Conclusions and recommendations

An executive summary is included in the text.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The *in itinere* review process consisted of: a document assessment (*desk review*), the analysis and adaptation of the monitoring tools in use at Oxfam International, and an evaluation and monitoring mission in Sicily<sup>5</sup>. The field trip represented an opportunity to analyze, review and compare information and data collected by the OIT team in Sicily, as well as a further opportunity for exchange and learning with partner organizations, in particular Borderline Sicily, Diaconia Valdese, AccoglieRete and Medici per i Diritti Umani (MEDU). The proposed methodology mainly focused on the desk review through a careful analysis of the project documents, including narrative reports, Oxfam sitreps, and other tools and presentations used by the project team. The review allowed a better definition of the main rationale of the present work and its conceptual framework. The possibility of using monitoring and evaluation tools already in use at Oxfam International was also evaluated through the consultation of the CAMSA<sup>6</sup> platform. Interviews with key informants carried out during the field trip with the Sicily team and project partners, allowed to gather relevant information for the report. Key questions to partners focused on the following four (4) dimensions: impact, effectiveness, coordination and sustainability, and the work with partners was evaluated highlighting as well strengths and weaknesses. Finally, most salient lessons learned came up from a joint analysis. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the necessary space for an open and constructive dialogue with the various interlocutors. Likewise, the OIT team was asked to focus on the dimensions of relevance and appropriateness of the assistance provided with respect to the needs, the efficiency and the coverage (the latter considered as the capacity to cover urgent needs in several geographical areas by reaching the most vulnerable beneficiaries).

Interviews with the team and project partners (number of people interviewed) were organized according to the table below:

Date	Time	Organization	#
14/11/2017	10 am – 1 pm	Oxfam Italia - Catania office	4 people
	3 pm – 5 pm	Borderline Sicily at Oxfam Italia office in Catania	1 person
	6 pm – 7.30 pm	Accogliere via Skype from Syracuse	2 people
15/11/2017	10 am – 1 pm	Diaconia Valdese in Pachino	1 person
	3 pm – 5 pm	MEDU in Ragusa	1 person
16/11/2017	8.30 am – 9.30 am	OIT operator connecting from Ventimiglia	1 person
	10 am – 4 pm	MEAL Officer #OpenEurope	1 person

Table 1 – Meeting agenda with partners and OIT program team. Source: authors.

# 3. HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

A significant decrease in sea arrivals has been remarked following the agreement signed between Italy and Libya<sup>7</sup>. The number of sea arrivals from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2017 to the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2017\* if compared with the data for the same period of 2016, shows a decrease of the 30.58%<sup>8</sup>. Comparing the data of sea arrivals in 2016-2017, in fact there were 181,436 people in 2016, against 114,424 people in 2017 (as of November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017)<sup>9</sup>.

With the decrease in sea arrivals since July 2016, subsequently there has been a decrease in the number of rejected migrants. However, the needs of the target population, i.e. migrants in transit and out of the reception system, remain important in terms of lack of access to services and need for adequate legal information and assistance. Ever since the agreement between Italy and Libya, which contributed to make the situation more volatile and difficult to anticipate, raising serious concerns regarding the vulnerability of migrants at the regional level, the situation remained unstable and could change rapidly if the agreement with Libya fails, or if new routes for migrants are to be opened. The extreme vulnerability of the project target and of different types of migrants require therefore constant and targeted support. Data analysis on the assisted beneficiaries in 2016 shows that the majority of migrants is arriving from countries whose nationality generally sees a very low recognition of the refugee status (for example the 30.2% is from Morocco)<sup>10</sup>. However, among the assisted migrants, the majority arrived from Libya (76.7%)<sup>11</sup> having been victims of human trafficking. The severe trauma caused by the abuses, the inhuman and degrading treatments suffered along the migratory route make the majority of the assisted migrants potential beneficiaries for the national humanitarian protection.

The #OpenEurope project considers vital to guarantee legal information in order to enable migrants to take informed decisions about their lives, including in the event that migrants are not interested in applying for international protection in Italy.

Guidance to local services is also provided to foster migrants' capacity to autonomously reach the services available (self-referral). In terms of specialized services an important need in psychological support can be remarked, given the extreme vulnerability related to the repeated violations of human rights and the abuses often suffered by migrants. However, services are often unaccessible to migrants outside the system due to linguistic barriers and lack of cultural mediation. OIT operators usually facilitate directly and bridge migrants with service providers. The #OpenEurope team in collaboration with partner associations estimate an increase in the numbers of children and adults leaving reception facilities, due to the lack of adequate services and other structural limitations. In relation to different types of beneficiaries the following categories have been identified (in addition to cases of mental health and very vulnerable households):

- Asylum seekers and unaccompanied foreign minors (UAM) excluded from the protection and reception system because of authorities illegitimate practices;
- Asylum seekers and unaccompanied foreign minors (UAM) left out from the reception structures or choosing to abandon them due to the poor quality and the low reception standards;
- Neo-adults excluded from the reception system and left in the street as they turn 18 years old;
- Groups of citizens from Northern African sub-Saharan countries subject to

mass rejection decrees and left stranded in the street with the order to leave the country;

- Forced smugglers victims of human trafficking charged over abetting illegal immigration left out of prison and put in the street with expulsion decree and the order to leave the country.

From January 2017, a total of 13,418 (12.7%) unaccompanied minors arrived to Italy<sup>12</sup>, being the most reached landing ports Augusta, Catania, Pozzallo, Reggio Calabria, Vibo Valentia. 2,993 deaths were recorded in the Mediterranean by IOM since the beginning of the year, of which 2,771 in the central Mediterranean (in 2016, the missing persons in the central Mediterranean were 4,581)<sup>13</sup>. These data are tragically confirming the Central Mediterranean as the deadliest route. Looking at the migratory flows and to migrant profile characteristics it is noticeable that they have changed over the duration of the program. Migrant flow to Italy is a mixed flow with a population characterized mostly by asylum seekers and the so-called “economic migrants”. The profiles of migrants outside the system met by the operators correspond mainly to young males and adults. Finally, Italy remains the main entry point (for landing) for migrants in the desperate attempt to reach Europe.

## 4. ACHIEVEMENTS

From an analysis of the data collected over the first 16 months of implementation, the most important achievement of #OpenEurope is to have directly assisted 2,345 people, of whom 2,157 (92%) male and 188 (8%) females<sup>14</sup>. As anticipated, migrants out of the system are the main target population, meaning those who are excluded from the protection and reception system and exposed to protection risks, subject of exploitation and therefore considered as the most vulnerable among migrants on the move across Italy. The table below shows detailed data on the #OpenEurope beneficiaries disaggregated by gender:

<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Migrants who have received support for (1) legal information, (2) guidance to basic services, (3) basic necessities (OIT)	1,495 <sup>15</sup>	1,456	39
Legally-assisted migrants ( <i>Borderline</i> )	75	72	3
Vulnerable migrants received in the structure at Pachino ( <i>Diaconia Valdese</i> )	20	20	-
Psychologically-assisted migrants ( <i>MEDU</i> )	219	186	33
Unaccompanied foreign minors ( <i>AccoglieRete</i> )	536	423	113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,345</b>	<b>2,157</b>	<b>188</b>

Table 2 – Summary of the direct beneficiaries reached by the program in the first 16 months, disaggregated by gender. Source: authors.

The great variety between the beneficiary numbers can be explained by the different type of activities carried out, by the heterogeneity, and the different mandates of the #OpenEurope partners. Oxfam assisted 1,495 people (1,456 males and 39 females) supporting them in accessing their rights: 970 migrants received information about regulations and laws existing in Italy and in Europe on international protection and reception, 678 individuals have been guided towards

the basic services available such as health care, dormitories, canteens, showers and clothes provision in Messina, Catania, Syracuse, and Ragusa. In addition, the team distributed the following essential items: (a) 943 kits for the safety and dignity of the person including shoes, waterproof poncho, waterproof sleeping bag, underwear, t-shirt, towel, soap, cream, toothpaste and toothbrush, pen, notebook and backpack, (b) 55 toilet kits disaggregated by gender, (c) 912 international telephone cards.

**Borderline Sicily** has taken care of 75 vulnerable asylum seekers<sup>16</sup> (72 males and 3 females) providing consultancy and free legal assistance for legal practices in the competent Italian courts: 6 cases (8%) have already received a positive result, 63 lawsuits (84%) are still pending, while 6 practices (8%) are of beneficiaries no longer available.

In Pachino<sup>17</sup>, **Diaconia Valdese** hosted 20 male asylum seekers<sup>18</sup> in 16 months in situations of high vulnerability due, in most cases, to psychological trauma and distress due to the migratory experience. Upon arrival, each of them received a welcome kit (sheets, blankets, personal hygiene materials, etc.) and a daily allowance for meals. Italian classes<sup>19</sup> are provided and they are assisted by a cultural mediator<sup>20</sup>. 10 of the migrants hosted in Pachino<sup>21</sup> were transferred to SPRAR, 7 are currently residing in the structure, while the remaining ones have left on voluntary basis.

**Medici per i Diritti Umani (MEDU)** supported 219 extremely traumatized migrants<sup>22</sup> (186 males and 33 females) providing psychological support and taking care of 121 migrants (103 males and 18 females) following tortures suffered during their journey to reach Italy, or inhuman and degrading treatments and prison experiences during migration. 98 migrants (83 males and 15 females) benefited from an initial screening and a safe space where they have been listened and could speak out about their experiences. During the reference period, MEDU assured a total of 763 hours of visits<sup>23</sup> and issued 44 medical-psychological certifications<sup>24</sup> to support the dossiers evaluated by the territorial commission for the recognition of international protection<sup>25</sup>.

**AccoglieRete** has supported 536 unaccompanied foreign minors (423 males and 113 females)<sup>26</sup> providing legal support, cultural mediation, psychological assistance, social inclusion and integration projects, and through mentoring and capacity building of voluntary legal guardians to provide them the necessary skills to perform the functions of guardians. It is estimated that at least half of the children are between 16 and 17 years old.

In terms of geographical coverage, the cities in which legal actions were promoted were mainly Ragusa (40 cases) and Catania (28 cases)<sup>27</sup>. Support for unaccompanied foreign minors by AccoglieRete was guaranteed in Syracuse, while psychological assistance to migrant victims of torture, inhuman and degrading treatments and prison experiences took place in Ragusa, given the proximity with the Pozzallo hotspot. Caltanissetta and Catania are the two cities in which it was more relevant the assistance for legal information (CL: 150 cases, CT: 663 cases)<sup>28</sup> and the orientation to basic services (CL: 80 cases, CT: 469 cases)<sup>29</sup>.

Migrant's profiles reached by Oxfam activities had the following characteristics: man (about 98%), adult (almost 91%), coming mainly from Morocco (30%), Eritrea (13%) and Pakistan (11%)<sup>30</sup>. Other nationalities of the beneficiaries include Gam-

bia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Senegal, Egypt, Guinea, Mali. Also significant is the percentage of minors involved in Oxfam's support activities, which is around 13.3% (12.5% boys and 0.8% girls). Equally interesting is the disaggregated analysis of data on minors which shows that 50% of them are between 16 and 17 years old and therefore close to the age of majority<sup>31</sup>. If we add to this the percentage of beneficiaries between the ages of 18 and 22, about 21%<sup>32</sup>, it is quite clear that young people are an important target for #OpenEurope, in terms of quality and quantity.

For the purposes of the project and its effect, it is important to highlight that the 54% of the migrant beneficiaries of legal support, guidance to basic services and provision of basic items remain in Sicily less than a month stating that they want to continue their migration project to other regions in Italy or, even more frequently, in Europe. The 15% of the beneficiaries, however, stay in Sicily for more than 24 months.

Under #OpenEurope the following 3 papers on migrants out of the reception system were published:

- *"Hotspot, rights denied"*<sup>33</sup>. The report highlights the absence of a legal framework and the absolute discretion in the identification procedures entrusted by the police deciding, after very short interviews, to welcome or reject migrants;
- *"Children alone. Pulled from the sea, fallen by the wayside"*<sup>34</sup>. The report captures the drama of children and young teenagers who arrived unaccompanied on the Italian shore (doubled in 2016) and highlights limitations and constraints of the reception system;
- "You aren't human any more". Migrants expose the harrowing situation in Libya and the impact of European policies<sup>35</sup>. The report denounces the atrocities perpetrated against migrants by the local militia, smugglers and other criminals in Libya. Recommendations are made for the suspension of the agreement between Italy and Libya and for better migration policies in Europe for the control of migratory flows.

These papers have had significant media coverage at national and international level. There are at least 330 entries recorded in the main national and local newspapers and weeklies (e.g. la Repubblica, L'Osservatorio Romano, Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, Avvenire, l'Espresso, Panorama, Libero, La Gazzetta dello Sport, La Sicilia, Gazzetta del Sud, etc.), news (e.g. TG La7, Tg1, Tg2, SkyTg24, RaiNews24, etc.), radio (e.g. BBC Radio, Radio1Rai, Radio Vaticana, GRRadio24, etc.), press agencies (e.g. Ansamed, Lapresse, Redattoresociale, Agensir, Ansa, Agi, etc.). All these papers have also had a relevant media coverage at the EU level (available upon request). Most importantly, these reports have also enabled Oxfam and the others #OpenEurope partners to influence the public debate around these issues, with an effect on the position expressed by them and, sometimes, with a direct effect on policy and practice change. Namely,

- The *hotspot* policy paper was presented in the Parliament 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016, and helped us to shed light on the actual practices put forward within the hotspot approach towards migrants disembarked. 18 months later, different accounts outline how the procedures put in place by the Italian authorities in terms of recognition, registration and (photographical) identification of migrants arriving in Italy have improved after Oxfam and other actors reports on the subject,

even if as we write, hotspots are still not being regulated by a proper EU and Italian law;

- The *Great Expectation* report on minors, published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2016, came out in a critical moment to influence the speedy approbation of the Italian law no. 47 on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 on “Provisions on the subject of protection measures of unaccompanied foreign minors”, that institutionalized some good practices, such as volunteer guardians for unaccompanied minors. Oxfam followed, as part of a NGOs/CSOs network, the process of law development up to the approbation and it is still following the implementation decrees phase;
- The ‘*You aren’t human any more*’ paper came out this July, at a crucial timing, when Italy announced its capacity building mission to the Lybian Coast guard, and helped to understand the reality faced by the people that would be brought back to Lybian shores. The report was therefore crucial to question Italy’s policy around this, leading to parliamentary interrogations and triggering a positioning of different policy makers. Oxfam Italy was then the first NGO to call for a cancellation of the agreements with Libya – a request that 7 months on is in the programs and agenda of some relevant parties running for elections next March 2018.

## 5. EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Efficiency and effectiveness of the action have been analyzed by taking into account the following aspects:

- type of vulnerability in relation to the assisted beneficiaries. As mentioned, the project is targeting migrants out of the system and works with the most vulnerable among the disadvantaged;
- activities carried out, quality of work and services delivered: beyond the total number of beneficiaries reached (2,345 over a period of 16 months).

Once again, it is important to highlight the different sectors of intervention along with the characteristics and the impact of each different action within the project, also in qualitative terms. The project ranges from legal assistance to guidance to services and material support through NFIs distribution, as well as psychological support, legal aid for unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA), and temporary reception in Pachino's structure.

**Kit distribution legal information and service orientation:** specifically, the distribution of hygiene kits and safety kits (backpacks) containing relevant items allowed to meet some of the most urgent needs of the migrants assisted by OIT operators in the street. Mobile teams have distributed the backpacks to those migrants out of the reception system following the legal information and after a first preliminary contact (thus, those migrants spending the night in the street have received the backpacks, for example migrants living in the area below the Caltanissetta overpass, near the structure that hosts the CARA, the CIE and the Immigration Office). Support provided to beneficiaries include legal information,

facilitation and guidance to services in the area with informative materials (Guide to Rights and to Services) and, subsequently, the distribution of the backpack. Hygiene kits have been designed for the Info Point activities in order to be distributed during a second or third contact, and for more specific needs. Therefore, they respond more comprehensively to the needs identified. During the distributions, it was also necessary to provide assistance to a limited number (65 in total) of Italian and European citizens considered highly vulnerable. In line with the protection approach, this choice was also oriented towards ensuring inclusion and promoting social cohesion between the main target of the humanitarian response and the local community. This type of approach aims to have a positive impact on the acceptance of the project by the local communities, as well as to reduce potential tensions and/or risks which may lead easily to further deterioration in such vulnerable contexts, for both beneficiaries and OIT operators.

Project flexibility was identified as another significant indicator, and it has been intended as the contextual changes requiring to adapt and revise the project intervention in terms of strategy and beneficiaries assisted. Since its launch to date, the project faced an evolution due to the fast-changing context related to migration which is a complex multi-faceted phenomenon. The first semester of the intervention corresponded to the hotspot approach (Lampedusa and Pozzallo were the first two hotspots) and the issue of rejected migrants required to focus on the so-called “rejected migrants”. The project approach was then gradually re-defined, the target of the response was expanded in line with the vulnerabilities identified during the first implementation phase, and project activities became more structured. With the arrival of a Humanitarian Programme Manager (HPM) at the beginning of 2017, an internal review process started in line with new needs and changes. In turn, the need to realign the action led to a necessary slowing down of some activities, in order to reorganize the internal structure on more solid basis in 2017. The accuracy with which the project partner Borderline provided a legal training to the OIT operators also allowed adequate response in terms of legal information. MEDU has instead helped to train OIT operators to recognize and identify beneficiaries' vulnerabilities. Oxfam's GHT support on protection issues was equally critical.

The Mobile Team operational modality, counting on a socio-legal operator and a cultural mediator, has proved to be efficient as it has allowed to reach out to the many situations of migrants in need in the street and to offer support with basic items, in addition to guidance in terms of services and basic information.

The need to expand the geographical coverage and to enhance the capacity to be present in several areas simultaneously, pushed OIT to increase soon the number of Teams dedicated to this activity. Therefore, a first team has been operating since May 2016 covering Catania area, and a second one was added since September to cover the provinces of Messina, Ragusa, Caltanissetta, Agrigento where less services are available if compared to Catania. In the event of alerts and reports from partners and/or other actors, which often occur without notice, the mobile teams respond as quickly as possible with an agile structure able to reach the areas where it's most needed. For instance, it takes about 1,5 hours for the mobile team to reach Caltanissetta, 1 hour to Messina. As another example, when a boat full of rejected migrants left Lampedusa, IOM operators have immediately informed the OIT team, and 2,5 hours later OIT was on the spot. The team was often deployed also in case of minors who decided to abandon the reception

centres, ensuring a direct presence where necessary, or activating other resources and services already present on spot. The mobile teams work in the street for the 70% of their time and, in general, OIT operators are in charge of indicating and facilitating access to services. Given the increasingly complex realities, the relationship between teams and beneficiaries is often deepened and after a first contact, a follow-up is necessary to fill in the gaps of the reception system on various fronts. Therefore, the management of time and work of the operators often varied during the different phases of the project. In principle, the role of the operators is to act as intermediaries between public social services and the person in need. This may require more resources and more efforts from the operators' side, depending on the vulnerability level of the beneficiary. In terms of access to public and private social services it is worth to mention the publication and dissemination of a "Guide to Services" which indicates in four different languages (Tigrino, Arabic, French, English) what is effectively accessible for migrants on the territory. To increase further the impact of the action, in addition to the mobile teams, an Infopoint was introduced in July 2017 near Catania railway station, which was identified as one of the major transit areas.

Coordinated action, networking with partners and service mapping were crucial in such fragmented context, allowing the mobilization of partners and activating in parallel the same services with a view to empower the resources responsible for each service, not least to generate a positive effect on beneficiaries. Sixteen months after the launch of the project in Rome and Catania (June 2016) in the presence of all actors involved, Oxfam is now recognized in Sicily as the lead for referrals<sup>36</sup>. Increased exchanges and direct synergies between project partners led in fact to a good level of interaction between the legal assistance provided by Borderline Sicilia and Diaconia Valdese in Pachino, where the project supports a structure initially conceived as a safe place of transit for migrants (awaiting completion of C3<sup>37</sup>, which is the entry step into reception and formalization for asylum seekers). Yet, between Borderline Sicilia and MEDU, for cases of former alleged smugglers out of Ragusa prison. The example of Caritas in Ragusa, is also encouraging: after initial support by the operators of #OpenEurope, Caritas is currently reaching out directly to lawyers and police to ask for assistance in case of manifestations of interest of the beneficiaries. Despite having proposed and put in place an effective model, project staff and partners came across the gaps of a reception system that often pushes migrants to abandon the structures in Sicily to try to reach other European countries. As we know, migrants are then pushed back in other border areas such as Ventimiglia. Given this context, #OpenEurope scaled up and became a national program, operational also in Liguria since August 2017, with a base in Ventimiglia.

The intervention strategy of #OpenEurope is co-financed by the Association of Foundations and Savings Banks (ACRI), Diaconia Valdese, Oxfam International, Oxfam Intermon (Spain), Oxfam America and Oxfam Germany. During the period of reference, the program spent a total of 546,612 euro<sup>38</sup>. A summary of the main costs of #OpenEurope is outlined in the table below.

Action	Amount in Euro	Percentage
A. Mobile team, legal information and service orientation	129,783 €	24%
B. Basic support	70,153 €	13%
C. Protection and support to minors	59,417 €	11%
D. Advocacy and communication	77,208 €	14%
E. Other	48.872 €	9%
F. Coordination (HPM, MEAL, Adm., etc.)	120,203 €	22%
<i>Subtotal Actions</i>	<i>505,636 €</i>	<i>93%</i>
G. Overheads	40,976 €	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>546,612 €</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 – Summary of the costs of the main components of #OpenEurope from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2016 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, based on administrative data provided by OIT. Source: authors.

## 6. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

#OpenEurope allowed to identify the following good practices at different levels:

- the service mapping for quality-check of the existing service providers in the areas of intervention, which allowed a more effective response and to reach an increasing number of beneficiaries by encouraging on one hand, migrants to do self-referrals, and by pushing on the other hand the responsible services to deliver support with adequate levels and standards;
- the pilot cases followed by Borderline (for example the criminal suits in the case of former forced smugglers) as strategic litigation tools to redirect the guiding principles of National Courts. Forced smugglers, for instance, have been real case studies for Borderline. In other terms case studies that make jurisprudence by creating an important multiplier effect of the intervention for future legal support to cases;
- thanks to the legal support of Borderline Sicily, the OIT team have finalized a *vademecum* on key concepts and principles of the EU and Italian legal framework on immigrants to guide socio-legal operators in the provision of a correct legal information;
- the multidisciplinary training courses currently in progress for operators working in the reception system are the result of the synergies between partners so to share the good practices resulting from specific expertise in different sectors;
- practices and experiences developed by Accoglierete on protection of unaccompanied minors and their social inclusion. Today, the role of legal guardian is a consolidated practice. And Accoglierete is organizing awareness sessions and ad hoc trainings for legal guardians so to promote an adequate and shared protection system;
- the well-structured relationship with some institutions and some local

authorities such as the Municipality of Messina (where OIT manages the minor SPRAR, as a complementary intervention to the present project). The Municipality has recently promoted a course for operators offering available free space;

- the efficient use and the improvement of data collection, which is functional since November 2016, as a tool aimed at re-orienting the program, but also at feeding in joint advocacy activities.

## 7. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The #OpenEurope intervention strategy included the achievement of some products (output) and expected results (outcome) to enable the pursuit of the overall program goal. The table below shows a summary of the main findings verified at result level for each of the expected products during the reference period.

Strategy	Results June 2016-September 2017	Conclusions
<p><u>Objective</u> To contribute to the fulfillment of the fundamental rights of migrant women, men and children through assistance to migrants on the move in Italy in order to enable them to claim for the rights and to live in better conditions and in dignity</p>		
<p><u>Result</u> 2,724 vulnerable migrants - women, men and unaccompanied minors - in eastern and western Sicily benefit from enhanced protection and better access to basic services through a) provision of adequate information on their rights, referral to basic services and legal support, b) distribution of in kind assistance, c) a response evidence based to the prevailing narrative on migration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2,345 direct beneficiaries (2,157 males and 188 females)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decreased number of beneficiaries is largely due to the decreased number of arrivals resulting from the agreements with Libya</li> <li>• The number of beneficiaries is expected to increase between October and December 2017 due to the activities started in Palermo with the partner Porco Rosso and to the <i>ongoing</i> trainings to operators from the reception system for asylum seekers in Messina and unaccompanied foreign minors in Syracuse.</li> </ul>

Strategy	Results June 2016-September 2017	Conclusions
<p><u>Output 1</u> A network of available quality-checked services is guaranteed in at least two districts in eastern and western Sicily (Catania and Caltanissetta-Agrigento) and is accessible for people on the move</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activated network of actors ensuring services to migrants on the move</li> <li>• Services for people in transit mapped and advertised through leaflets in 4 different languages (Arabic, English, French, Tigrino)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular mapping and update of the available services to ensure that they are accessible to migrants</li> </ul>
<p><u>Output 2</u> People in transit out of the public reception system in 4 districts of eastern and western Sicily (Catania, Siracusa, Ragusa, Agrigento) benefit from the protection they are entitled to through legal assistance and ad hoc services (i.e. support to minors and psychological support) according to their needs and through informed decision concerning their rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catania: 28 legal practices</li> <li>• Siracusa: 1 legal practice, 537 cases of unaccompanied foreign minors supported</li> <li>• Ragusa: 40 legal practices, 219 psychological supports</li> <li>• Agrigento: 1 legal practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the support to coordination efforts among the different partners, strengthen internal and external communication within the present partnership and networking in different areas with public and private actors</li> </ul>
<p><u>Output 3</u> Vulnerable migrants in hotspot areas and regional hubs (Pozzallo, Agrigento) and other landing areas (Catania, Augusta, Agrigento) have received information on their rights and/or have been referred to healthcare and social services according to their needs by (2) Oxfam mobile teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catania: 663 legal information, 469 orientations to basic services</li> <li>• Siracusa: 23 legal information, 23 orientations to basic services</li> <li>• Ragusa: 84 legal information, 56 orientations to basic services,</li> <li>• Agrigento: 18 legal information, 25 orientations to basic services</li> <li>• Messina: 32 legal information, 20 orientations to basic services</li> <li>• Caltanissetta: 150 legal information, 80 orientation to basic services, 2 legal practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase self-referrals limiting individual case management to situations of high vulnerability and special needs</li> <li>• Maximize the operational modality of the mobile team adapting to the evolution of the context</li> <li>• Scale up the Sicily experience to other Italian regions (such as the north of the country) facing large scale migration</li> <li>• Elaborate a strategy for better integration of migrants in Sicily</li> </ul>
<p><u>Output 4</u> Most vulnerable migrants among women, minors and men are supported with basic items while people in need are referred to ad-hoc structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 998 dignity and hygiene kits and 912 phone cards distributed</li> <li>• 20 vulnerable migrants hosted in Pachino</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and adapt kit distribution methods according to the future intervention strategy of #OpenEurope</li> </ul>

Strategy	Results June 2016-September 2017	Conclusions
<p><u>Output 5</u> The prevailing negative narrative on migrants is opposed by public awareness activities and migration policies and practices in Italy and in the European Union are influenced through advocacy actions in cooperation with other national and European networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 330 press releases for the 3 papers published by #OpenEurope (on main national and local newspapers and weeklies, radio and press agencies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start looking at options and ways forward for the development of an advocacy strategy at regional level, besides the national one</li> </ul>

Table 4 – Summary of key findings over the period June 2016-September 2017. Source: authors.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The #OpenEurope program has guaranteed to migrants out of the protection and reception system, i.e. *the most vulnerable among the disadvantaged*, effective and adequate assistance to respond to their basic needs, while guaranteeing the fundamental rights of men, women and children who arrived in Sicily. The heterogeneous partnership involved with the integration of key complementary actions, maximized not only the wellbeing of the direct beneficiaries, but also coordination processes and networking across the Sicilian territory in order to improve the reception system and its functioning. A very ambitious strategy which allowed, subsequently, to enhance the objectives, the skills and the thematic specializations of all actors involved and to multiply the effects of the action. Future challenges of the project include, on the one hand, the subsidiarity of the intervention, in order to support a management of the reception system which is professional, effective and able of interacting with all institutions involved. Similarly, the systemic dimension is key to guide the action more and more towards networking and towards the finding of links between legislation and praxis. It is recommended to continue to invest in periodic regular monitoring and evaluation activities, to ensure adequate quality of work following in parallel the evolution of the context. Constant updating for the administrative management remains as well a priority for OIT in order to guarantee positive progress and correct project implementation.

With the launch of protection activities in Palermo in October 2017, along with the trainings carried out in different provinces of Sicily and the startup of legal information and facilitation of access to basic services in Ventimiglia, #OpenEurope scaled up its response across Sicily starting to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable migrants in other parts of the country particularly exposed to large scale migration. Thus, more coordination efforts are strategic for future effectiveness of the action, given the fast-changing context. Oxfam's decision to focus more on the protection approach and on referral to basic services is therefore consistent with the new challenges of #OpenEurope. In parallel, the influencing component and the advocacy addressed to institutions and policy makers requires further support in order to influence both, national and local policies and regulations (i.e. Municipalities and Region), as well as to create the basis for increasing the pressure at the European level, through the Oxfam Confederation. Internal and external communication of the program can also allow partners to increase their visibility and access to information on very complex and sensitive issues, expanding the impact of activities in the different geographical areas in which partners operate, and where beneficiaries are living. Beside the emergency situation that Italy is facing cyclically, resilience and integration are two other significant axes of work in order to generate positive, lasting and sustainable social change. The future strategy of #OpenEurope is based on a rather consolidated and mature partnership. Finally, the evidence on the positive work carried out can help to improve further the overall performance of the program to ensure the fulfillment of the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable migrants in Italy.

# NOTE

<sup>1</sup> <http://accoglierete.org/it/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.borderlinesicilia.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.diaconiavaldese.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mediciperidiritiumani.org/>

<sup>5</sup> The field trip in Sicily was carried out from the 13th to the 16th of November 2017 by the Knowledge Coordinator and the Humanitarian Desk Officer of Oxfam Italia.

<sup>6</sup> Oxfam Common Approach for MEL and Social Accountability.

<sup>7</sup> The agreement between the two Governments was signed on February 2, 2017. The text is available at the following link [http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti\\_accordo\\_italia-libia\\_ecco\\_cosa\\_contiene\\_in\\_memorandum-157464439/](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti_accordo_italia-libia_ecco_cosa_contiene_in_memorandum-157464439/)

<sup>8</sup>Source: Italian Government, Ministry of the Interior, 2017, Daily statistical dashboard on landings and reception of migrants (10 November 2017), Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, p. 1. Available on <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>

<sup>9</sup>Source: Italian Government, Ministry of the Interior, 2017, op. cit., p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, monitoring and evaluation system for the #OpenEurope program. Data update as at 30 September, 2017

<sup>11</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, monitoring and evaluation system for the program, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Source: G. Capitani *Hotspot: Rights denied* (Oxford: Oxfam, May 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Source: Missing Migrants Project of the International Organization for Migration, 2017. Data update as at 23 November, 2017. Available on <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

<sup>14</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, monitoring and evaluation system of the program, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> With regard to the total number of beneficiaries, 65 are of Italian and/or European origin and have received a kit with items for the safety and dignity of the person. from Oxfam Italia

<sup>16</sup> Source: Borderline, monitoring and evaluation system for the #OpenEurope program. Data update as of September 30, 2017

<sup>17</sup> Diaconia Valdese temporary reception structure in the center of Pachino has a capacity of 8 people and consists of 3 rooms (2 rooms with 3 beds each and 1 room with two beds), two bathrooms, a kitchen and a common area. The apartment is air-conditioned (hot and cold) and has internet access.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Diaconia Valdese, monitoring system of the #OpenEurope program. Data update as at 30 September 2017

<sup>19</sup> Italian language is taught for at least 4 hours per week within the Pachino facility by qualified personnel. Often these migrants take advantage of another 4 hours per week thanks to courses in the local school, between September and June.

<sup>20</sup> Diaconia Valdese in Pachino offers a linguistic-cultural mediation service for 8-10 hours a week.

<sup>21</sup> The stay of the guests in the Pachino structure varies from 3 weeks to 12 months, depending on the complexity of the case.

<sup>22</sup> Source: MEDU, monitoring system of the #OpenEurope program. Data update as at 30 September 2017

<sup>23</sup> Each psychological visit lasts 45-50 minutes on average. At least 3-4 psychological visits are required to issue a certificate.

<sup>24</sup> During the interview with MEDU, it emerged that, according to their internal estimates, 75-85% of migrants may have suffered psychological violence with medium and long-term repercussions on the individual.

<sup>25</sup> More information on the territorial commissions is available on the Italian Ministry of Interior's website at the following link: <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/immigrazione-e-asilo/protezione-internazionale/commissioni-territoriali-riconoscimento-protezione-internazionale>

<sup>26</sup> Source: AccoglieRete, monitoring system of the #OpenEurope program. Data update as of September 30, 2017

<sup>27</sup> The other cities in which the lawsuits were brought are Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Messina, Syracuse.

<sup>28</sup> Legal information was also provided in Agrigento (18 cases), Messina (32 cases), Ragusa (84 cases), Syracuse (23 cases).

<sup>29</sup> Guidance towards basic services was also assured in Agrigento (25 cases), Messina (20 cases), Ragusa (56 cases), Syracuse (28 cases).

<sup>30</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, data processing of the monitoring and evaluation system of the #OpenEurope project.

<sup>31</sup> The protections for unaccompanied foreign minors provided by Italian legislation lapse at the age of 18.

<sup>32</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, data elaboration of the questionnaire filled in by migrants assisted by the #OpenEurope mobile team. Update as of September 30, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> The paper is available online at the following link [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-hotspots-migrants-italy-220616-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-hotspots-migrants-italy-220616-en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> The paper is available online at the following link [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/children\\_alone\\_pulled\\_from\\_the\\_sea\\_fallen\\_by\\_the\\_wayside.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/children_alone_pulled_from_the_sea_fallen_by_the_wayside.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> The paper is available at the following link <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/you-arent-human-any-more-migrants-expose-harrowing-situation-libya-and-impact-eu>

<sup>36</sup> For referral, in this document, we mean the reference system to the specialized services in charge.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of declarations by foreigners requesting recognition of refugee status in Italy under the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951

<sup>38</sup> Source: Oxfam Italia, #OpenEurope administrative data updated as of September 30, 2017.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email [policy@oxfam.it](mailto:policy@oxfam.it)

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