



Housing Integration Project Case Study

Ebrima, The Gambia, 20-years-old

**Time in
program:
5 months**

**Salary
secured:
€1450
p/month**

**Money
saved:
€2000**

**29.5
support
hours
received**

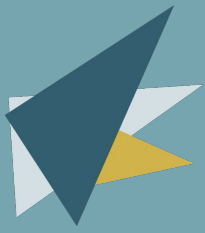
Summary

Ebrima was one of the first young people to live in the Velos Youth Young Person's Apartment. Having previously been without a supportive network or secure place to stay, Ebrima entered the apartment with a mixture of relief and excitement, determined to make the most of all the support and services available. After just six weeks of intensive support from Velos Youth, Ebrima was selected from many applicants to work in a boutique hotel on the Greek island of Samos as a cleaner, with a fair wage and a probationary employment contract. Just two weeks after his arrival to Samos, he had made such a good impression he was promoted and trained as a waiter, and received a contract covering the remainder of the tourist season. Velos Youth is now supporting him to find work in Athens, crystallizing the independence he has developed in the previous months.

Ebrima's Journey with Velos Youth

Ebrima is a very motivated young man who came to Velos Youth in order to receive support with finding secure accommodation and employment. Ebrima had previously spent two months working on a rural farm, from which he had returned to Athens with no money and no accommodation to move into. This farming job had exhausted him as it required him to work seven days a week, and 12 hours per day. For this he received just 25 euros each day and was not issued an employment contract. Ebrima had not felt he could refuse this job "opportunity" due to the enormous pressure he received from his family in The Gambia. Without this money, his brothers and sisters would no longer be able to go to school.

During job counselling sessions with the Velos Youth Livelihood Officer Ebrima shared his urgent need to find paid work again, and explained that he lacked both the knowledge and the confidence to do this. He wanted to earn a fair wage, work regular hours and have the security provided by an employment contract; basic requirements that all people regardless of their background need to live stable and happy lives. Ebrima's ideas for immediate employment included work in a factory or in the tourism sector. Longer-term, Ebrima referred to his dream of becoming a doctor, to reduce the high infant mortality in his country.



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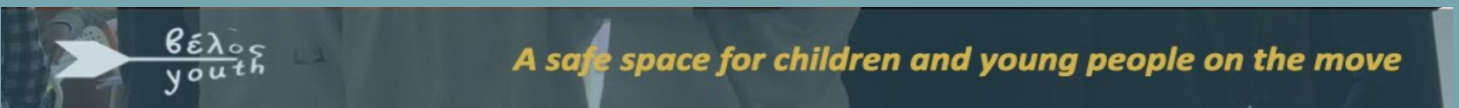
During his first week in the apartment, an action plan with long and short-term goals covering work, education, life-skills, and physical and mental wellbeing was created. The plan was the result of Ebrima working alongside the holistic range of Velos Youth professionals available, to devise a bespoke plan that was attainable but would push him to achieve his goals as quickly as was felt possible. A significant amount was achieved in the first few weeks; Ebrima completed his CV, learned how to search for a job, and how to prepare for a job interview. Ebrima also applied successfully for an unemployment card and a free transportation card, with which he could look for jobs and attend interviews in person. Guidance was provided by the Velos Youth team every step of the way, while the workshops and activities offered as part of the program supported the improvement of his communicational and self-presentation skills.

In addition, he attended the Greek classes provided by Velos Youth each day and worked closely alongside the teacher to start learning the basics of the language. This was supported by independent study, an area in which Ebrima became a role model for the young people with whom he shared the apartment. Ebrima also benefited from the Learning Support Sessions held at the Velos Youth Centre each afternoon, a space where he could bring the homework set and work through it with one of the teams native Greek speakers.

"I am really thankful for this opportunity. I want to thank all the people here for their support and the other boys in the apartment. I enjoyed the time in the apartment and I learned a lot of things. I felt you all as a family."

As was to be expected given the high levels of unemployment in Greece, Ebrima faced many rejections and often no response at all from the places which he applied to work. He became increasingly disheartened and suffered feelings of hopelessness, and therefore a lot of discussions were focused on managing this and overcoming the low self-esteem that can easily follow a period of unemployment. Learning how not to take these rejections personally was one of the central goals of the job counselling sessions.

One of the jobs that Ebrima applied for was the position of a cleaner in a boutique hotel on the Greek island of Samos; a role advertisement that had been shared directly with Velos Youth Livelihoods Officer. Following a successful interview with the company, Ebrima was selected from a large number of applicants and signed a one-month contract that has since been renewed until the end of the tourist season. His take-home pay is €850 euros per month plus tips, a good wage for Greece and significantly higher than the minimum wage of €606 (which is typically paid for hospitality jobs). Meals and accommodation are also covered by the employer, which has created a great opportunity for Ebrima to begin to save money. After a successful first two weeks Ebrima had made such a positive impression on the company, he was asked to join the hotel restaurant waiting staff.





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Ebrima's feedback about the job is very positive. During our weekly follow-ups, he repeatedly mentions that his colleagues are very friendly and that the working conditions are unexpectedly good. He has a very supportive manager who has helped him with bureaucratic issues that have arisen. This includes the issuing of a bank account; something that is notoriously difficult for refugees in Greece, is a common barrier to legitimate employment, and a key driver of black market labour. Ebrima also often refers to the opportunity he has had to learn and grow, by working alongside experienced professionals. He believes that the door will be open for him to work there next year for the entire season if he chooses (May - October).

Since finding employment Ebrima's wellbeing has improved significantly, and his self-confidence and belief in his ability to find further employment when his current contract ends has grown beyond recognition. Ebrima has managed to save over €2,000 euros since moving to the island, with which he plans to acquire a motorbike licence in order to work for a delivery company in Athens through autumn and winter. Velos Youth will work with him to make a strong plan and realistic budget for this next chapter.

While Ebrima's success is the result of his own hard work and determination, he is grateful for the support he has received along the way. Above all, Ebrima feels positively about his future and ready for whatever it may hold.

Cost Analysis

Between June and October 2021, Ebrima received 14.5 hours of professional support and attended 15 hours of Greek classes and group workshops; a cost of **€306**.

Due to the short-term nature of Ebrima's employment his place in the apartment was reserved whilst he was away, to enable him to return to Athens at the end of the tourist season; a cost of **€1,622**.

The full cost of supporting Ebrima over the course of 5 months was therefore **€1,928**.

For every €1 spent supporting him, Ebrima has earned over €3.50 to move forward on his journey to autonomy.