

Gender-based Violence Programme

Serbia – Refugee and Migrant Response

November 2019

Focus on Phase II of the programme *Action Against Gender-based Violence Affecting Refugee and Migrant Women and Children in Greece, Italy, Serbia and Bulgaria*
October 2018 – September 2019

Situation Analysis

Serbia remains a country of transit for refugees and migrants, despite the closure of the Balkan route in 2016. In 2018, around 18,000 migrants and refugees entered the country, almost half of them children (70 per cent boys; 30 per cent girls). Between January and September 2019, the same numbers arrived (20 per cent of them children, of whom an estimated 60 per cent were being unaccompanied or separated). A monthly average of 3,000 people are accommodated in reception centres in any given month: 1 in every 4 being a child and 1 in every 5 a girl. Almost 50 percent of the children in reception centers are registered as unaccompanied boys.

Fewer safe and legal pathways are available to migrants to continue their journeys since Hungary cut admissions in 2018 from 50 people per week to around 10, increasing the risks of smuggling and trafficking.

Most refugees and migrants live in reception centres that offer basic support, but lack safe spaces to rest, and provide limited specialized and community-based psychosocial support. A recent research on migrant and refugee women and girls revealed numerous concerns related to gender-based violence (GBV), particularly to physical and sexual violence – often at the hands of intimate partners.

Referrals to specialized services, particularly those for sexual violence survivors and mental disorders, remain limited, and girls still face linguistic and social barriers in seeking support. The Serbian authorities have invested in improved reception conditions and greater access to services. However, major challenges related to care and protection needs persist, particularly for women and girls, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC,) and people with disabilities.

Strategy

In Serbia, the GBV response has been integrated into UNICEF's overall programme. The GBV component includes the establishment of safe spaces for women and girls, documentation of good practices to position women and girls at the heart of GBV prevention and response, and the mainstreaming of GBV into all programme activities.

UNICEF provides advocacy, technical assistance and protection guidance to a range of stakeholders, and plays a key role in the coordination of the Child Protection (CP) Working Group, supporting the GBV Working Group, and mainstreaming GBV and CP into broader EU migration management initiatives.

Achievements

UNICEF's response in Serbia addresses challenges in access to services for women and girls with a focus on GBV services. Between September 2018 and September 2019, 1,329 individuals accessed two Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS) and one Child-Friendly Space (CFS) managed by the Adventist Development and Relief


Agency (ADRA)³ and Info Park⁴: 791 women; 327 adolescent girls and 211 adolescent boys. In all, 75 per cent of beneficiaries polled in April 2019 reported satisfaction for the services received – a percentage that had grown to 82 per cent by September.

KEY POPULATION FIGURES¹

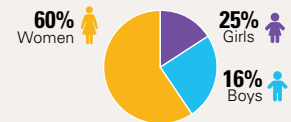
- 3,000** people are on average accommodated in reception centres each month 
- 1** in every **4** is a child 
- 1** in every **5** is a girl 

KEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE²

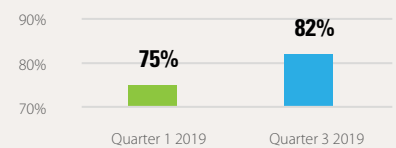
(October 2018 – September 2019)


1329 GBV survivors and individuals at risk who have accessed GBV services⁵ 


TARGET 500
REACHED 1329



Percentage of polled beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with the services received




90% of women and girls polled reported they're satisfied with the competency of the staff 


62 frontline workers trained 

84% of previously trained frontline workers now know how and where to refer GBV cases 

UNICEF works with the National University of Serbia to develop a dedicated GBV and Child Protection in Emergency Lifelong course for future social workers.

UNICEF-BPRM⁶ Partners

Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs Commissariat for Refugees and Migration 

ADRA, Info Park 

Around 90 per cent of beneficiaries reported being satisfied with the competency of the staff and 84 per cent would recommend the service to others. This trend was confirmed by UNICEF assessments in March and August 2019, which evaluated the improvements in the services offered by its partners.

As of June 2019, a total of 62 frontline workers had been trained on GBV prevention and response. A pool of 13 trainers is now available to deliver a four-day integrated training programme on child protection and GBV, developed by UNICEF. A post-training survey found that 84 per cent of participants confirmed the good quality of the training, with 81 per cent reporting a high or very high understanding of GBV as a result of the UNICEF training.

Preliminary findings from a recent evaluation of the Country Programme recognize UNICEF's response to migrant and refugee

crisis as highly effective in achieving positive results, particularly in gender sensitive programming for women and girls and the prevention of GBV, as well as support for UASC and children in distress.

"It's good that there is a place that I know is just for us. There are no men there, no husband goes there. And everything I need, I know where I can ask. (...) And for my daughter, I like her to be here because I know where she is, I know what she's doing, and she can study and learn as well."
– Afghani Woman in a WGSS

Key institutional and civil society partners report having benefited from UNICEF technical assistance, guidance and tools, such as the Child Protection Standard Operating Procedures and the Adolescent Girls Safety and Resilience Pocket [Guide](#).



Widespread GBV

[Research](#) by UNICEF's implementing partner, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), on women and girls in transit in Serbia found that many reported GBV risks, including physical and sexual violence, and a prevalence of intimate partner violence. Women traveling alone and girls from ethnic minorities were among the most vulnerable in asylum centres, where they faced the additional risk of sexual harassment. Most respondents agreed that girls and women hesitate to report cases of violence. Consequently, many find themselves isolated and unsupported when experiencing such violence.

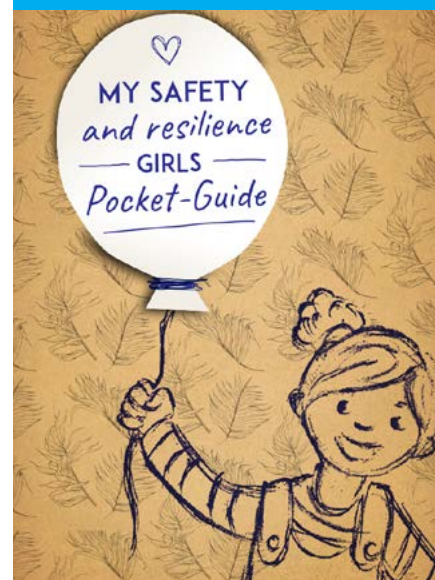
In focus – Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) in Serbia

Since early 2018, UNICEF has developed programmes to reach the most-at-risk women and girls, during their stay in reception centres or outside the formal system. Mobile outreach teams of well-trained GBV specialists and cultural mediators, equipped with rapid risk-assessment tools, such as identification methods, have been key to reach women and girls on the move. In addition, the development of fully-fledged women and girls safe spaces (WGSS) has been vital for women and girls staying in Serbia for longer. Each month, safe spaces are visited by over 100 beneficiaries who access different services, such as information, recreational and occupational

activities, vocational training, sports and transformative workshops, as well as GBV-response services.

Women and girls have said that the biggest impacts of the safe spaces have been an increased sense of safety and the development of stronger support networks. Indeed, internal evaluations showed that 95 percent of women and girls participating in activities were satisfied or felt good and safe. Finally, gender transformative workshops held at the safe spaces have contributed to greater awareness among women and girls about their rights and available protection services.

This Pocket-Guide defines guidelines to design, develop, implement and evaluate a girls' empowerment programme with Roma communities and migrant and refugee populations in Serbia and Bulgaria.




Safe Spaces: A Snapshot

Safe spaces provide safe surroundings for refugee and migrant women and girls. Activities aim to empower them, help them reach their potential, amplify their voices and increase their awareness of their own strengths. Women and girls on the move are often restricted and silenced in public spaces, and can use safe spaces to rest, move and talk freely. They are also venues gender transformative workshops for adolescent girls who want to learn, play, and thrive. In addition, safe spaces are entry points for safe and confidential GBV disclosure and access to specialized services.

Endnotes

- ¹ UNICEF Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe Situation Report # 33.
- ² All data are drawn from UNICEF's regular Monitoring and Evaluation System.
- ³ To know more about ADRA visit <https://adra.org/>
- ⁴ To Know more about Info Park visit <https://www.facebook.com/pg/infoparkserbia/about/>
- ⁵ The My Safety and Resilience Pocket Guide is available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/reports/my-safety-and-resilience>
- ⁶ Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

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unicef  for every child