



# Regional Humanitarian Situation Report # 1

**12 OCTOBER 2015: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE**

**SITUATION IN NUMBERS**

## Highlights

- *Refugees and migrants have continued to steadily enter Europe at levels not seen since World World II, primarily through Greece from Turkey, continuing north through Western Balkans and then onwards to Western Europe.*
- *There is an urgent need to ensure children and their families are protected from the cold and rainy weather, improve child nutrition, and increase national capacities to effectively identify and address child protection risks and act in the best interests of children on the move.*
- *All children going through the registration process in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia have access to the seven child friendly spaces UNICEF has established at key registration and country entry/exit points, where between 100 and 200 children participate in child friendly activities at any given time.*
- *Three mother and baby care facilities provide support and counseling to lactating mothers and their children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in Serbia and Croatia.*
- *Immediate funding needs for the next three months in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia combined are more than US\$1 million.*

## Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

In 2015, refugee and migrant levels in Europe have reached unprecedented levels since World World II. In 2015, over 80 per cent of people arriving in Europe through Greece and the Western Balkans, are escaping conflict. As of 12 October 2015, UNHCR estimated that over 590,585 people had arrived in Europe by sea, 55 per cent of whom were Syrian. This number is expected to reach 700,000 by the end of the year. One in every four asylum seekers in the EU is a child. A total of 141,525 children sought asylum in the European Union between January and July 2015 with an average of 20,217 children every month, according to Eurostat data as of 9 October 2015.

Most children have undertaken perilous journeys, exposed to the elements and the threat of smugglers. Children are exhausted and have trouble sleeping. They need a safe place to rest and play, appropriate shelter, adapted nutrition and WASH facilities. Many of them require psychological support and medical

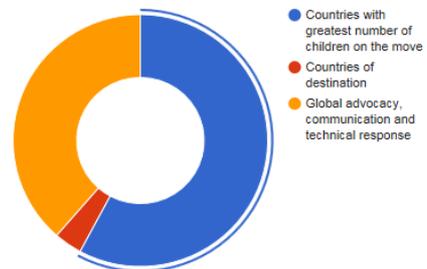
**590,585**  
# of arrivals by sea in Europe in 2015  
(UNHCR, 12 October 2015)  
**18%** are children

**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**  
**132,782**  
# of arrivals registered by the Ministry of Interior for the period 19 June 2015 - 12 October 2015  
**21%** are children

**Serbia**  
**208,893**  
# of arrivals registered in the Republic of Serbia from 1 January to 12 October 2015  
**23%** are children

**Croatia**  
**160,421**  
# of refugees and migrants registered by the Croatian Ministry of Home Affairs from 16 September to 12 October 2015  
*No disaggregated data is available*

**UNICEF Appeal 2015/2016**  
**US\$14,019,135**



■ Funding Received ■ Funding Gap

assistance as they are often traumatized and physically exhausted by the long journey. Breastfeeding mothers need appropriate conditions to continue providing adequate care for their infants and young children. Vulnerable children, especially children separated from their families during the journey, require immediate and adequate protection by responsible authorities. These are only a few of the most urgent humanitarian needs that children on the move have on their journey as they seek refuge in Europe.

### The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Since June 2015, more than 132,000 people, have been registered by police in Gevgelija on the border with Greece. Around 35 per cent of those registered were women and children. These figures are likely to be grossly underestimated as the latest Government Response Plan, issued in September, indicates that as many as two thirds of people transit through the country without being registered.

Despite the changing political situation in Western Europe and the increasingly dangerous sea crossing, there is no immediate indication that the number of people on the move will change in the near future, and the Government has extended the state of emergency at the border with Greece until July 2016. During September 2015, between 4,000 and 6000 people crossed the border with Greece each day, with a peak of 10,000 on 9 October 2015. The majority of people registered originated from Syria (72%), Afghanistan (14%), Iraq (7%), and Pakistan (3%). There are children of all ages travelling with their families. Between 19 June and 1 October, 3,857 unaccompanied minors were registered at the border.

Rain and cold weather represents a major challenge for refugees and migrants arriving in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, especially when they have to wait for long hours at the border for registration. Children are confused, physically exhausted and psychologically traumatized and some need medical assistance. Through the stress of travel, some mothers are unable to breastfeed. Although food security and access to safe drinking water have generally improved over the past month, serious concerns remain about the way these services are adapted to children.

### Serbia

Since 1 January 2015, the number of people registered crossing the border into in the Republic of Serbia reached 208,893, as of 12 October 2015, but according to UNHCR estimates, at least this many refugees and migrants have also passed through Serbia without registering. Approximately 23 per cent of asylum seekers are children, most of them travelling with their parents or extended families. The majority of refugees and migrants are entering Serbia through the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Those who register, do so at the nearby Presevo One Stop Registration Centre which provides basic services: water, toilets, food, medical checks, and tents for short rests. The difficult weather conditions, however, make the need for additional shelter capacity in the waiting areas at the main entry and exit points increasingly urgent. The improvement of registration in Presevo has significantly increased humanitarian needs as thousands of asylum seekers wait outdoors, some for over 12 hours, to be registered and documented. Although the registration centre provides overnight accommodation for up to 50 women and children at a time, most refugees and migrants, leave the same day and continue their journey by bus directly to the border with Croatia at Sid, with the intention of reaching western or northern European countries. Those who decide to pursue their initial registered 'intent to seek asylum' must go to one of the five asylum centres located in Bogovadja, Banja Koviljaca, Krnjaca, Sjenica and Tutin (Central, Western and South-Western Serbia). These centres can accommodate a total of 920 people, but only 245 asylum seekers are currently staying there. Only 14 people have been granted refugee status since the beginning of the year because of the lengthy and complex asylum procedure. The number of refugees and migrants in the parks of Belgrade is decreasing, with fewer than 100 people as of 11 October.

### Croatia

During the current crisis, large numbers of refugees and migrants began arriving in Croatia on 16 September 2015. As of 12 October 2015, a total of 160,421 people had entered the country, according to the official statistics provided by the Croatian Ministry of Home Affairs. Although there is no disaggregated data available, it is estimated that between 30 and 40 per cent of them are women and children. During the first week of arrivals, refugees and migrants could enter into Croatia through one of the eight existing road border crossings with Serbia, but due to the huge influx of people only one reception and registration centre remains in use in the village of Opatovac, eastern Croatia.

The average time that refugees and migrants spend in the Opatovac reception centre has decreased from 48 hours to around 4-6 hours. The vast majority do not express an intention to stay in Croatia - only four asylum applications have been submitted so far. The refugees and migrants are then transported by buses and train to the two open border points with Hungary – Baranjsko Petrovo



Selo and Botovo. The Ministry of Interior has announced an agreement with Slovenia to allow the transit of refugees and migrants through Slovenian territory in the instance that Hungary closes the border with Croatia once the fence they are building is finished. Although families with children are given priority access to most services (including transportation and food), shelter and protection from adverse weather conditions are increasingly of concern as winter approaches. In the reception centre at Opatovac, the lack of heating and limited access to separate washing facilities has led to increased protection and health risks for children and their families. As most children have been eating only dry food for weeks, sometimes months, there is a particular concern regarding nutrition, especially for infants.

Although a tracing system has been established by the Government of Croatia to help reduce the number of family separations within the country, the system cannot help reunite families that have already split before reaching Croatia. In addition, several reported attempts to abduct children by individuals who noticed that families with children were given priority access to transport have been recorded.

Children with disabilities and their families are facing extreme difficulties during their journey – for instance there have been reports of children with cerebral palsy being carried in blankets or on the adults' shoulders throughout the journey. Currently, these children are not being systematically provided with necessary support.

### Neighbouring Countries

In Turkey, which is home to the largest Syrian refugee population in the world, the number of Syrians registered increased from 1,772,535 in June to 2,072,290 as of 2 October 2015. Meanwhile the number of Syrian child refugees surpassed 1 million, totalling 1,050,937 as of 25 August – a grim milestone in this continuing conflict. There has also been a marked increase in the number of Afghan refugees arriving in Turkey fleeing the escalating violence at home, with 10,000 registered in the month of September 2015. Refugees on the move towards Europe are currently concentrated in the coastal areas of Izmir, Mugla and Canakkale, as well as Edirne (bordering Greece and Bulgaria) and the city of Istanbul. Refugees on the move in Turkey have many needs, the most urgent being temporary shelter, access to sanitation and hygiene, meeting basic food and non-food needs, and accessing essential health services. Strengthened screening and referral for vulnerable cases, including separated and unaccompanied children, is required. Access to information is also a significant gap, as many are not being systematically informed about the registration process and access to services in Turkey, while others are reluctant to approach authorities and official structures to seek information.

Bulgaria, which was among the first European countries to be affected by Syrian refugee flows, has not seen an increase in refugee influx in the last months due to the tight border control, newly adopted legislation on counter-trafficking in human beings and still unhindered access from Greece to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. Since the beginning of the year, approximately 11,000 people (the majority from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan) have applied for asylum in Bulgaria, but a new trend is emerging: many asylum-seekers leave for Western Europe before they have even received their documents, or do not register at all. There is no information of how many people have passed through Bulgaria on their way to Western Europe without being registered. According to official national statistics, there are 900 children and 1,600 women out of a total of 2,500 asylum seekers accommodated in the centres managed by the State Agency for the Refugees. As of the end of September 2015, 154 unaccompanied children have been identified, but there is no best interest determination procedure in place and UNICEF together with UNHCR has been a strong advocate for change in procedures affecting unaccompanied and separated children.

The situation in other neighbouring countries remains stable. With the exception of two reported cases of migrant smuggling in Brcko district, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet been affected by the crisis. No border crossings by refugees and migrants have yet been registered in Albania, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Montenegro, but UNICEF has already started developing contingency plans. Although the Albanian route seems unattractive for refugees and migrants, principally because of the country's mountainous roads and the absence of long-distance public transportation, winterization and registration are considered as major priorities for the Government. Authorities in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) have shown a high level of political commitment to prepare for the passage of refugees and migrants through the territory (UNSCR 1244). The Ministry of Internal Affairs has requested support from international partners to update its current registration system, but concerns remain about the government's capacity to provide adequate basic services – namely shelter, education, and healthcare – if refugees and migrants begin to cross into Kosovo. Another concern is the possibility that Kosovars wanting to migrate for economic reasons could start to join the flow of refugees and migrants travelling to Austria and Germany. On 4 October, the first four refugees arrived in Romania, who were young men, aged 25-30, requesting asylum. Six reception centres and two camps have been set up in Timiș county, near the border with Serbia, with a total of 100 tents with beds. A National Coalition for Integration has been set up in Romania, as well as five working groups for the integration of refugees.

### Other Countries Where Children Are on the Move

Most refugees and migrants crossing the Western Balkans arrive through Greece and head for Western and Northern Europe, mainly through Hungary, Austria and Germany. Although UNICEF does not have a country programme in Greece, Hungary, Austria or Germany, these countries have seen ever increasing numbers of children, who arrive with their families or alone in dire conditions to seek protection and refuge. UNICEF made preparatory visits to Germany and Austria, and undertook rapid assessment missions to Hungary, Greece and Slovenia. The assessment missions had the following main objectives:

- Produce a rapid assessment of the situation of refugee and migrant children and women, in particular against UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the existing and planned response by the Government, national and international NGOs and the UN, and identify gaps with implications for children and women;
- Make recommendations regarding UNICEF's potential response and value added; identify potential partners for the delivery of aid to affected children and their families; and explore concrete collaborations within the regional context, including with the UNICEF Country Offices in the Western Balkans and support the National Committees for UNICEF in identifying their contribution to the response;

Results from rapid assessment missions in Hungary and Greece revealed overstretched national capacities, insufficient coordination and a lack of child protection standards in reception and transit centres. UNICEF is seriously concerned by the situation of unaccompanied children in Greece and other countries, who have been travelling on their own from the outset, but who have limited resources and appear to be very vulnerable to risks of exploitation and trafficking. As a result of the swift movement of people through South-Eastern and Central Europe, it has been difficult to detect violence and trafficking incidences. During the visit to Germany UNICEF was informed of reported incidences of gender-based violence and abuse in temporary reception centres and efforts undertaken by partners to better protect women and children. More generally, there are concerns about the length of time accompanied children and their families spend in temporary reception centres in Germany, (up to 6 months, or even longer for those from "secure countries"), as these environments are not child-friendly for extended stays, and children do not have access to education and protection services. UNICEF has established working contacts and constructive initial dialogue with Governments in the five countries - Greece, Hungary, Austria, Germany, and Slovenia.

## Humanitarian strategy

While extending protection to children and their families along their entire journey, UNICEF's main focus is on supporting governments and partners where the number of children on the move is the greatest.

Through its existing network of country offices and in collaboration with its National Committees and other partners, UNICEF is enhancing advocacy efforts, awareness raising and child rights education in host communities, as well as supporting capacity building to improve the quality and reach of protection interventions and other service delivery when needed. UNICEF will also provide technical support where requested by host countries.

In countries with the greatest number of children on the move - including Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Slovenia, Turkey and Italy, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Romania - UNICEF works with Governments and partners to support their efforts to safeguard the rights of children on the move.

UNICEF has engaged in continued policy dialogue so that the rights of children are respected. It also provides technical assistance to governments and partners on best interest determination procedures, the establishment of child friendly spaces and the provision of psychosocial support for distressed children, family tracing and reunification for children who are unaccompanied or separated, and infant and young child feeding. UNICEF also supports the provision of water and sanitation facilities at reception centers and the distribution of winterization goods such as blankets and winter clothes. In addition, UNICEF disseminates critical information to refugee and migrant populations on protection services and contacts for assistance.

In countries of final destination, UNICEF provides technical assistance at the request of the government, and supports advocacy and awareness raising on the situation of refugee and migrant children. UNICEF also continues, in partnership with sister UN agencies, to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy with the institutions of the European Union in order to represent the interests of children and families in regional policy processes undertaken in response to the present crisis.



*Children participate in an activity in a UNICEF child-friendly tent space set up at the reception centre for refugees and migrants, in the southern town of Preševo, on the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-2221/Georgiev*

In all instances, UNICEF works closely with Governments, National Committees, UN agencies, NGOs and other partners who are providing frontline assistance such as UNHCR, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Save the Children, IOM, and the European Asylum Support Office, among others.

Establishing a stronger evidence base on children on the move in countries of origin, passage and destination is urgently required for policy and programmatic action. In order to address this gap and to inform its global advocacy, UNICEF a) makes data available on children on the move, b) conducts reviews of legal frameworks related to international child refugees and migrants, and c) strengthens policy research and knowledge exchange on what works.

UNICEF continues to adapt its response, taking into account the specific situation of children in different countries and areas of operation, tailoring the response strategies and interventions to meet the specific needs in each of these countries.

Finally, UNICEF continues to support programmes inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. Parents say that they risk the dangerous journey to Europe because they have no other options, and see no future for their children. So as UNICEF addresses immediate needs of children for protection, healthcare, safe water and adequate nutrition, UNICEF continues investing in the future of children and adolescents for example through the No Lost Generation initiative, expanding access to learning and psychosocial support, strengthening social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts, and restoring hope to millions of children for a better future. UNICEF also continues to make every effort to address the situations in other countries of origin such as Nigeria, Afghanistan and Eritrea, where conflicts have pushed so many children to be on the move.

## Coordination

UNICEF has established close coordination and working relationships with major actors in the current response to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, in particular UNHCR, IOM and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement at both country and regional level. UNICEF has been advocating for a coordinated response at country levels. At the regional level, UNICEF and UNHCR agreed to work on developing common advocacy positions, review and strengthen standards and protocols in relation to unaccompanied children, develop a shared approach to the best interest of the child and how it applies in the current context of the refugee and migrant crisis, as well as improving data collection and its disaggregation.

In affected countries, UNICEF is actively engaged in regular UN country team meetings on the refugee and migrant crisis and has been mobilising all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the needs and concerns of children on the move. Within the UN system, UNICEF plays a leading role in relation to the situation of women and children and assistance to vulnerable groups, supporting and complementing UNHCR overall leadership in this crisis. In Turkey, where the Cluster system has been activated, UNICEF is the lead of the Southeast Turkey Education Working Group, co-lead of the WASH Working Group and the Child Protection Working Group.

## Summary Analysis of Programme response

UNICEF has been responding to the refugee and migrant crisis in most countries of transit for many months and is now scaling up and accelerating its regional response. UNICEF has been identified by Governments in the Western Balkans as one of the key partner at both national level and in reception centres, and has been able to reach the large majority of children on the move across the region. UNICEF is currently developing an integrated response plan covering all countries affected by the crisis, with a priority focus on countries with the highest number of children on the move. The current priorities for UNICEF are child protection; health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; and education.

UNICEF is complementing its programmatic interventions and direct assistance to refugee and migrants with strong and active advocacy, through a two-pronged approach: immediate assistance and support to governments on protection and non-discrimination of refugee and migrant women and children. UNICEF is working on developing a plan of action with countries of final destination to support the strengthening of child protection systems and the longer term social inclusion and integration of refugee and migrant children. UNICEF is also formulating recommendations regarding the particular circumstances and needs of children on the move, which it will present to the EU and other partners in key meetings.

### UNICEF in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- Established two child-friendly spaces at the registration centre on the border with Greece, where children can rest and play while families complete registration procedures or wait for transport. The spaces support up to 100 children at a time.
- Provided three 10,000 liter UNICEF water bladders for people transiting through the centre to access to clean drinking water, which is also used for maintaining personal hygiene.
- Supports a mobile team from the local NGO La Strada providing early childhood development services, family tracing, and psychosocial support and facilitating distribution of other aid. In addition, the mobile team is screening, identifying and referring children in need of specialized child protection services.
- Regularly dispatches age appropriate food for children comprised mostly of semi-solid jarred meals, child appropriate biscuits, chocolate milk and bottled water.
- Supports the supply of hygienic kits for children.
- Disseminates materials in Arabic on breastfeeding.

## UNICEF in Serbia:

- Established three child-friendly spaces, with support from the Danish Refugee Council and World Vision, in Presevo, close to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in Belgrade and Sid. They are equipped with educational materials and toys and have been used by more than 2,800 children, most of whom are aged between 6 and 10 years, since they were opening in September. Additional activities with adolescents in the child-friendly space in Belgrade will begin this week in cooperation with Danish Refugee Council.
- Established two mother-and-baby spaces, in Belgrade and in Presevo, where lactating mothers can continue breastfeeding and receive necessary information on breastfeeding. Nurses have been deployed to support and counsel breastfeeding mothers. Referrals to paediatricians are being organised if needed. To facilitate effective counselling, UNICEF made video materials in Arabic available to mothers through tablets and via internet supported through Telenor. Referrals to paediatricians are organised if needed. Supports the strengthening of the capacity of the Centres for Social Work to identify and support the most vulnerable children and families. UNICEF is upscaling the outreach component of the social services in Presevo and Belgrade, whose statutory obligations include intervening and protecting children at risk of abuse or unaccompanied minors.
- Assesses child-sensitive procedures for unaccompanied minors and has joined advocacy efforts with UNHCR to ensure smooth access of young unaccompanied children into Serbia's standard formal care system.
- Distributes information leaflets in Arabic on landmines at the border with Croatia, left from the recent conflicts.
- Produces information leaflets in Arabic for parents about protection issues.
- Supports the Ministry of Health to define standards for optimal food baskets for infants and information for lactating mothers.
- Supports provision of daily feedings for infant and young children, but since low acceptance of the jarred baby- food has been noticed in the field, UNICEF plans an in-depth assessment with mothers, which will result in a renewed guidance.
- Organises orientation training on Infant and Young Child Feeding in emergencies for health practitioners and CSO partners with the support from a joint UNICEF/WHO HQ mission.
- Distributes Diapers and in cooperation with Mixer-House (local NGO) and the Danish Refugee Council ensured distribution of second-hand winter clothes for infants and children in Presevo.

## UNICEF in Croatia:

- Established two child friendly spaces- one in Zagreb and one in Opatovac.
- Established a 24 hours / 7 days mother and baby care centre (MBCC) in Opatovac, providing breastfeeding support and counselling, baby changing facilities, facilities for the safe use of milk alternatives, medical care, NFIs such as diapers, clean clothes for babies and their siblings, items for protection from cold and drinking water. Between 80 and 120 babies and children below 24 months are attended in MBCC every day.
- Established several temporary mobile units for children on the move, providing psycho-social support, occasional medical support, items for protection from the cold and basic recreational activities.
- Monitors the situation of children and women at all stages of their stay in Croatia and advocates with Government bodies, Ombudspersons, Diplomatic corps and through the media for the fulfilment of child rights, in line with UNICEF's core commitments for children.
- Produced two leaflets in English and Arabic, one on breastfeeding in emergencies and another one on land mine awareness.
- Established a protocol for addressing the needs of unaccompanied and separated children in Opatovac reception center together with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Red Cross, UNHCR.
- Established a small child-friendly facility for unaccompanied and separated children. Most children separated from their families in Croatia have been reunited with their family members and care givers. Three unaccompanied minors (2 from Egypt and 1 from Syria) have been taken care of by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. The capacities to identify unaccompanied and separated children in Croatia however need to be further strengthened.

## Next SitRep: 25/10/2015

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