



Regional Humanitarian Situation Report # 2

27 OCTOBER 2015: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

Highlights

- *There has been a sharp increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece during the second half of October with as many as 85 boats arriving daily on Greek shores. Border police in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia have also registered an increased influx of people.*
- *The refugee and migrant crisis in Europe is a crisis for children. 20 per cent of all refugees and migrants arriving in Europe are children. With winter approaching and borders closing, they and their families are becoming increasingly vulnerable.*
- *Over 7,000 children have rested and played in UNICEF child friendly spaces in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Some 70 per cent of all transiting babies and infants have benefitted from UNICEF mother-and-baby care centres in Croatia. 3,315 women and 5,236 children received psychosocial support over the past two weeks in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.*
- *Reaching all those children on the move who do not complete the registration process, addressing the urgent needs of children stranded at borders and effectively protecting unaccompanied and separated children are major challenges for UNICEF's response to the crisis.*
- *UNICEF requires US\$11,266,998 out of a total appeal of US\$14,019,135 to respond to the crisis, with a funding gap of 80 per cent.*

705,251

of arrivals in Europe by sea in 2015 (UNHCR, 26 October 2015)

20% are children

562,355

of arrivals by sea through Greece in 2015 (UNHCR, 26 October 2015)

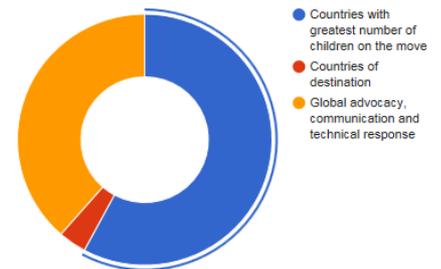
23% are children

225,000

of children in need of assistance between September 2015 and December 2015

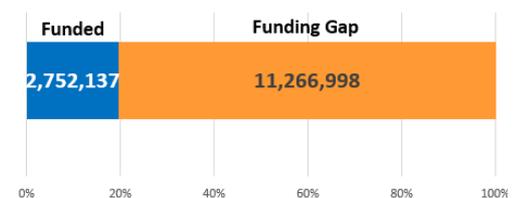
UNICEF Appeal 2015/2016

US\$14,019,135



Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

The overall number of arrivals in Europe this year has reached 705,251 people (UNHCR, 26 October 2015). Of these, more than 562,000 arrived through Greece and travelled onwards through the Western Balkans route. Despite the deteriorating weather conditions, more people have taken the perilous journey to Greek islands than in previous months and the average number of refugees and migrants who have crossed into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is estimated at 6,800 per day by UNHCR, with a peak of over 10,000 arrivals in one day on 18 October. From there around 6,200 have been crossing into Serbia every day. The majority of those arriving in Greece come from Syria (64 per cent), and the number of Afghans has now reached 22 per cent of the total new arrivals (at the beginning of September, it was 14 per cent) and continues to increase. Up to 23 per cent of all registered refugees and migrants are children, who are fleeing war, hardship, and lack of opportunities.



The refugee and migrant crisis in Europe is a crisis for children. According to Eurostat, there has been an increase of 80 per cent in the numbers of children seeking asylum in Europe in the first seven months of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014. To reach Europe, many people, including children, are risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea - and over land - the Western Balkan route, the main route into Europe. For those who survive the journey, many have endured terrible conditions and are at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and harm including from traffickers. As much harsher weather conditions have now arrived in Europe, refugee and migrant families are now battling rain and extremely low temperatures at night, with many continuing the journey wearing the only shoes and clothes they have. Children are physically exhausted, scared and psychologically distressed. Due to poor nutrition, challenging weather and sanitary conditions, inadequate shelter and fatigue, there is a growing number of children and women who are suffering from health problems, mainly respiratory and digestive infections. Children with disabilities and their families are still facing extreme difficulties during their journey. Children need to be safe and protected from the cold and rainy weather, receive age-appropriate food and support in a language they understand. As part of its response to the immediate needs of children on the move, UNICEF has already been providing direct assistance for many months at major border crossing points and reception centres.

Malek, a 9 year old Afghan boy, came to the UNICEF child friendly space in Opatovac, Croatia on 18 September. He was drawing when, all of a sudden, he pulled out the top of a can from his pocket and tried to cut his neck while shouting "I want to die! I want to die!" He was provided with psycho-social counselling and so was his uncle, the only person he was travelling with. Malek told a UNICEF staff member that his mother had died and his father had been killed in Afghanistan. He left for Europe with his uncle and his sister, but she had gotten lost during the journey. Malek's story illustrates how psychological trauma can have a devastating, long-lasting impact on children as well as how the immediate provision of psychosocial counselling and support is one of the key elements of child protection.*

**The name has been changed to preserve confidentiality.*

As a result of the closure of the Hungarian border with Croatia on 16 October, a redirection of people towards the Slovenian border was imposed, resulting in a significant slowdown in the duration of transit through Croatia from 4-6 hours to some 24 hours. The influx of refugees and migrants into Croatia was almost twice as high compared to the number of refugees and migrants that Slovenia agreed to accept immediately after people started approaching its borders. As a result of the slowed down transit, Serbian-Croatian border was temporary closed on 19 October and over 3,000 refugees and migrants (including many families with young children, pregnant women, elderly and disabled persons) were waiting on the Serbian side of the border in cold, rainy and muddy conditions, without access to adequate shelter, resting and sanitary facilities. Due to the priority given to mothers with children on the Croatian-Serbian border, family separation increased and UNICEF staff from Serbia and Croatia have been restlessly working together on family reunification across Serbian-Croatian border.

While highly concerned about the conditions in which children on the move and their families find themselves when borders close, UNICEF welcomed the progress made during the EU-Balkans Summit (25 October, Brussels) to improve cross-border collaboration.

Most refugees and migrants attempting to cross into Europe remain concentrated in the Turkish coastal provinces of Izmir, Mugla and Canakkale, but with winter approaching the influx may very soon be redirected towards the 'safer' land route to Europe, through Istanbul and Edirne (bordering Greece and Bulgaria). At least 12 Syrian and Afghan migrants, including 5 children and 2 pregnant women, drowned while attempting to reach the Greek island of Lesbos from Turkey on 17 October- only one of many tragic incidents in the Mediterranean Sea during the past month. As sea conditions continue to deteriorate, the journey toward Europe is expected to become longer and more dangerous.

Approximately 820 refugees and migrants (mostly Afghans, but also Syrians and Iraqis) have arrived since the beginning of the year in the small town of Dimitrovgrad in South-eastern Serbia from Bulgaria, according to Serbian Ministry of Interior. They complained of a difficult journey through Bulgaria, sometimes as long as two months, sleeping in the woods, lacking food and being detained. According to information provided by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, since the beginning of 2015 around 9,000 refugees and migrants (the majority of them were caught trying to exit the country at the Bulgarian border with Serbia) have been sent to detention centres. Afterwards, those who want to apply for international protection are sent to the registration and reception centres for refugees. UNICEF has been discussing with the Bulgarian government the possibility of conducting an assessment and providing training on child rights and child protection for the police and border authorities.

UNICEF completed assessment missions in Greece (6-9 October) and Slovenia (15-16 October, 23-24 October) and produced recommendations on where UNICEF could add value to the existing response. In Greece, where more than 140,000 refugee and migrant children have arrived by sea since the beginning of the year (UNHCR), and where national capacities are overstretched by the financial crisis, the government welcomed UNICEF support. Concrete recommendations on the way forward will be submitted to the Government for consideration. Two assessment missions were deployed to Slovenia. The first one took place a few days before the country became a new migration route following the closure of the border between Croatia and Hungary, and therefore focused on preparedness. In light of the rapidly evolving situation, marked by more than 86,484 arrivals in only 10 days (UNICEF National Committee), a second assessment mission was deployed at the Croatia/Slovenia border on 23-24 October to evaluate the needs for immediate humanitarian aid. Recommendations from both missions have been submitted to the Slovenian Government.

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 numbers of children on the move are the highest: Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Italy. As winter arrives, political discourses become increasingly polarized and borders close, UNICEF is looking at potential scenarios and their implications for its response. UNICEF is taking steps to further scale up preparedness in Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), in particular, as they are considered at high risk of being affected by the refugee and migrant crisis.



On 10 September, a man holds a girl, helping her stay warm by wrapping the front of his coat around her on a rainy day, near the town of Gevgelija, on the border with Greece. They are among the people who have fled their homes amid the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis. © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-2183/Georgiev

Through its existing network of country offices and in collaboration with its National Committees and other partners, UNICEF is engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy with governments and the institutions of the European Union in order to represent the interests of refugee and migrant children in national and regional policy processes undertaken in response to the present crisis. UNICEF also provides technical assistance to governments and partners, and supports capacity building to improve the quality and reach of protection interventions and other service delivery when needed.

Coordination

UNICEF is actively engaged in regular government and UN country team meetings on the refugee and migrant crisis. The operational humanitarian response is coordinated by UNHCR. As global humanitarian and development agency for the rights of every child, UNICEF has been mobilising all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the concerns of children on the move, adapt its response to their needs, and improve assistance to children and their families during their journey across Europe, both as part of the immediate humanitarian response and through longer term support to national child protection systems.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

After the introduction of partial or full border restrictions in Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria, UNICEF has taken urgent steps to adapt its response to the new situation and further scale up its activities. UNICEF is finalizing the development of its 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. This plan will ensure greater consistency and technical focus in response strategies across the region and will lead to:

- Strengthened quality assurance on programme response monitoring and reporting;
- Improved programme standards and targets;
- Inclusion of 'slow-down' scenarios of delayed onward movements;
- More comprehensive monitoring of the movement for more informed programming;
- Working together with the Turkey, Syria and Afghanistan programmes as a way to strengthen impact of UNICEF interventions in Europe.

Child Protection

Child protection has been a priority in all countries, where UNICEF has a programme response. With support from local and international NGO partners, UNICEF has established **child friendly spaces** in all major reception and registration centres in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, where children can play, rest and receive psychosocial support. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 3,315 women and 5,236 children (2,565 boys and 2,671 girls) were provided with psychosocial assistance over the past two weeks in the two UNICEF child friendly spaces at the transit centre in Gevgelija, at the southern border with Greece. Among them, there were pregnant women, separated children and children with disabilities. In Serbia, over 3,500 children have so far rested and played in the three child friendly spaces in Presevo (now open until 8pm), Belgrade, and Sid. UNICEF is currently working with partners to establish another child friendly space at the northern border with Serbia, near the village of Tabanovce, which in addition to psychosocial and emotional support to women and children, will provide a centre for adolescents, a corner with WiFi access, as well as shuttle transportation for children with disabilities. It is expected to become fully operational during the first week of November. In Belgrade and Presevo, Serbia, the child friendly space concept has

now been expanded to **adolescent groups**. To ensure children outside reception facilities have also been reached, a **mobile approach to child friendly spaces** has been adopted in Serbia, Croatia and Turkey. In Croatia, temporary mobile units were formed to respond to the needs of children while on the move, providing psychosocial support, occasional medical support, items for protection from the cold and basic recreational activities.

UNICEF is providing support to **family tracing and reunification** of children with their families as well as **identification and referral of vulnerable children** and families.

UNICEF is now in the process of reviewing and strengthening standards and protocols in relation to unaccompanied children on the move. Special sessions for frontline workers have been organised to build their capacity to better assist children and their families while on the move. UNICEF has also been trying to improve conditions and assistance to children with specific needs, including children with disabilities.

Reunification of children with their families has become a priority for UNICEF in Croatia due to the increased number of reported cross-border family separations. So far, the cases of family separation were successfully resolved with family members

reuniting at Opatovac reception centre and leaving together towards Slovenia. A protocol for attending the needs of unaccompanied and separated children in Opatovac reception centre was established with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Red Cross, UNHCR and UNICEF, and a small child-friendly facility for support and care for unaccompanied and separated children has been functional. To respond to the increased need for qualified staff to identify separated children, UNICEF together with partners has also trained 22 social welfare professionals from Vinkovci, Zupanja and Slavonski Brod.



On 30 September in Serbia, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Orlando Bloom greets children in a child-friendly space at the refugees and migrants one stop registration centre in the town of Presevo in south Serbia, close to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The child-friendly space is a safe-haven for children where they can rest, draw and play, and receive psycho-social support. ©

Three children (3, 6 and 14 years of age) were separated from their families while crossing the Serbian-Croatian border, and UNICEF in Croatia and Serbia were able to trace the families across borders. One family was reunited the same night in Croatia. The younger child was appointed a legal guardian while the Red Cross in Serbia and Croatia were following international procedures on identification and reunification. The child was reunited with his parents on 22 October. While this is a positive sign, the follow-up of the case by the child protection system in Serbia shows that much remains to be done to provide timely support to family reunification cases. The family of the younger adolescent was identified by UNICEF in Croatia, but the adolescent who decided to cross from Serbia to Croatia with one of his relatives has not reunited yet with his family.

In Serbia, Social workers are assisting refugees and migrants throughout the day and night to fast-track vulnerable children and families through the registration process. Additional social workers have now been deployed and trained in Presevo and Belgrade to identify and protect children at risk of abuse or unaccompanied children, and negotiations with the Centre of Social Work in Sid are under-way to expand capacity in Berkasovo. An assessment of the child-sensitive procedures for unaccompanied children is also ongoing with the deployment of a DRC child protection expert.

In addition, UNICEF has provided recommendations for the setup of the new reception centre at Slavonski Brod, Croatia, so as to meet the needs of women and children, and is elaborating a response plan that includes provision of wheelchairs for children with disabilities.

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF has been working with Government and partners to improve standards on child nutrition, and in particular on **Infant and Young Child Feeding** practices.

Three mother-and-baby spaces in Opatovac, Croatia and in Belgrade and Presevo, Serbia continue supporting breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding (24/7 for Presevo and Opatovac). In Serbia, video materials in Arabic are

available to effectively counsel women on infant feeding. Information materials on breastfeeding in Farsi and Urdu have also been developed and made available in UNICEF mother-and-baby care centres. Some 70 per cent of all infants and children below 2 years of age traveling through Croatia (120 to 150 babies every day) have attended mother-and-baby facilities in Opatovac.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF is regularly dispatching age-appropriate food for children. 2,500 food packages for children were distributed in Vinojug camp near Gevgelija during the reporting period to cater to the needs of the increasing number of people arriving in the country.

In addition, UNICEF has supported the Serbian Ministry of Health to define standards for optimal food baskets for young children and information for lactating mothers that was distributed by partners whose mandate is the provision of food. A joint UNICEF/WHO mission organised a training on Infant and Young Child Feeding in emergencies for health practitioners and NGO partners, and developed Standard Operating Procedures on controlled handling of infant formula (including sourcing) is in the process.

Water, Health and Sanitation (WASH)

Currently, UNICEF WASH activities focus on **infrastructure, supplies (mainly hygiene kits) and hygiene promotion**. A multi-country field needs assessment was conducted by a UNICEF WASH expert in October 2015, which covered Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia aimed at identifying areas of intervention for further scaling-up of UNICEF WASH activities.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, three 10,000 litre UNICEF water bladders provide daily access to clean drinking water to all people transiting through the centre. In addition, UNICEF has initiated the construction of two semi-permanent sanitation blocks for persons with disabilities and for children in the reception centre of Gevgelija.

In Serbia, UNICEF has procured 500 waterproof baby changing mats and distributed them to partners in the field in mother and baby and child friendly spaces, along with wet wipes, antibacterial gel and diapers. Such supplies are also provided in changing rooms within Croatian mother-and-baby care facilities. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF has also supported partners in helping mothers and young children maintain personal hygiene by providing access to bathing facilities and hygiene sets. A total of 582 babies and children were provided with hygiene services (235 boys and 347 girls). Clothing was distributed to 2,672 children (1,377 boys and 1,295 girls). In Turkey, four trucks containing 12,750 family hygiene kits (serving approximately 60,000 people) and 5,000 baby hygiene kits are currently being distributed in Mugla Province.

Winterization

With the aim of preparing all UNICEF facilities for winter, the child friendly spaces in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia have been equipped with hard flooring and heating devices, and were protected from the elements with additional tarpaulins, so that services can be provided throughout the winter. UNICEF is preparing for the snow season and will soon be replacing the CFS tents in the "Vinojug" reception centre with semi-permanent 'prefabricated' constructions to facilitate the uninterrupted operation of child-friendly activities during the winter. In Serbia, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Labour to provide a hard structure.

In addition, UNICEF in Serbia has procured emergency stock of 1,200 child raincoats to be distributed in the three locations where UNICEF is active (Presevo, Belgrade and Sid). UNICEF is procuring supplies and equipment for its winterization programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, focusing on the procurement of winter clothing and footwear for children and adolescents, blankets, as well as equipment to improve conditions in all UNICEF supported child-friendly spaces, including heating devices. The first winter supplies are expected to arrive by end of October 2015.

Innovation

With support from the Innovations Unit in New York and UNICEF in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), an application for tablets and mobile phones is being developed to enable **quick, real-time data collection** at different points on the refugee and migrant route and at service delivery points. This application should improve data collection on total numbers of children, as well as their age and gender. It will also enhance the utilization of services in child friendly spaces and information on the basic needs of children and their families.

In Serbia, UNICEF is engaging its corporate partners to increase the availability of free **Wi-Fi hot spots** to refugees and migrants to increase access to information on available services along their journey, including child-friendly spaces, infant feeding, etc.

Advocacy and Communication

Communication and advocacy on behalf of children on the move was stepped up with a major briefing to media at the United Nations Office in Geneva on 16 October and a number of international media interviews given during the reporting period. The briefing focused on the onset of bad weather in the Balkans and a warning that preparations for winter were urgently required. UNICEF's messages have been widely reported throughout international media outlets, including coverage of Goodwill Ambassador Orlando Bloom's visit to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia to meet refugee and migrant children on the move in Europe.

In the first two weeks of October, a UNICEF multimedia team travelled through the refugee and migrant route from Greece, through the Western Balkans and onto Germany. As a result, UNICEF has released a series of videos and photo essays which highlight the

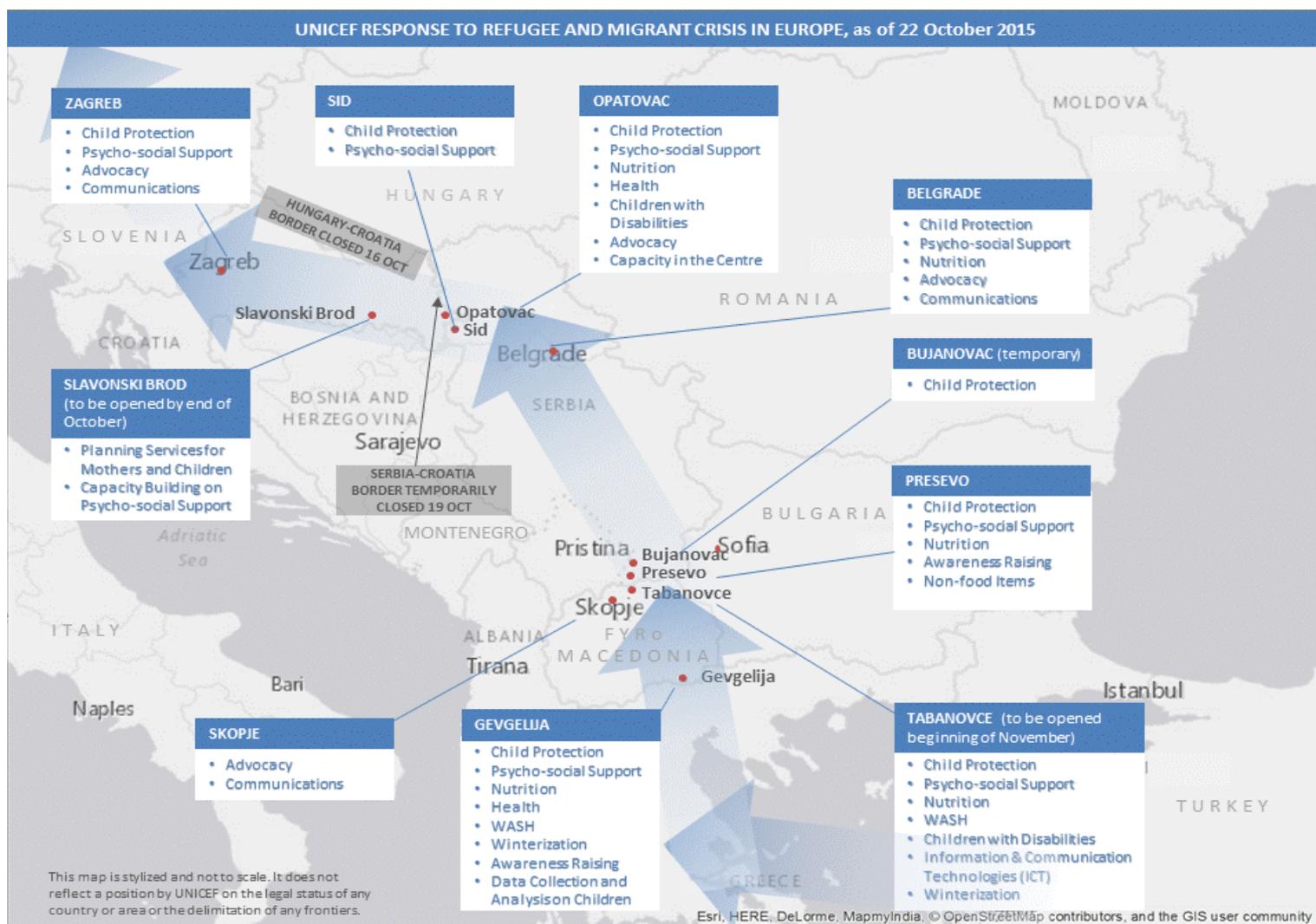
situation of refugee and migrant children on the move to Europe. The videos have been viewed more than 7.2 million times through Al Jazeera+, Upworthy, and UNICEF's digital platforms, including one with over 5 million views while several others have been viewed more than 1 million times.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia, there has been very good local engagement of UNICEF's response to the crisis on traditional and social media.

Supply

With support from UNICEF Headquarters, emergency supply strategies and detailed supply plans for a period of six months have been developed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Albania and Slovenia to support the emergency response plan and address the various needs of children. A supply plan is also being developed for Bulgaria.

The supply plans cover winter clothes and footwear for children aged between 06 months and 12 years, blankets, diapers and baby food, to address the needs of children on the move. In addition the plans include art and play materials for child friendly spaces, Wi-Fi hotspots, power generators and electric space heaters, as well as wheelchairs for children with disabilities. In addition of the use of International Long Term Agreements (LTA) from UNICEF Headquarters, local tenders were launched in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia resulting in LTA establishments which could be used regionally by other affected countries.



Next SitRep: 12/11/2015

Who to contact for further information:

Marie-Pierre Poirier
 Special Coordinator
 Regional Director
 UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS
 Switzerland
 Tel: +41 22 909 55 02
 Email: mppoirier@unicef.org

Robert McCarthy
 Regional Chief of Emergency
 UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS
 Switzerland
 Tel: +41 22 909 56 46
 Email: rmccarthyunicef.org

Tsvetomira Bidart
 Information Management and Reporting
 UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS
 Switzerland
 Tel: +41 22 90 95 536
 Email: tbidart@unicef.org