

KEY FIGURES

1 January 2015-28 January 2016

438,444

Registered intentions to apply for asylum

30%

of registered intentions were expressed by minors

2,065

Applications for asylum

82%

of asylum applications were from the top ten refugee-producing countries

2

Persons granted refugee status

22-28 January 2016

13,407

Registered intentions to seek asylum

35

Applications for asylum

13,088

Medical interventions provided

617

Medical assistance to children

10,500

Food packages distributed

3,796

Winter jackets distributed

PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the refugees
- Strengthen the asylum systems in the country in line with applicable international standards

FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

22-28 January 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

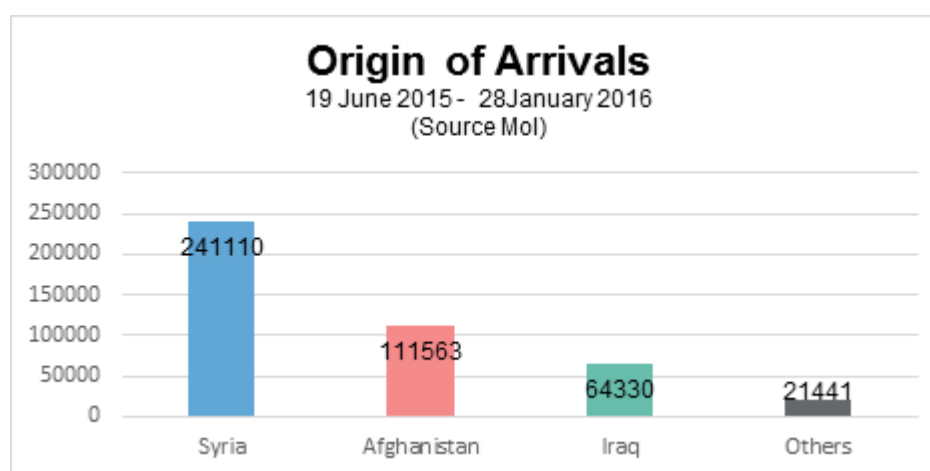
- 13,407 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 22-28 January 2016, with a daily average of 1,915. Since UNHCR began monitoring departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **737,489** refugees and migrants have departed.
- In the period from 22-28 January 2016, 35 applications for asylum were filed, while from 1 January 2015 to 28 January 2016, 2,065 asylum applications were submitted out of which 1,005 (49%) were submitted by Syrians, 412 (20%) by Afghans, and 176 (8.5%) by Iraqis. So far only 2 persons have been recognised as refugees in 2015-2016, both unaccompanied children, one from Iraq and one from Syria.
- For the period 1 – 28 January total of 169 applications, out of which 6 were submitted by Syrians, 34 by Afghans and 4 by Iraqis.
- During the reporting period, 94 people were returned from Vinojug transit centre, on the southern border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Greek border for possessing forged documents, no documents, or for being nationals of countries other than Afghanistan, Iraq, or Syria.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

13,407 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 22-28 January 2016, with a daily average of 1,915. Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **737,489** refugees and migrants have departed.

The Ministry of Interior's statistics of refugees and migrants declaring their intention to apply for asylum reached 438,444 including 131,956 (30%) children, of whom 18,225 (4% of children) were registered as unaccompanied since 19 June 2015 until 28 January 2016. Of these 241,110 (55%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 111,563 (25%) Afghans, 64,330 (15%) Iraqis, and the remaining (5%) represent other nationalities such as Iranians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Congolese and Bangladeshi.



Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact



Refugee child in Tabanovce transit centre ©UNHCR/I.Ciobanu
Tabanovce (FYR Macedonia) 28 January 2016

- The main Children and Family Protection Support Hub services have been established and the logos were put up. UNHCR is going to support partners to put a billboard at the point where refugees arrive and one next to the information point; they will include a site plan indicating where people can find the services they need.
- From 22-28 January approximately 1051 children and 489 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance, in the UNICEF Child Friendly Space operated by the NGO La Strada in Vojvodina. La Strada identified and assisted 70 vulnerable individuals. In Tabanovce La Strada assisted and supported approximately 1699 children and 1572 women. The activities are funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, GIZ, People in Need, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes.
- During the reporting period approximately 939 children and 632 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance in the Child

Friendly Space operated by the SOS Children's Village in Tabanovce. Additionally, 3 vulnerable individuals were identified and assisted. The activities are funded by the SOS Kinderdorf International and UNICEF.

- From 22-28 January, 303 group leaders, around 14,156 refugees were given information about their rights and obligations in Macedonia at the Vinojug site by MYLA, who also assisted 31 asylum seekers at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedure. MYLA also ensured prioritisation in 63 cases, around 109 vulnerable individuals for their registration in Vinojug.
- During the reporting period, in close coordination with UNHCR, the Red Cross, La Strada and DRC staff in Tabanovce, 89 Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI) and 243 members of their families/groups were transported by Mercy Corps from Tabanovce transit centre to border with Serbia, and referred to the MSF team to be picked up at the border and to the Mercy Corps team at Miratovac RAP. The Mercy Corps Tabanovce team has been supported by two volunteers of Operation Mercy, experienced in emergency work and work with EVIs.
- On 21 and 22 January, UNICEF and Save the Children supported cross-border visits in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Serbia, between La Strada and ARSIS, to improve cross-border coordination to support vulnerable children at high risk and to formalise information sharing and referrals to appropriate services.¹
- UNICEF shared a new report, *Situation Analysis of Children on the Move in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, with government and partners to inform advocacy and humanitarian programming, to reduce the vulnerability of, and risks to, children.
- On 26 January, UNICEF and the Ministry of Interior discussed challenges faced by the border police in relation to the refugee crisis and how UNICEF can support to mitigate these challenges, including capacity building for a more child-friendly approach to crowd management to minimize risks of increased psychosocial distress of children.
- Visits: On 23 January, representatives of Swiss Agency for Development (Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs) visited the Vinojug reception centre. They were briefed about the site operations and available services. They were interested in donating funds for basic and essential needs. They also had a short meeting with the Crisis Management Centre representative. After the visit was completed, they continued to visit the Greek site Eidomeni. On 22 January, FRONTEX, accompanied by the border police, paid a visit to the site. A UNICEF Senior Emergency Coordinator from the global Emergency Response Team (ERT) was deployed to support the ongoing crisis. The purpose of his mission is to review issues along the route through missions to FYR Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, etc.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- During the afternoon and evening of 27 January the borders between the FYR Macedonia and Greece closed, as a reaction to the closure of the Serbian border with FYR Macedonia. The Serbian police monitoring the borderline instructed refugees who were trying to cross to return to the Tabanovce to wait – around 500 individuals spent the night in the transit centre. Another 900 refugees were waiting to be admitted to the country in the transit centre in Eidomeni, Greece, and in busses near the border. After the border with Greece re-opened the Chief of Police informed UNHCR that only small groups would be let in on an hourly basis
- On 23 January, MYLA staff relayed information to UNHCR that the FYR Macedonian police in Gevgelija started turning back Palestinians with residence in Syria whose Greek registration documents say “Palestine” instead of “Palestine-Syria” (even those who possessed a valid Syrian ID card and/or passport). The abovementioned issue was raised with the police. The police are willing to make exceptions to their policy only in cases when there is a clear risk of family separation.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy continued to conduct interviews and Best Interests Assessments for unaccompanied and separated children. However, all of them were registered on the documents of an adult in the groups they were travelling with, rather than given their own registration documents. A number of children have been abandoned by these “caregivers” along the transit through FYR Macedonia. UNHCR and partners raised this new UAC registration practice with the MLSP, highlighting the risks associated with it, and are looking for appropriate solutions.

¹ Source: UN Women, Europe and Central Asia Office, January 2016, *Gender Assessment of the refugees and migration crisis in Serbia and FYR Macedonia*

- According to UNICEF's *Situation Analysis of Children on the Move in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 32 per cent of children indicated that the fear of being attacked during the journey was the main stress factor since they began the journey².
- Brochures written in Arabic were found in front of the coffee and tea area in Vinojug. The MYLA translator informed humanitarian partners that it was a brochure containing stories from the Bible used to promote Christianity. The Crisis Management Centre representative was informed for follow-up.
- An NGO reported to UNHCR that they were threatened by local villagers while they were distributing items to refugees. People from nearby villages were spotted on site taking items (clothes and boots) intended for refugees. This is not the first time individuals, including children, from the surrounding areas enter the site from the railway entrance, an area which is open.



Health

Achievements and Impact

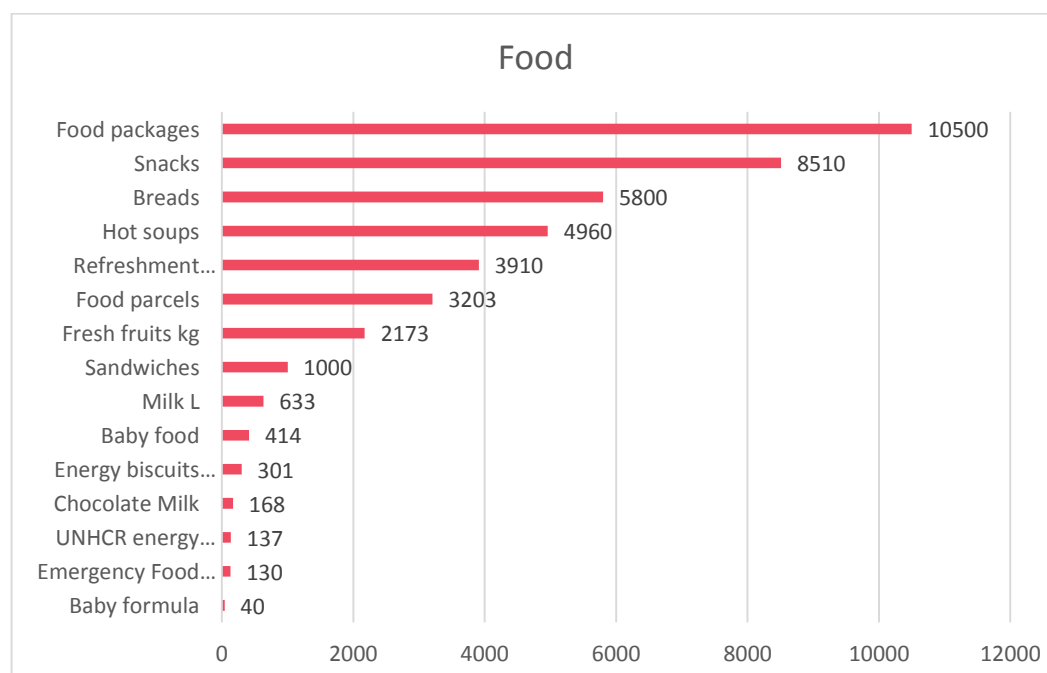
- During the reporting period the Red Cross provided 13,088 medical interventions out of which 149 were pregnant women and 617 were children. The Red Cross is working in shifts to provide medical assistance and first aid in Gevgelija and Tabanovce 24/7. This activity is funded by UNHCR and the Red Cross.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Legis, Nun, Kalliri, Agape, Dorcas, La Strada, Help the Refugee in Macedonia, Caritas, UNHCR and Red Cross distributed:



- The baby food that is distributed in the child-friendly spaces in Gevgelija and Tabanovce is funded by UNICEF.

² Source: SITAN of children on the move carried out by UNICEF & IPSOS in December 2015 bearing in mind that the methodological challenges led to the findings not being representative of all children on the move

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

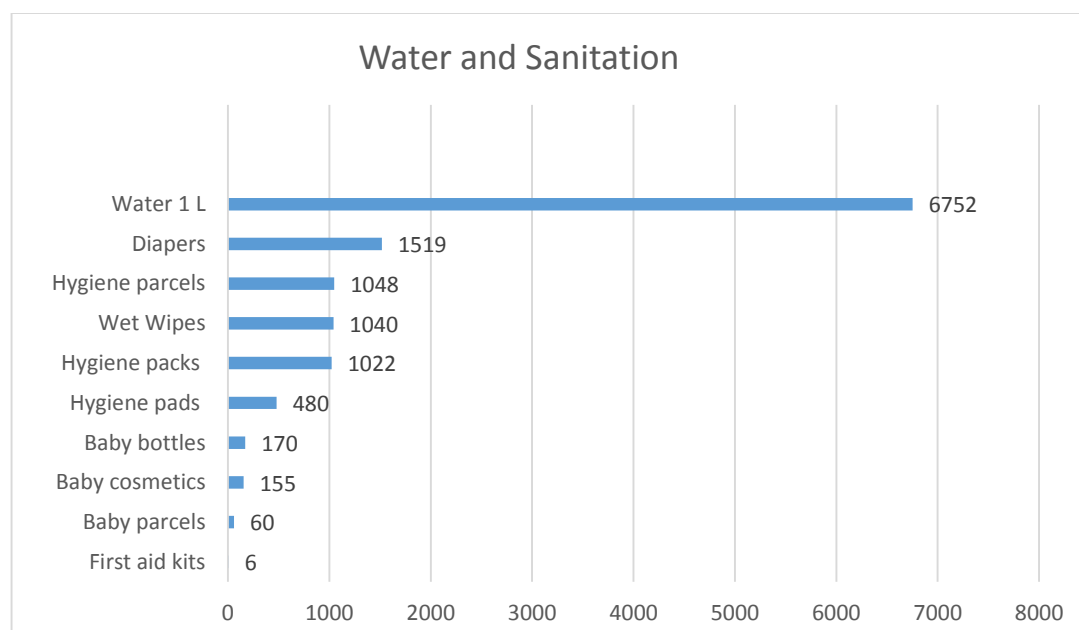
- In Tabanovce, the kitchen was not functional yet as it still lacked insulation and there were frequent power outages.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- Red Cross, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, La Strada and other NGOs distributed:



- Toilet flushes were repaired in some of the sanitation facilities in Vinojug, and heaters were installed to prevent the pipes from freezing in the colder weather.
- In Gevgelija/Vinojug, the construction works of the new UNICEF-funded toilet block next to the train departure area, and septic tank system shared with the toilet block outside the site, funded by the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, has progressed. However, construction has been temporarily halted for the toilet block outside the fence, while municipal inspections are conducted.
- The hygiene items that are distributed in the child-friendly space in Tabanovce are funded by UNICEF.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Hygiene standards in the toilet blocks and Rubb halls were sub-par in Tabanovce, due to inability of cleaning staff to do the job properly without water. The Danish Refugee Council maintenance team is repairing water supply / septic tanks, and has installed temporary toilets.



Red Cross colleagues handing out sanitation items to refugees in Tabanovce transit centre ©UNHCR/I.Ciobanu Tabanovce (fYR Macedonia) 27 January 2016



Communication and Information

Achievements and Impact

- On 24 January, the UNHCR “Innovation Team” colleagues from Geneva started testing the new remote loud speaker system in Vinojug. New messages were prepared in consultation with partners, and they were translated into Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, English and Macedonian. Different messages can be selected based on need; in feedback from refugees it was mentioned that they wanted regular information with regards to train departures and delays. Feedback will be continuously received from refugees and partners in order to adapt and create new messages, and Translators without Borders will continue to assist.
- On 23 January, the “Innovation Lab” colleagues went to the Tabanovce transit centre to conduct an assessment with the field team on the possibility of installing a loud speaker system to broadcast important messages on onward movement and services to refugees, similar to the one in Vinojug. Besides a loudspeaker system the idea of installing a screen to show visual messages was also discussed as an idea to be implemented in the near future.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

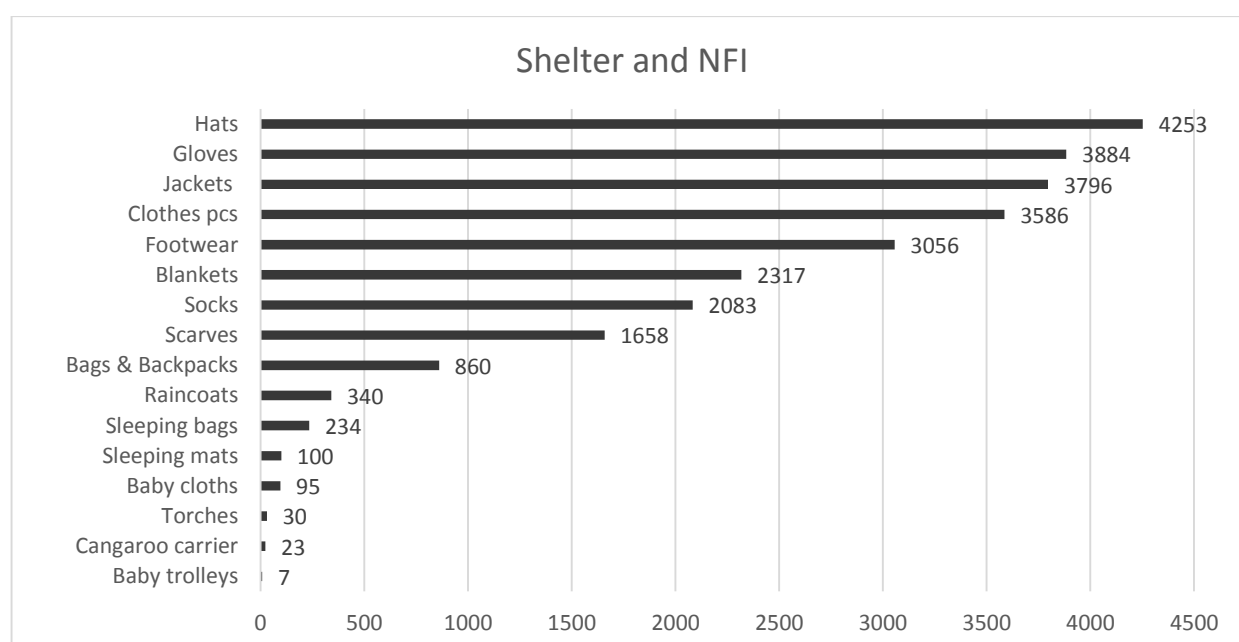
- In Tabanovce, Internet from the SOS Children’s Village was not working. Colleagues had to use internet from their phones, which was extremely slow and intermittent.
- There were some electrical issues in the NGO distribution site due to overuse of electricity.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia and UNICEF distributed:



- The roofing between the two Rubb halls near the train platform in Vinojug reception centre was being completed.
- The new clothing distribution point was prepared and concrete was poured for further construction in Vinojug.
- On 24 January, typhoon heaters were installed in the restrooms to prevent the water from freezing in Tabanovce.
- UNHCR procured and delivered 70 benches to the Tabanovce site and installed them in the Rubb halls.

Working in partnership

Achievements and Impact

The weekly coordination meeting took place on 28 January in Gevgelija and in Tabanbovce. Also coordination meetings for food distribution and NFIs meeting took place.

Partners working with the Ministries and municipalities to provide protection and assistance to refugees are: Agape, ASB, Caritas, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Macedonia, Danish Caritas, DRC, Dorcas, Euro Human, GIZ, Grain of Goodness, Habitat for Humanity, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, HERA, IOM, JRS, Kalliri, La Strada Open Gate, Legis, MCMS (Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation), Mercy Corps, Merhamet, MYLA, Nun, Operation Mercy, People in need, Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, Secours Islamique Balkans, SOS Children's Village, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), Terre des hommes, Vlaznia Kumanovo, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.

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