

Aegean Islands

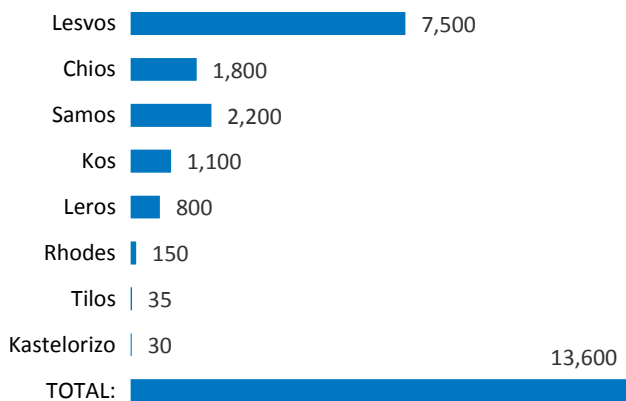
Arrivals increased to 3,000 in April from 2,400 in March and 1,250 in February. Most arrived on Lesbos and consisted of **Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan families**.

As **overcrowding worsened, conditions deteriorated** on Lesbos, Chios, and Samos **and fuelled tension** between refugee and island communities.

Delays in covering interpretation gaps at reception centres and hospitals hindered access for asylum-seekers to specialized care.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Islands

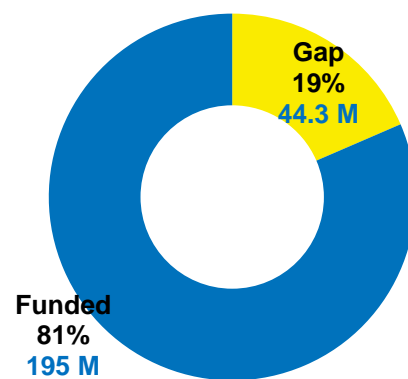


** UNHCR Greece estimate as of 30 April 2018 of those who remained on the Aegean islands since the 2015-2016 mass flow.*

FUNDING (AS OF 8 MAY 2018)

USD 239.3 M

requested for the Greece operation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

55 National Staff

6 International Staff

Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens

1 Sub Office on Lesbos

3 Field Offices on Chios, Samos, Kos

2 Field Units on Leros and Rhodes



A girl at Vathy reception centre on Samos.

Working with Partners

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who coordinates the refugee response. The Office works with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, State institutions, community-based organisations, refugees, and host communities through sectoral working groups on **Lesvos**, **Chios**, **Samos**, **Kos** and **Leros**.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, asylum procedures and offers legal counselling and representation to asylum-seekers directly and through partners. UNHCR identifies and refers people with specific needs to responsible authorities and service providers for targeted assistance.
- With persistent overcrowding and increased flows, current mixed shelter allocation arrangements in the reception centres raise protection concerns as often unaccompanied children are placed among adults and women have limited privacy. On **Chios**, UNHCR organized a training on shelter allocation for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR on **Lesvos** and **Samos** organized a seminar on statelessness with the participation of humanitarian actors and caseworkers of the Asylum Service.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- UNHCR works to identify people at risk and SGBV survivors, provides legal information and refers them to appropriate services where they can receive specialized support.
- Sexual harassment and violence, including against men, continued to be a major risk in the reception centres with the limited number of female interpreters and police officers exacerbating feelings of insecurity and restraining the provision of services. On **Chios**, UNHCR installed 15 solar street lights at the Vial reception centre to improve safety at night, while on **Lesvos**, awareness raising sessions against domestic violence were organized in Kara Tepe.

Child Protection

- UNHCR supports the identification of children at risk and assists in building the expertise of national and local actors. UNHCR coordinates with humanitarian actors and stakeholders to enhance the protection of children through legal aid, psychosocial support and case management.
- Living conditions for unaccompanied children remained alarming on **Lesvos**, but also on **Samos** where the designated area remains uninhabitable. This month, UNHCR supported the authorities in transferring 25 unaccompanied children from the reception centres to temporary facilities on the mainland until their referral to appropriate shelters. Since January, 305 children have been transferred to improved accommodation on the mainland.

Education

- UNHCR runs educational and recreational centres to ensure that the development and well-being of refugee children and youth, including unaccompanied minors, is supported in a conducive learning environment as access to formal education on the islands is not fully rolled-out and access to public schools remains a constraint.
- In Kara Tepe on **Lesvos**, Vial RIC on **Chios**, and Vathy RIC on **Samos**, UNHCR provides space to host the on-site kindergartens.

Health

- UNHCR offers primary health services to the residents of Kara Tepe on **Lesvos**.
- Access to medical and psychosocial services is limited in the reception centres and hospitals on the islands, especially on **Kos** and **Leros**, due to the low number of national service staff under the Ministry of Health, in particular doctors and cultural mediators. This situation further delays the vulnerability assessment which is an integral part of the asylum procedure.

Food Security

- UNHCR provides food for the specific needs of the population in Kara Tepe on **Lesvos**.

Shelter, Water and Sanitation

- Living conditions, especially on **Lesvos** and **Samos**, are dire as new arrivals increased, while transfers to the mainland slowed.
- Overcrowding and sanitation conditions are deplorable in Moria on **Lesvos** with the reception centre hosting almost three times more people than its capacity (5,500), leaving them exposed to protection risks.
- On **Samos**, insecurity and overcrowding persists in the Vathy reception centre where some 1,900 people, including some hundreds of vulnerable people in tents or makeshift shelters, grapple with inadequate shelter and hygiene facilities.
- On **Chios**, where over 1,450 are hosted in the reception centre, UNHCR delivered eight toilet and shower containers, as well as, 100 family tents. Regular water cuts and insufficient water provision amplify health risks.
- The reception centre on **Kos** reached capacity, while pressure has increased in Lepida on **Leros**. On **Rhodes**, a derelict building hosts new arrivals, including children.

Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities, convenes regular community discussions on the islands. These platforms serve as a dual channel of communication amongst asylum-seekers, humanitarian actors and authorities.
- UNHCR provides leaflets in different languages about the asylum procedures and access to key services. On **Chios**, UNHCR donated three billboards to the Reception and Identification Service and assisted with the translation of messaging to new arrivals in six languages.

Support to Local Communities

- UNHCR organizes events and implements projects that bring closer the refugee and local population and help build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.
- UNHCR donated to health institutions and volunteer groups on **Samos** over 25,000 items, including wheelchairs and hygiene kits.

Accommodation and Cash assistance

- **Cash** assistance and **accommodation** help provide people with a sense of normalcy and contribute directly to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods, and the renting of apartments.
- In April, some 1,274 people were accommodated by UNHCR in apartments on the islands.
- UNHCR works with the Government, local authorities and NGOs to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees through the ECHO-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (**ESTIA**).

Logistics

- In April, UNHCR assisted the transfer of more than 1,600 asylum-seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and Government-run sites on the mainland. Since January 2017, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of some 22,500 such transfers which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands.
- UNHCR offers local transportation from remote sites to key facilities on the islands in order to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the asylum procedure and the necessary services.

Returns

- Within the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement in April, 18 people were **returned** from Greece to Turkey. Since 20 March 2016, 1,601 people have been returned to Turkey.

Partners

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: **International Rescue Committee**, **Mercy Corps**, **Doctors of the World**, **Solidarity Now**, **METAdrasi**, **Arsis**, **PRAKSIS** and **Iliaktida**.

Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds

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Thanks to the donors for the Greece Operation

European Union (195 M)

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