

FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

26 August - 01 September 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- The presence of twelve new data entry clerks, from the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) and financed by UNHCR, as well as the new software has increased the pace of registration.
- The transit site in “Vinujug” in Gevgelija currently consist of fourteen refugee housing units including medical facilities, breastfeeding area and washing facilities for babies, registration area, child friendly space, storage and temporary shelter and once completed will be able to assist 3,000 refugees and migrants. Food and water is distributed regularly.
- The site in Tabanovce consists of seven refugee housing units with a capacity of 84 persons, shaded area of two open pavilions for 40 persons, water and sanitation facilities to accommodate 500 persons and two refugee housing units used for storage and information/ medical point.

KEY FIGURES

22,500

Food packages distributed

12,558

Medical interventions provided

400

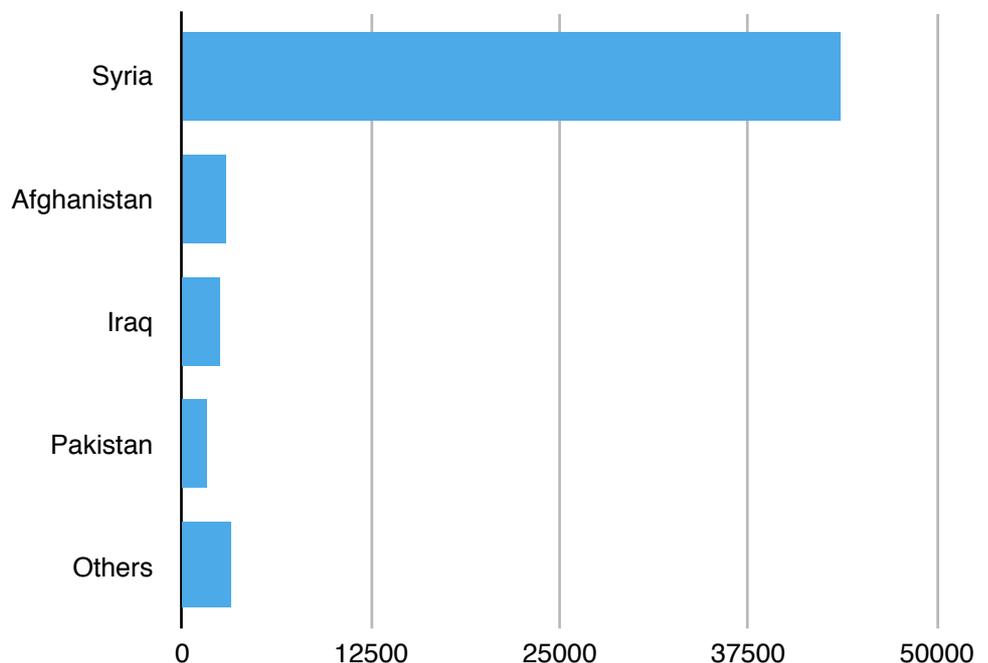
People provided with direct legal assistance

967

Unaccompanied minors identified

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



Intention to apply for asylum: **53,571** applications have been filed from 19 June to 01 September 2015 (source: Ministry of Interior).

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

The number of refugees and migrants crossing the border from Greece, entering the city of Gevgelija continues to be high with 53,571 persons registered their intention to apply for asylum, including 9,305 children, of whom 967 are unaccompanied since 19 June until 01 September 2015. Of these 43,478 (81%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 2,825 (5%) Afghans, 2,477 (5%) Iraqis, 1,622 (3%) Pakistanis and the remainder represent other nationalities such as Somalis, Palestinians, Congolese and Cameroonian. 49 applications for asylum were registered out of which 36 were submitted by Syrians in the same period while from January to end of July 1,675 asylum applications were submitted.



*UNHCR staff assisting refugees in Vinojug transit site.
Photo: UNHCR/A.Moller*

Achievements

Protection

Achievements and Impact

- The new reception centre “Vinojug”, is operational while construction and improvements in service provision are ongoing at the same time. When completed the capacity is 3,000 persons plus a contingency of another 1,000 persons. The centre is 600 meters from the border and 500 meters from Gevgelija. 14 refugee housing units have been erected, with flooring, storage capacity and a service area for partners. A child friendly space is operational 7 days a week with two pedagogues and a psychologist and a separate RHU to allow women to breast feed is in place.
- UNHCR is working with the Government to improve the registration to facilitate safe access to asylum and to ensure implementing border management measures with humanity and in accordance with international obligations including family unity and protection of persons with specific needs
- The presence of twelve new data entry clerks, from UNHCR’s partner the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) and financed by UNHCR, as well as the new software has increased the pace of registration. A metal detector is currently being installed at the entrance of the site for security screening.
- During the reporting period 400 persons were offered free legal advice at the railway station. Also MYLA assisted 8,052 asylum seekers at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedure. These activities are funded by UNHCR.
- In *Tabanovce* refugees continued to arrive from Gevgelija in an organized manner using trains, buses and taxis. Waste disposal and cleaning of WASH facilities are provided by the Red Cross, financed by UNHCR. The Red Cross housing unit was functional and used as storage for food/water supplies.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The standard operating procedures for the registration and site management and initially finalized for the site at the train station will be updated
- While the registration procedure has improved, additional measures are needed to ensure that the needs of persons with specific needs are identified and addressed during this registration procedure, including through appropriate referral channels. Currently, La Strada, MYLA and UNHCR working with teams at the Vinojug reception centre through mobile outreach teams.
- UNICEF will further support La Strada with 14 additional staff such as social workers, psychologist, pedagogues translators and assistants as well as adequate supply.
- UNHCR will be working with partners to strengthen the existing protection monitoring system using innovative approaches and mobile technology.

Health

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period the Red Cross provided 29,261 medical interventions out of which 1,236 were pregnant women and 8,611 were children. Four mobile teams of the Red Cross are working in two shifts to provide medical assistance and first aid in Gevgelija and Tabanovce. This activity is funded by UNHCR.
- Medical teams from the public health facilities are present at the Gevgelija reception center. Voluntary MRP and polio vaccination is available at the site. All healthcare services for the migrants at the public health facilities are provided free of charge.
- During the reporting period a joint WHO UNFPA and UNICEF field visit took place with a purpose to look more in-depth into the medical aspects of the response. The identified needs have been discussed with the Ministry of health.
- WHO will support training of additional 30 volunteers to be deployed as part of the Red Cross teams.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The provision of drugs including those requiring a prescription is currently being explored with the Ministry of Health and the Crisis Management Team.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- A weekly plan for the food and NFI distribution by the various NGOs working at the reception centre has been agreed upon while improvements are still required to train the volunteers working at the reception centre. A food coordination meeting with all actors will be held on Friday.
- The NGOs Nun, Legis and Help the Migrants with the support of individuals are providing daily food packages and other products to the refugees. During the reporting period 22,500 food packages were distributed, 50 kg fruit.
- The Red Cross provided 6,711 food kits last week.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Discussions will be initiated on how best to cater for food and nutrition needs once the temperatures drop

Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- The Red Cross provided 3,445 hygienic parcels (for men, women and babies).
- Legis, Nun and Help the Migrants in Macedonia distributed daily hygienic goods to babies consisting of: diapers (1,500), baby wipes (300 kg) shoes and clothing (250 pcs), and to women; pads (400 pcs), wipes (600 packages), shoes (100 pair).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Challenges remain in ensuring daily service provision such as the water trucking from the municipality whose services arrive often late or irregular; daily follow up is currently required.



Communication and Information

Achievements and Impact

- Materials containing relevant information for refugees and migrants on different issues of interest have been produced by WHO, IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR, the Red Cross and MYLA.
- UNHCR's information desk through mobile outreach teams at the reception centre Vinojug is operating several hours a day to cater for the information needs of the refugees related to registration and protection.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Once the necessary construction have been finalized, leaflets, sign posts, posters and other information material will be made available to ensure an optimal communication and exchange with the refugees.

Working in partnership

- The UNHCR Refugee Situation Preparedness Planning Workshop started on Monday 31 August and will finish on 2 September. A team from UNHCR Geneva is on mission to facilitate the workshop. The output is expected to be a vetted contingency plan for responding in partnership to a large influx of refugees. A range of Government actors, UN Agencies and NGOs participate totaling 37.
- The refugee response activities are headed now by the Crisis Management Team including the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Partners working with the Ministries and municipalities to provide protection and assistance to refugees are: Help the Migrants in Macedonia, HERA, IOM, La Strada Open Gate, Legis, MYLA, Nun, Drika, Vlaznija, Red Cross, SoS Children's Village, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO.



*Child friendly space. Children playing while waiting for the train.
Photo: UNHCR/A.Moller*