



A.Moller/UNHCR/2015

## INTRODUCTION

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UNHCR works directly with communities of concern and places priority on their participation in decisions that affect their lives. UNHCR systematically employs the meaningful participation of persons of concern, and dialogue methodologies, to develop the protection, assistance and solutions approaches that form the core of its action and programming.

For UNHCR, accountability to affected populations (AAP) is situated within the broader protection priorities in each situation. AAP principles and mechanisms intrinsically align as vehicles for the delivery of protection services and outcomes. UNHCR's application of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, participatory assessments, and community-based protection approaches provide a recognizable pathway for the meaningful participation of communities, by acknowledging their full partnership, as capable rights holders.

In the current context, where people are on the move and the average length of stay in the Gevgelija transit center is some 6 hours, accountability becomes even more important to ensure that refugees are informed, can voice their concerns, and are able to influence which type of assistance is the most adequate for them.

The following document provides an overview of the different activities and mechanisms which UNHCR financed and put in place at Gevgelija transit center to assume its responsibility on AAP. These are structured around three main themes:

- **Giving account:** transparently and efficiently sharing information with communities
- **Taking account:** People have influence over decision making in a way that accounts for the diversity of communities, and allows the views of the most vulnerable/at-risk to be equally considered
- **Being held to account:** Giving others the opportunity to assess and if appropriate sanction actions

### Giving account

- Through its partner the Macedonian Young Lawyer Association (MYLA) UNHCR provides a pool of 10 translators who are available 24/7 at the reception site; they provide information to the refugees on the registration procedures, services available and help direct refugees with specific cases to either UNHCR, or other specialized service providers.
- UNHCR has a team of xx field staff who are working 24/7 in three shifts at the site to identify, refer and address the needs of persons with specific needs and to carry out daily interviews with refugees to detect new trends. Four more are currently being hired to further increase UNHCR's presence and an experienced Snr. Emergency Coordinator is responsible to ensure that AAP is integral part of all UNHCR and partner's interventions.
- Two information boards (2m x 2m) are installed visibly at the site with information in three languages, but also for refugees to leave messages for friends and family as they wish.
- A loudspeaker system is currently being installed at the site to air pre-recorded information in five languages on registration procedures, services and other important announcements.
- An information point is strategically installed directly after the border crossing to inform refugees as soon as they crossed the border on the registration procedure and the services at the site. This allows to mitigate possible tensions which have arisen in the past due to the fact that refugees were not informed sufficiently on the registration procedure.
- Wifi connection at the site is provided free of charge and 300 mobile charger stations are available in strategic locations for refugees to remain connected with family and friends and social media.

### Taking account

- Feedback boxes are installed at the site for refugees to voice their ideas feedback (positive/negative) on how to improve the available services and assistance.
- UNHCR has and will continue to carry out needs assessments through key informant interviews in four languages which are collected using mobile data collection. The results have informed the content of the UNHCR regional standardized package for core relief items, the food packages distributed and other services at the site.

## Being held to account

- UNHCR supported the Government to bring together all respective line ministries and UN partners which then validated standard operating procedures (SoPs) on the treatment of victims of trafficking in human beings; the national SoPs are validated and implemented.
- From 6 to 8 October 2015 UNHCR brought together all relevant partners, line ministries and UN agencies to finalize the national standard operating procedures on unaccompanied minors.
- Together with all partners, UNHCR developed standard operating procedures on food/NFI distributions which are currently implemented in the reception center.
- Standard operating procedures for the site including registration are developed and are currently under discussions for finalization.
- UNHCR staff is present at the reception center 24/7; in addition, the outreach team from UNHCR's partner, La Strada Open Gate, identifies and refers protection cases to specialized service providers.
- Once a week, UNHCR together with the Crisis Management Team organizes a coordination meeting during which partners can raise problems and concerns and where lessons learned are discussed to improve programming.
- UNHCR is currently exploring possibilities to have a protection hotline in place through a toll free phone number which can provide responses in several languages to questions raised by refugees.