

# Aegean Islands

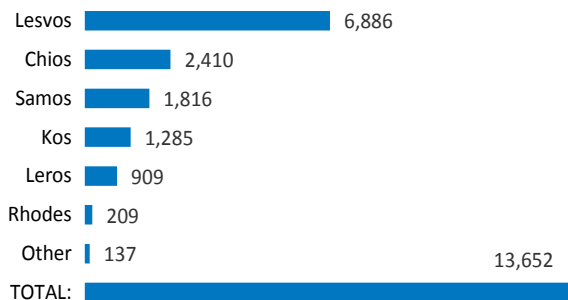
Sea arrivals continued mainly to Lesvos and Chios, but decreased this month to **4,100 people**. The majority came **from Syria and Iraq, and 59% were women and children. The conditions in the**

**reception centres deteriorated further** with asylum-seekers waiting to complete **lengthy procedures while in inappropriate shelter** with limited access to services.

Several thousand asylum-seekers endured cold and rain in tents or makeshift shelters without heating as the authorities struggled to make **preparations for the winter.**

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Host Islands

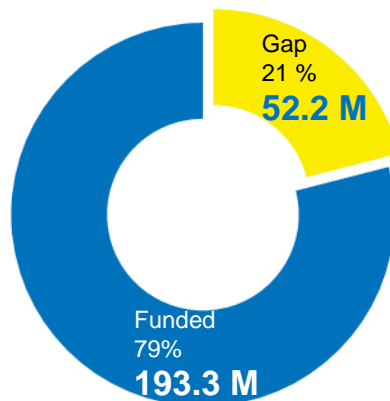


\* Source: UNHCR Greece as of 31 October

## FUNDING (AS OF 8 NOVEMBER)

**USD 245.9 M**

requested for the Greece operation



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

62 National Staff  
8 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens  
1 Sub Office on Lesvos  
5 Field Offices on Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros and Rhodes



Refugee woman in Moria RIC, Lesvos. Photo: UNHCR/Giorgos Kyvernitis.

## 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.
- This month, a number of pregnant women on [Lesvos](#) experienced complications and could not be adequately supported due to the lack of ante-natal care at the Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), known as 'hotspot'. UNHCR is working to identify space in alternative accommodation for women in advanced stages of pregnancy.

### Sexual and Gender Based Violence

- UNHCR provides capacity building to humanitarian organisations and authorities on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) prevention and response, organizes awareness campaigns and conducts trainings to actors from various sectors on how to integrate SGBV guidelines in their everyday work.
- UNHCR and partners have also developed referral pathways so that survivors of SGBV receive appropriate help.

### 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 monitor and develop Standard Operating Procedures and minimum standards to enhance the protection of children.
- There are some 450 unaccompanied children at the RICs on the islands who are awaiting referral to shelters according to UNHCR's estimates. Not enough shelters exist on the islands to accommodate all unaccompanied and separated children.

### Education

- UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available and runs recreational spaces to ensure that the development and well-being of refugee children and youth is supported in a conducive learning environment.

- In collaboration with the University of Aegean on [Lesvos](#) and [Samos](#), UNHCR facilitates classes in 12 European languages for adult and child asylum-seekers through the European Commission's online learning programme.

#### Health

- Medical services in the hotspots on the islands remain limited as the deployment of national service medical staff under the Ministry of Health has not been completed yet. This affects access to primary healthcare and psychosocial support for asylum-seekers and migrants and creates severe delays in the vulnerability assessment.
- UNHCR offers primary health services to the residents of the Kara Tepe managed by the municipality of [Lesvos](#).

#### Food Security

- UNHCR provides food tailored to the specific needs of the population in Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).

#### Shelter, Water, Sanitation and CRIs

- With thousands of people staying in structures inappropriate for the winter, UNHCR offered to the Ministry of Migration Policy its remaining stock of containers, tents and core relief items for use in open sites until stocks are depleted.
- Conditions in the Moria and Vathy 'hotspots' remained very challenging increasing the risks for security incidents, including the risk of sexual violence. Some 2,700 people were found without proper shelter in 'hotspots' on the two islands.
- Upon request of the authorities, UNHCR is offering targeted shelter and hygiene solutions in the extended part of the Vial RIC on [Chios](#), including the set-up of some 40 large tents and three Rubb halls. These interventions facilitated the transfer of the remaining population from Souda to Vial, and consequently the closure of Souda by the Municipality of [Chios](#) in October. Nevertheless, conditions in the hotspot remained difficult with some 200 people staying outside containers or tents.
- Conditions remain challenging on [Rhodes](#) where approximately 100 people stay in an old slaughterhouse in the absence of an official reception facility on the island.

#### Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities, convenes regular community discussions on the islands. These platforms are a channel of communication amongst asylum-seekers, humanitarian actors and authorities where issues such as hygiene and childcare are discussed. UNHCR also provides leaflets in different languages with information about the asylum procedures and access to key services.

#### Support to local community

- 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 equipment to the hospital on [Kos](#), as a gesture of appreciation to the local community. In addition, IT equipment was donated to local schools on [Tilos](#)

where some 45 people are accommodated by UNHCR.

- Fatigue and polarization – often expressed with protests and demonstrations – is observed particularly on the islands of [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#) and [Samos](#) by both the local and refugee communities over the lengthy asylum procedures, overcrowding and poor living conditions for those having to remain on the islands.

#### **ESTIA Accommodation and Cash assistance**

- In October, UNHCR provided dignified housing on the islands to 938 people in apartments and buildings. Some 6,700 people benefited from partial cash assistance to cover certain basic needs, such as clothes, educational material, transport and communications. Cash assistance and accommodation help provide people with a sense of normalcy. They also contribute directly to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods, and the renting of apartments.
- 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 October, UNHCR assisted the transfer of some 2,000 asylum-seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and open sites on the mainland. Since June 2016, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of over 15,600 such transfers, which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands.
- UNHCR offers local transportation from remote sites to key facilities and the Regional Asylum Offices on the islands in order to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the asylum procedure and the necessary services.

#### **Partners**

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: [Danish Refugee Council](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), [Doctors of the World](#), [Save the Children](#), [Samaritan's Purse](#), [Metadrasi](#), [Arsis](#), [Praksis](#) and [Iliaktida](#).

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**Thanks to the donors for the Greece Operation**

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