

## Gender-based Violence Programme Overview

# Refugee and Migrant Response

November 2019

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Focus on Phase II of the Programme “Action Against Gender-Based Violence Affecting Refugee and Migrant Women and Children in Greece, Italy, Serbia and Bulgaria”  
October 2018 – September 2019

### Situation Analysis

By September 2019, **82,000 refugees and migrants had arrived in Europe** since the start of the year via the Mediterranean migration routes. One in four (19,800) was a child, and around a third of them are girls. As of September 2019, **11,940 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were registered in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the majority boys, and around 10 percent girls.<sup>1</sup> However, it is safe to assume that more children have been moving across the region and are not captured in the data due to limitations of national and regional data collection systems. Refugee and migrant boys and girls – some travelling with their families, some alone, some accompanied by unrelated adults, some with their spouses – risk everything, even their own lives, in search of a better life. Millions of uprooted families flee their homes in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, East and West Africa to escape conflict, persecution and poverty. When children and young people feel that they have no choices or sense of a future, and where there are no safe and legal alternatives for migration accessible to them, uprooted children will take matters into their own hands, facing even greater risks of exploitation.<sup>2</sup> While child protection systems in Europe have improved, and social inclusion has progressed with increasing access to education in some areas for refugee and migrant children, major gaps remain.

### Strategy

UNICEF is meeting the unique needs of children and young people who are seeking asylum in Europe, as well as those on the move, stranded or being pushed back, since the earliest days of the migrant and refugee response. UNICEF uses two inter-linked approaches: **life-saving service provision in partnership with institutions and civil society organizations (CSO)**

It is clear that migration is a gendered phenomenon. Gender roles, relations and inequalities often determine who migrates (whether voluntarily or forcibly), how they migrate, why they migrate, and where they end up. Gender influences the risks and threats both boys and girls experience on their journey as well as their coping and protective mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> Migration routes can be particularly dangerous for adolescent girls, specifically those who are unaccompanied or separated.<sup>4</sup> They face a unique set of risks related to gender-based violence (GBV) before, during and after migration. Many are fleeing violence, including child marriage, in their home country, or are trafficked on their journey, which becomes yet another part of the violence they face. Reports indicate that nearly all women and adolescent girls who have taken the central Mediterranean route have survived sexual violence. A [report](#) from the Women’s Refugee Commission finds that men and boys are also subjected to high levels of sexual violence during the journey, particularly in Libya as the main transit country before Italy. Finally they remain at risk of exploitation and other forms of violence once they reach countries of arrival. Key challenges within Europe’s migrant and refugee response include poor reception conditions, limited comprehensive and appropriate services for GBV survivors, and persistent discrimination.

**and supporting existing national child protection systems.** This dual approach is crucial for long-term improvements in the care and protection of refugee and migrant children, whether they are travelling alone or with their parents or caregivers’, and to improve overall child protection systems.

### KEY POPULATION FIGURES<sup>5</sup>

**82,000 arrivals** in Europe through Italy, Greece, Spain and Bulgaria in Jan-Sept 2019  
(UNHCR, 6 October 2019)



**19,800 children** among all arrivals through Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria in Jan-Sept 2019. **Around a third of them are girls.** (UNHCR, 6 October 2019)



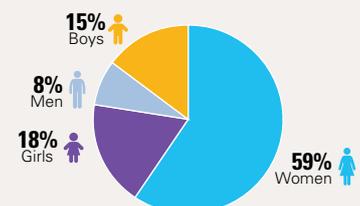
**11,940 unaccompanied and separated children** registered in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Around 10% are girls.** (UNICEF, September 2019)



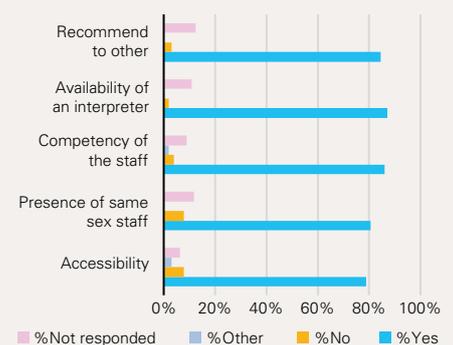
### KEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE<sup>6</sup>

GBV survivors and individuals at risk who have accessed to GBV services (October 2018 – September 2019)

**TARGET 2400**  
**REACHED 3641**



### Beneficiaries’ feedback



With support from Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), UNICEF has focused on the integration of GBV prevention and response into broader child protection programming. This spans the update and expansion of effective **referral mechanisms** for GBV survivors and other at-risk groups, on-going **capacity support for frontline workers** (including those from social welfare systems), provision of integrated **technical assistance**, and a complementary focus on provision of direct services. More specifically, UNICEF has focused on providing **safe spaces** for girls and women, alongside specific services for boys and young men who have also faced sexual violence and exploitation. Working closely with **local CSOs, including migrant-women lead organizations**, safe spaces have been established and strengthened through regional and international good practice exchange. UNICEF also engages directly with governments and relevant ministries through technical and financial support to **develop and disseminate policies and laws** including GBV consideration, with a focus on migrants and refugees, ultimately contributing to overall **system strengthening**.

## Achievements

As of September 2019, **2178 women, 650 girls, 281 men, 532 boys who are survivors of and/or at risk of GBV**, had received protection services, including psychological support, material assistance and referral to existing specialized services, many through women and girls' safe spaces. In all, 84 per cent of beneficiaries who were surveyed reported satisfaction with the competency of the staff, and would recommend the services to others. Ongoing quality monitoring showed improvements in terms of service accessibility, respect of the users' confidentiality and competency of the staff. In fact, during the first quarter of 2019, 56 per cent of UNICEF's quality criteria were met in full – a percentage that increased during the third quarter to reach 69 per cent.

As of September 2019, a total of **1,092 frontline workers**, from state authorities as well as civil society organizations, were trained on GBV prevention and response. Different sectors and types of professionals were targeted including reception site staff, linguistic and cultural mediators, medical staff, teachers, guardians, social workers and others. Enhancing the capacity of national actors is contributing to the strengthening of overall child protection systems and to the quality of the response. The strategy also featured UNICEF-supported secondments to relevant ministries, as well as technical support and advocacy for policy reform.



At the regional level, UNICEF focuses on cross-fertilization among the different programmes, promoting learning exchanges and sharing of good practices. This has included a September 2019 study visit to Italy to exchange practices across countries on the integration of **GBV and gender into guardianship systems**. A roundtable of 30 experts from Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, the Netherlands and Serbia generated a rich discussion on the different systems, their challenges and opportunities, culminating in an exchange with volunteer guardians and former UASC to reflect on their experiences.

A training curriculum for guardians on GBV was piloted, involving around 20 voluntary guardians and representatives from Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece. This regional approach promotes cooperation among institutions and horizontal learning across practitioners and institutions, including, for example, twinning between partners in Greece and Serbia.

Collaboration with UNFPA has expanded Boys on the Move **life skills** package which is used around the region including in Serbia and Italy to include GBV prevention and response elements, and be suitable for an older audience of late teens and young men.



Safe spaces are made to support women and girls' empowerment and to provide safe surroundings to seek help on many levels. Activities are tailored to increase their potentials, create the space for their voices and increase the awareness of their strength to fulfill their dreams and hopes. The safe spaces serve several important roles in providing protection to women and girls on the move. While being restricted in public spaces, refugee women and girls can use the safe space to rest, move and talk freely. Additionally, safe spaces act as entry points for safe and confidential GBV disclosure and access to specialized services. Lastly, safe spaces are a venue for empowerment and gender transformative workshops for adolescent girls. UNICEF developed a **Pocket-Guide** including guidelines to design, develop, implement and evaluate a girls' empowerment program with Roma communities and the migrants and refugees population in Serbia as well as in Bulgaria.

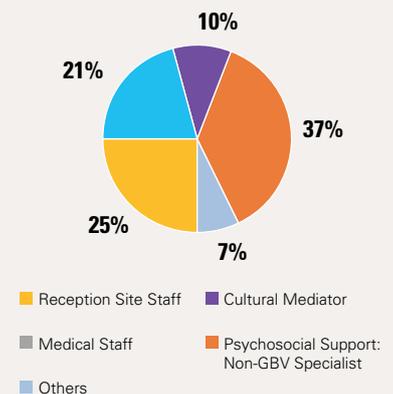


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**1092** frontline workers trained



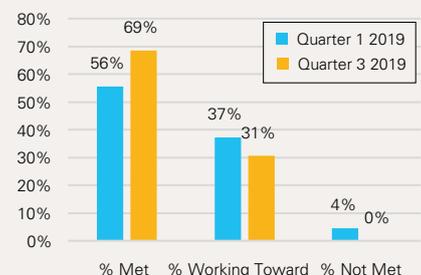
Frontline workers trained



**85%** of trained frontline workers now report knowing how and where to make a GBV referral



Minimum Standards



*To see the faces and hear the voices of girls, and the UNICEF staff and partners who support them, watch this [video](#).*

## In plain sight – Making unaccompanied and separated girls visible within the European Refugee and Migrant Response

UNICEF has carried out an analysis of the situation of unaccompanied and separated girls based on the direct experiences of around 20 current or former unaccompanied and separated girls in Greece and Italy, as well as feedback and advice from girls in Serbia, backed by a secondary data review and limited direct data collection, and a literature review conducted with the support of the GBV Area of Responsibility Help Desk.



**Unaccompanied children** are separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

**Separated children** are separated from both parents, or from their previous primary or customary caregiver, but not necessarily other relatives.

### *‘Boys help the families, but girls need the families’ – Girl in Greece*

Findings indicate that few national, regional and international statistics are available on the specific situation of being a girl on the move. Across all target countries, unaccompanied and separated girls represent a smaller percentage of the total number of UASCs than boys, but there is a general lack of statistics disaggregated by sex and age, and the needs of girls are often subsumed under the term ‘children’, with little or no data gathered on their migration experiences. As a result, the diverse profiles and experiences of unaccompanied girls – including girls travelling with young children, pregnant girls, and younger adolescent girls – are poorly reflected across programming and advocacy.

Unaccompanied and separated girls may not, therefore, be ‘visible’ and identifiable for a variety of reasons, including the inability of service providers to ‘see’ them. Many girls travelling within other families are not identified by authorities, and the girls themselves may be reluctant to self-identify to relevant authorities, particularly if they are travelling as part of an extended families (or with other adults assumed to be family). Some fear being separated from their relatives, travel companions or adult spouses or being placed in protective custody. Many are instructed to report themselves as being older than they really are to avoid referral to child protection systems, particularly in the context of trafficking.

The stakeholders interviewed were clear in expressing a lack of the expertise and tools that would enable them to spot girls who are unaccompanied, given that the dynamics of movement differ from those of boys. This places the burden of responsibility for accessing available

protection mechanisms on children themselves. Service providers did share some good practices that aid identification, including the use of safe spaces (women and girl spaces or child-friendly spaces) to create entry points to build trust, enable access to information and provide somewhere for girls to come forward and seek help. UNICEF will continue to focus on unaccompanied and separated girls through dedicated programming, by sharing of knowledge and expertise with others, and by advocating with authorities and service providers to improve the identification of these particularly vulnerable children.

*“They didn’t believe me. They told me I was about twenty-four because I was married and had a baby. I had a son, but he died ... and nothing when I arrived in Lampedusa they didn’t believe my age and then I had my identity card sent to me and they changed it.” – Girl in Italy*



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe Situation Report # 33.

<sup>2</sup> [<https://www.unicef.org/eca/news-and-stories-refugee-and-migrant-children-europe>]

<sup>3</sup> [<https://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/updates/gender-and-migration>]

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA, UNHCR and WRC (2016) *Initial Assessment Report: Protection risks for women and girls in the European refugee and migrant crisis in Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem (UNICEF Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe Situation Report # 33)

<sup>6</sup> All data are drawn from UNICEF’s regular Monitoring and Evaluation System.

## Results Per Country At a Glance

### BULGARIA

**380** Beneficiaries supported 



**81%** of polled beneficiaries would recommend UNICEF supported services to others 

**3** GBV service delivery points supported 

**UNICEF BRPM Partners**  
State Agency for Refugees 

Animus Association Foundation, Mission Wings Foundation, Alliance Protection from Gender-Based Violence, Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria 

**74** frontline workers trained 

**86%** of previously trained frontline workers report knowing how and where to make a GBV related referral 

UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR jointly developed a GBV referral pathway to guide frontline workers, complementing the internal rules of the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees 

### GREECE

**1418** Beneficiaries supported 



**90%** of polled beneficiaries would recommend UNICEF supported services to others 

**2** GBV service delivery points supported 

**UNICEF BRPM Partners**  
General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) 

Iliaktida, Melissa Network of Migrant Women, KETHI (Research Centre for Gender Equality), Diotima 

**264** frontline workers trained 

**89%** of previously trained frontline workers report knowing how and where to make a GBV related referral 

UNICEF continued its strategic partnership with the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE). 

### ITALY

**514** Beneficiaries supported 



**81%** of polled beneficiaries would recommend UNICEF supported services to others 

**2** GBV service delivery points supported 

**3,190** U Report subscribers, 86% aged 15 to 24, 8% female 92% male, reached with GBV related information 

**UNICEF BRPM Partners**  
Ombudsperson of Palermo 

Medicines du Monde, Intersos, Centro PENC, Women Refugee Commission, UNFPA 

**692** frontline workers trained 

**85%** of participants reported their knowledge was improved after the training 

Adapted curriculum on GBV for Guardians Piloted. Boys on the Move Life Skills Curriculum adapted. Q&A on sexual violence developed 

### SERBIA

**1329** Beneficiaries supported 



**82%** of polled beneficiaries reported satisfaction for the UNICEF supported services received 

**7** GBV service delivery points supported 

**90%** of women and girls polled reported they're satisfied with the competency of the staff 

**UNICEF BRPM Partners**  
Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs Commissariat for Refugees 

ADRA, Info Park 

**62** frontline workers trained 

**84%** of previously trained frontline workers report knowing how and where to make a GBV related referral 

In collaboration with the National University of Serbia UNICEF is developing a dedicated GBV and Child Protection in Emergency Lifelong course for future social workers. 

 Funding provided by the United States Government

unicef  for every child