

# SERBIA

## INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

15 – 21 September 2015

### 2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-AUGUST)

**103,623**

Registered intentions to seek asylum

**5,753**

Unaccompanied minors

**810**

Capacity of Asylum Centres

**245**

Asylum seekers in procedure

**15**

Persons granted asylum

**25%**

Of registered asylum-seekers are minors

### PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and the civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the refugees
- Strengthen the asylum systems in line with applicable international standards

### HIGHLIGHTS

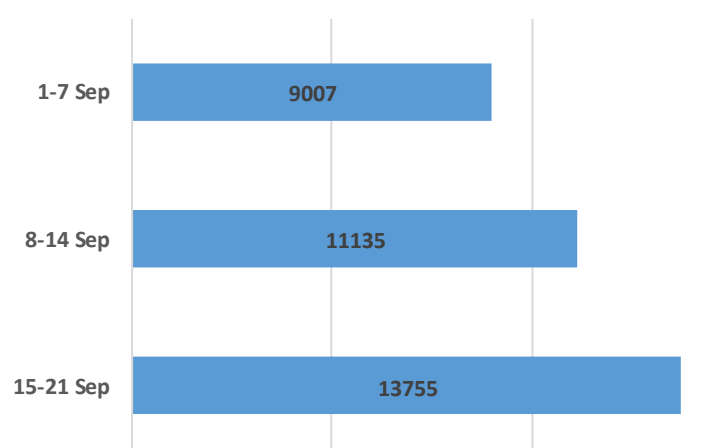
- The number of refugee arrivals from FYR Macedonia averaged 4,200 in the reporting period. Registration capacities have been stepped up to around 1,800 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere.
- As of 21 September 2015, 137,520 PoCs expressed intent to seek asylum in Serbia.
- The UN is assisting the Serbian Government and civil society to respond to the most urgent needs of refugees and migrants, including coordination, registration, food, water, temporary shelter, health care, hygiene and child care. UNHCR is coordinating the UN response which also involves the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as the World Food Programme (WFP).
- Government of Serbia began preparing 3 new refugee aid points near Kikinda (border with Romania) and Sombor and Šid (border with Croatia), in view of the changed refugee route due to Serbia/Hungary border closure.



Syrian family awaiting registration outside the One Stop Centre in Preševo, South Serbia @UNHCR/Imre Szabo

**Intention to apply for asylum** (Source: Ministry of Interior)

**13,755** registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



## UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

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### Operational Context

Serbia is situated along the preferred route through the Western Balkans for refugees originating from the Middle East and Asia, aiming to seek asylum in Europe. The majority are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. UNHCR estimates that at any given time over 12,000 refugees are on Serbian territory. Slow but steady increase in the numbers of women and children continues.

On 15 September, the border crossings Horgosz 1 and Horgosz 2 on the Hungarian side of the Serbia/Hungary border were closed. Clashes between the Hungarian police and refugees intent on breaking through the barricades and police cordons ensued and some 3,000 refugees remained stranded, until buses were sent to take them to Kanjiža Refugee Aid Point (RAP). Almost a hundred family tents remained camped near Horgosz on the Serbian side of the border for the next 4 days, hoping to be eventually allowed to enter Hungary.

Events at the Hungarian border rapidly changed the route of the refugee flow towards Croatia - mainly Šid/Tovarnik border crossing and partly towards Bezdán/Batina border crossing near Sombor. This wave sent around 14,500 refugees into Croatia in the space of the first 48 hrs. The Croatian authorities decided to close 7 out of 8 border crossings with Serbia on Thursday 17 September, following which around 200 refugees (40% of which women and children) remained stranded on the bridge over the Danube river at the border-crossing of Bezdán-Batina, having been refused entry into Croatia. The authorities, with the help of UNHCR, convinced these refugees to return into Serbia.

Hungarian border crossing Horgosz 1 was officially re-opened in the morning of 19 September. The official readmission process from Hungary has been suspended until further notice.

The Serbian government is continuing to provide refugees with registration and documentation and the UNHCR continues to offer the government assistance to be ready for the reception of larger numbers of refugees.

### Achievements



Protection

#### Achievements and Impact

- Upon request from UNHCR, family tracing and reunification services were put in place by the Red Cross at Serbian borders with Hungary and Croatia.
- Since the rerouting of the refugee flow towards the Šid/Tovarnik border crossing on 15 September, UNHCR teams have been present at this border crossing day and night, monitoring, identifying and assisting EVIs.
- UNICEF installed a 'Mother and Child' tent on 16 September at the Preševo Centre to provide a safe environment for refugee women with babies to use for breastfeeding and other needs.
- UNHCR worked closely with the Government, central and local authorities, and NGO partners to monitor and support refugee protection and humanitarian needs at the main entry and exit points of the country, as well as along their journey throughout the country. Locations covered included Preševo, Bujanovac, Vranje, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Negotin, Niš, Zaječar, Belgrade, Subotica, Kanjiža, Šid, Sombor and Kikinda.
- Together with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and Border Police at the One-Stop Centre in Preševo, UNHCR prioritised Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) to fast-track registration procedures.
- Seven refugees from Syria approached the UNHCR team for assistance in Miratovac RAP and reported that they had been subjected to violence during their flight due to their sexual orientation (LGBT).
- Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) installed free WiFi to be used by the refugees at Preševo Centre.
- IOM and UNHCR continued to transport around 2,000 most vulnerable refugees daily from Miratovac RAP to Preševo One Stop Centre. IOM added 3 more mini-vans.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The mother and child rooms of the SCRM in the Preševo Centre remained unavailable during daytime.
- NGOs of unknown provenance opened an info booth in Bristol Hotel Park, promoting irregular onward movement by distributing flyers with information on asylum systems in Germany, Sweden and other EU countries.
- Refugees and migrants continued to cross into Serbia from Bulgaria, with the total number of arrivals around 350 daily across the entire stretch of this border.
- Due to the decrease in the number of refugees in Kanjiža RAP, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) revised the level of needed response. Thus, the opening of DRC/UNICEF Child-Friendly Space in Kanjiža has been postponed. DRC will continue to closely monitor the situation in RAP Kanjiža.
- Refugees continue to complain about limited access to registration services at the Alien Office of Belgrade Police in Savska Street.

## Education

### Achievements and Impact

- In the Banja Koviljača, Krnjača, Bogovađa and Krnjača asylum centres, UNHCR funded DRC activities for children, including a kindergarten supervised by qualified care-givers, and English and Serbian language lessons three times per week to improve their chances of integration within the community.
- The Bogovađa asylum centre conducted sewing classes for women and mothers who are protégés of this centre. This activity boosted refugees' psychological well-being and self-confidence, and empowered them with transferable skills. Products included bedsheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.
- Ministry of Education installed a tent in the Hotel Bristol park in Belgrade, serviced by the staff of the local kindergarten and Petar Petrović Njegoš elementary school, where refugee children could attend creative workshops and avail of professional daycare, making their short stay in Belgrade a bit more meaningful.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Notwithstanding the above mentioned efforts, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection continued to face challenges of integration and education opportunities.



## Health

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM), funded by Catholic Relief Service (CRS), had a medical team in Vašarište RAP present four days a week, as well as 3 translators.
- Danish Peoples' Aid established a medical mobile team in Belgrade's central parks.
- MSF mobile teams commuted between Miratovac and Preševo on a daily basis, and had a daily presence in Belgrade and Subotica-Horgosz area. As of 15 September, MSF mobile team has been covering the Šid/Tovarnik border crossing as well.
- One medical mobile team from Belgrade municipal health centres was in place in the Faculty of Economics park in Belgrade to provide medical assistance on a daily basis (one doctor and two nurses from 7am-5pm). Assigned health centres changed every day.
- As of 15 September, Ministry of Health (MoH) appointed two medical teams to be present at Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre 24/7.
- With the support of UNHCR, DRC engaged a medical team consisting of a medical doctor and two nurses, to provide medical assistance in Kanjiža RAP. The medical team was engaged through the local health centre in coordination

with the MoH and operates in the medical container in Kanjiža RAP provided by UNHCR and equipped by DRC with UNHCR funding.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR and DRC were requested by the MoH to engage four additional medical teams (consisting of medical doctor and a nurse) - two in Preševo and two in Belgrade.



## Food Security and Nutrition

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR received a World Food Programme (WFP) donation of 33.61 MT of high energy biscuits (HEBs). Youth Office volunteers, Red Cross and UNHCR distributed HEBs and water to refugees arriving from FYR Macedonia to Miratovac RAP.
- SCRM provided refugees sleeping at Preševo Centre overnight with food and water.
- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre. In the reporting period, over 3,000 UNHCR-funded food rations were distributed. Red Cross distributed additional 400 rations daily, provided by Caritas Luxembourg and SCRM.
- Red Cross distributed around 1,000 dry food rations daily, funded by SCRM, in Miratovac RAP.
- Red Cross and UNHCR started distributing food parcels to refugees at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing as of 15 September.
- HCIT delivered food packages, baby food and biscuits to the refugees at Horgosz and the old brick factory (OBF) near Subotica as well as Šid/Tovarnik border crossing.
- World Vision distributed dried food, energy food, water and baby food in all the refugee aid points in the north of the country.
- Red Cross distributed food and baby food once daily at Vašarište RAP. They also distributed food and water at OBF.
- German HELP organization delivered over 200 food packages at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing on 16 September.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross organisations and MSF, 2,000 food and hygiene packages daily, mainly for refugees arriving from Bulgaria.
- French NGO SOS Attitude mounted a tent in the public park next to the railway station in Belgrade on 15 September. The tent was used to distribute hot meals to refugees who spend the night in the parks every evening.
- Asylum Protection Centre (APC) provided refugees in Belgrade parks with food.
- Citizens continued to bring food and non-food items to Asylum Info Centre, who then coordinated with Miksalište and took some of the aid over there. Restaurant Vodenica was preparing hot meals for refugees in Belgrade parks on 15 September and Bahlsen Poland company donated 2.5 tons of biscuits to the Info Centre, to be distributed among refugees in Belgrade.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Miksalište in Belgrade was in need of canned tuna fish, milk and juice.



## Water and Sanitation

### Achievements and Impact

- Due to increasing amounts of rubbish left behind the refugees crossing into Croatia, HCIT and UNHCR embarked on a joint waste management project at Serbia/Croatia border.
- UNOPS delivered an EU-funded 10,000 litre water tank and 10 containers for plastic waste to Miratovac RAP.

- UNHCR installed 6 portable toilets at Šid border crossing on 19 September.
- As of mid-September, DRC as partner of UNHCR has been in charge of coordination and implementation of various activities related to WASH interventions in Preševo/Miratovac, in close cooperation with the relevant authorities.
- DRC conducted WASH activities funded by UNHCR in Vašarište RAP related to the connection of the RAP sewage system to the public utility network and aimed at improving the current hygienic and sanitary conditions.
- State Institute for Public health visited Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre and disinfected the latrines and wash areas on 19 September.
- HCIT distributed water to refugees at the OBF, Vašarište RAP and Serbia/Croatia border.
- UNHCR started distributing water to refugees at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing as of 15 September.
- Red Cross distributed water, donated from the Provincial stock reserves, once daily at Vašarište RAP and OBF, as well as water donated by the SCRM at Miratovac RAP, and was present at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing delivering water.
- Due to increase in the number of refugees at OBF, ASB started distributing water to refugees there.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Norwegian Church Aid visited Preševo Centre together with the DRC on 19 September in order to develop a project for building 14 Turkish-style toilets in the Centre.
- Amity NGO appealed for one mobile shower and toilets at Negotin border crossing.
- The medical container in Miratovac RAP remained in need of water supply (a water tank).



UNHCR staff distributing raincoats to refugees arriving from FYR Macedonia at Miratovac RAP  
@UNHCR/Mahmoud Awad

## Shelter and NFIs

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR procured 1,100 raincoats, 19,000 blankets and 23,000 sleeping mats, which were distributed in Miratovac RAP, Preševo Centre, Kanjiža RAP and aid points at the Serbia/Croatia border.
- UNHCR distributed 40 family tents to refugees at the Horgosz border crossing on 16 September.
- Ministry of Defense set up a tent in Hotel Bristol park in Belgrade.
- UNOPS donated 900 blankets, 700 bed linen sets and 350 pillows to the SCRM to be used at Preševo Centre.
- Japanese Embassy donated 200 winter tents and generators to the Miratovac RAP.
- Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and the Border Police, accompanied by IOM, visited Miratovac RAP in order to explore the possibilities for winterization of the existing tents in the RAP.
- SCRM transformed a former childrens' hospital Principovac in Šid into a RAP which was opened on 16 September. Principovac has 250 beds that can be made available to women and children only, with the possibility of installing more beds in the hallways. Men would be accommodated outside, in tents and containers that SCRM would provide. Serbian Red Cross delivered food, water and clothes and stored them in Principovac warehouse.
- HCIT handed out raincoats and hygiene parcels to refugees at the OBF, the bus station in Subotica and Horgosz border area, as well as Šid/Tovarnik border crossing.
- World Vision distributed hygiene packages, first aid kits and raincoats in all the refugee aid points in the north of the country.
- German HELP organization distributed hygiene kits at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing on 16 September.
- Asylum Protection Centre (APC) provided refugees in Belgrade parks with hygiene kits.
- Asylum Info Centre distributed 400 UNHCR raincoats in Belgrade parks on 20 September.
- Norwegian Peoples' Aid distributed 1,000 hygiene kits for men and women at Miratovac RAP on 18 September.
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) were constructing a new RAP in Subotica.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre faced new challenges due to rain and cold. The refugees staying in the Preševo Centre for several hours were exposed to changing weather conditions and Miratovac RAP site was covered in mud and rain puddles making movement fairly difficult.

- Between 500-600 refugees remained in Preševo Centre overnight to await registration in the morning, mostly sleeping rough without shelter.
- MoI requested UNHCR to provide shelter for the police and gendarmerie in Miratovac RAP, as well as a supply of protective masks and gloves.
- Sigma plus was appealing for shelter, food and water assistance for refugees, as well as enhancement of registration capacities of the border police at Dimitrovgrad border crossing, due to an increased number of incoming refugees there (over 200 per day).
- Miksalište in Belgrade was in need of diapers, tooth paste and tooth brushes.

## Working in partnership

- UNHCR continues to co-chair the **Refugee Protection Working Group** together with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs / Chair of the Inter-Ministerial WG. The last meeting took place on 24 September.
- UN agencies in Serbia continue to elaborate its **internal** coordination mechanism concerned with the response to the refugee crisis. The **UN Country Team Refugee Task Force** meets on a weekly basis.
- UNHCR implementing partners include: Amity, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Indigo, INTERSOS, Microfins, Praxis, Sigma Plus and Vizija.
- UNHCR operational partners include the Ministries of Labour, Interior and Health, the SCRM as well as municipal authorities, the UN Country Team, ADRA, CRS, and MSF.

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### Links:

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