

KEY FIGURES

16,554

Medical interventions provided

16,064

Unaccompanied minors registered

24,100

Food packages & sandwiches distributed

5,336

Blankets distributed

8,900

Liters of water distributed

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

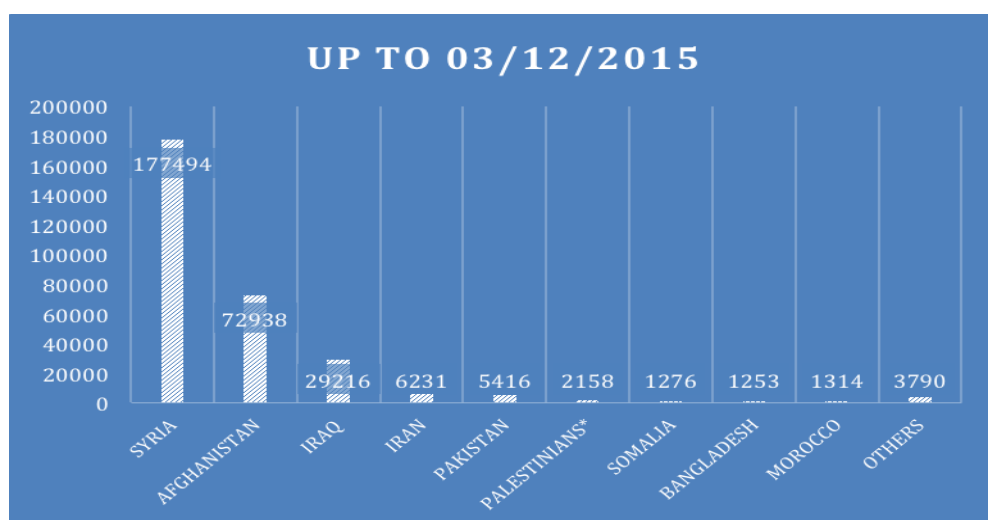
FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

25 November – 3 December 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- 19,422 refugees and migrants have crossed the border into fyR Macedonia during the reporting period 25 November – 3 December with a daily average of 1942. Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **605,373** refugees and migrants have departed.



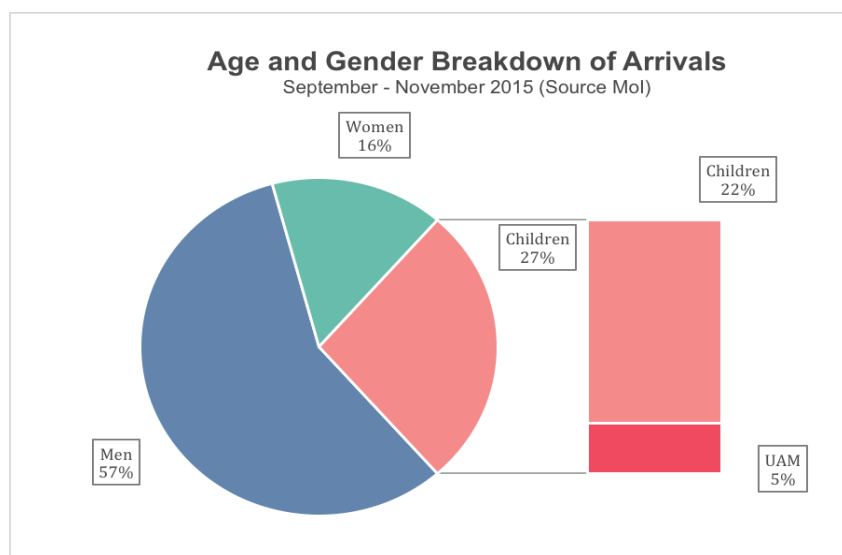
- Intention to apply for asylum: **301,086** applications have been filed from 19 June through 3 December 2015 (source: Ministry of Interior)



UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

19,422 refugees and migrants have crossed the border into fYR Macedonia during the reporting period 25 November-3 December with a daily average of 1,942. Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some 605,373 refugees and migrants have departed.



The Ministry of Interior's statistics of refugees and migrants declaring their intention to apply for asylum reached 301,086 including 81,093 (27%) children, of whom 16,064 (5%) are unaccompanied, since 19 June until 3 December 2015. Of these 177,494 (59%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 72,938 (24%) Afghans, 29,216 (10%) Iraqis, and the remaining (7%) represent other nationalities such as Iranians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Congolese and Bangladeshi. 41 applications for asylum were registered in the month of November out of which 10 were submitted by Syrians for the same period. From January to the end of October, 1,739 asylum applications were submitted out of which 975 were submitted by Syrians.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- In agreement with the Border Police, UNHCR established a system to monitor returns of people who were found to possess forged Greek registration documents; were missing documents; or were unable to prove they were of Syrian, Afghan or Iraqi nationality. UNHCR and the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) provided information to on the asylum procedure and their rights. Upon UNHCR and MYLA intervention, several people were given access to the territory and were registered every day. In addition, so far, all 739 of those who were deported since UNHCR began tracking individuals on 25 November have been readmitted to Greece without problems.
- Cross-border coordination between UNHCR and Red Cross colleagues in fYR Macedonia and Serbia, and fYR Macedonia and Greece has improved, and become more systematic. Issues such as the effective and timely information of arrival of Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI), and the restoration of family links for those who were separated when boarding the train, or during transit, were among the main issues that required cooperation between the teams.
- The fYR Macedonian Ombudsman, and his Austrian counterpart, visited the Gevgelija reception/transit center, and had the opportunity to speak to the authorities and some of the refugees present at the site. They also met the

UNHCR Representative and discussed the winterization plans. The Ombudsmen highly praised the work of UNHCR and partners, and made very strong points to the press that the Government needs to treat all refugees without discrimination and in a humane way, with full respect for their human rights. He also highlighted that there was insufficient coordination efforts by the Government, as well as inadequate assistance (making specific reference to the problems with heating and the electricity supply). The UNHCR Representative took the opportunity to remind that the country must ensure access to the territory for all refugees and asylum-seekers, without discrimination.

- The Head of the Registration Unit of the MOI Sector for Asylum also visited the transit center in Gevgelija during the reporting period. UNHCR welcomed the mission and expressed hope for a more systematic presence of the Asylum Sector on the ground, which is crucial for ensuring access to asylum.
- A delegation from the US Embassy visited the Vinojug site together with the US Consul General in Thessaloniki; the Italian Ambassador visited both the Geveglijia and Tabanovce transit sites; a delegation made of the Embassies of the Netherlands in Skopje and Athens visited the transit sites in Gevgelija and Idomeni; and a delegation from the Serbian Red Cross visited Tabanovce during the reporting period. A representative of the Crisis Management Center, UNHCR, the Red Cross and other partners on the ground briefed them. The Italian government has contributed to winterization activities through the Special Mediterranean initiative, and the Netherlands are financing three projects on building professional capacity on migration, as well as protecting unaccompanied and separated child migrants (in fYR Macedonia and Serbia).
- UNICEF implementing partners SOS Children's Village and La Strada continue to operate Child Friendly Spaces at Tabanovce and Vinojug, which provide safe places for children to rest and play, with materials for early learning activities for children, psychosocial support, a place for mothers to breastfeed, wash and change their babies, winter clothing and food appropriate for children. Between 25 November – 3 December approximately 2479 children and 2254 women were provided with emotional and psychosocial assistance in the UNICEF Child Friendly Spaces operated by the NGO La Strada and SOS Children's Village. La Strada identified and assisted 286 vulnerable individuals. The activities are funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, GIZ, People in Need and Terre des Hommes.
- Between 26 and 28 November, UNICEF, with the support of Terre des Hommes, conducted a scoping mission in Skopje, Vinojug and Tabanovce to assess child protection training needs of humanitarian workers in contact with children and those delivering specialized child protection services. Training will begin in the three locations on 7 December.
- During the reporting period 276 refugee group leaders, around 13,875 refugees were given information about their rights and obligations in fYR Macedonia at the Vinojug site by MYLA. MYLA also assisted 32 asylum seekers, out of which 4 were UAMs, at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedure. MYLA also ensured prioritization of 59 cases, representing around 250 vulnerable individuals for their registration in Vinojug. MYLA's data entry clerks assisted the Border Police in issuing 16,517 intentions for asylum during the reporting period.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The fYR Macedonian army started building a metal fence along the Greek border during the reporting period. Thus far, the fence extends for 1.6 km in either direction from Border Marker 59, for a total of 3.2 km. Media reported the total target span is 59 km (the total span of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Hellenic Republic border is 256 km, including some difficult to cross mountain areas). UNHCR asked for official information from the Government. The Government assured that the sole purpose of the fence is to prevent irregular movements outside the current border crossing point near the Gevgelija/Vinojugovo transit center.
- Need for stronger cross-border cooperation between the respective Border Police services of the fYR Macedonia and Greece, in relation to the screening of registration documents, in order to streamline admission and registration procedures. The Border Police continued to screen documents at the checkpoint, so in addition to the persons being deported from the registration point there are also many people not admitted to the country at the checkpoint.



- Railway staff members are allegedly still overcharging for train tickets and selling tickets to children under 10 years of age, contrary to the official policy. FYR Macedonian Railways charges 20 euros per person for transit between Gevgelija and Tabanovce—more than twice as high as its regular fare. Moreover, it is a regular occurrence that trains are overcrowded and oversold; a number of people who bought tickets were forced to wait for the next train due to the lack of room. The Ministers of Interior, Defense and Health visited the site and the border area and reiterated that they wanted to resolve the issues with the train. UNHCR addressed an official letter to the Prime Minister's Office copying the ministries of Transport, Labor and Social Policy, and the Director of Crisis Management Center on this subject.
- The road conditions remain bad due to the weather, making it difficult for people to walk and to transport individuals with specific needs/disabilities to Serbia. There is still no police presence on the Serbian side of the border. The police checkpoint is near the first RAP in Miratovac. Hence the security and safety of the refugees and migrants remain serious issues as they need to walk close to 4 km, and at night there is no light or police present along the road.
- Illegal vendors were still present in the site, and sold goods such as UNHCR blankets. The number of illegal merchants is increasing. At the last CMC coordination meeting it was stated that they would at least try to move these sellers to the periphery of the site.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period the Red Cross provided 16,554 medical interventions. The Red Cross is working in shifts to provide medical assistance and first aid in Gevgelija and Tabanovce 24/7. This activity is funded by UNHCR and the Red Cross.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR recommended systematic medical screening at the site entrance in Vinjug, especially for more vulnerable groups such as children. UNHCR will continue to follow-up with MoH and other partners.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Legis, Nun, Kalliri, Agape, Dorcas, La Strada, Help the Refugee in Macedonia, Caritas, UNHCR and Red Cross distributed over 11,000 food packages and 4100 sandwiches in Vinjug, and 9000 food packages in Tabanovce during the reporting period. Legis also handed out 9000 dates in each site during the period, and La Strada distributed 173 packages of dried fruits. La Strada distributed 3000 packages of baby food, 100 packages of biscuits for babies, 200 bottles of children's drinks and 30 boxes of formula. Of other items that were distributed were about 323 kg of fresh fruits and 350 packages of biscuits.
- UNICEF in partnership with Red Cross ensures distribution of chocolate milk and age-appropriate food in UNICEF Child Friendly Spaces.
- Red Cross, Legis and Caritas Macedonia, in collaboration with the red cross, distributed over 11,000 warm soups and bread and around 4200 hot teas during day and evening at Vinjug site. Legis also distributed 2700 hot soups and bread in Tabanovce.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Food distribution continues to be difficult to plan with the large variation in arrivals over the course of the last week. There has been too much food during the day, and it is then taken back by partners when they leave the site. Food quantities provided by the partners need to be reviewed. The Red Cross continues to ensure food distribution during the night.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- Red Cross, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, La Strada and other NGOs distributed daily hygiene items such as baby wipes (770 packages), diapers (around 2200), and to women, pads to women (900 pcs) as well as soap, wipes, towels and other hygienic items in Vinojug and Tabanovce.
- The Red Cross distributed over 500 hygiene parcels (for men, women and babies), and approximately 8900 liters of water.
- Between 27 November and 4 December a UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene specialist assessed WASH needs and potential improvements to WASH facilities and services in Vinojug and Tabanovce.
- MSF donated cleaning products to UNHCR so that cleaners employed by the Municipality could to clean the sites.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The UNICEF WASH assessment identified the need for two additional sanitation blocks in Vinojug (one for people waiting to enter the transit centre and one for people waiting to board the train), as well as an additional biodegradable septic tank. In Tabanovce, the need for an additional submersive water pump to serve as a back up to the one already installed was identified. Plans are in place for UNICEF to supply and build these facilities.



Communication and Information

Achievements and Impact

- A UNHCR CWC (Communicating with Communities) mission visited Vinojug transit site and met with partners, including Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) personnel to develop interventions to further strengthen communication with communities and refugees on the move. A number of new initiatives will be proposed in the coming weeks.
- The 'SET-scouts' installed two televisions for news, one in the tea area and the other food distribution area in Tabanovce.
- Standard messages providing basic information about the services in the transit center were recorded in Arabic, Farsi and English language to be aired from 6 December.
- Giles Duley, a British documentary photographer and photojournalist visited the site. He is best known for his photography of humanitarian issues and the consequences of conflict

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Tabanovce, Wi-Fi coverage remained weak.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- The Danish Refugee Council deployed a new site planner, who arrived in FYR Macedonia and visited the sites.

- Construction of the new Child Friendly Space by UNICEF was initiated in Vinojug on 27 November, with the completion of works expected by end December.
- The concrete platform at the exit of the railway station was completed in Vinojug.
- The wiring for the electricity in the main two Rubb halls in Vinojug at the exit point was installed, and the gravelling of the rub halls was completed and the flooring is being installed.
- Rehabilitation work started on the road from the reception center to the bridge in Gevgelija.
- UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia and UNICEF distributed 5336 blankets, over 380 sleeping bags, 765 backpacks, 1200 rain jackets, 160 pcs of baby clothing, 350 pcs of women's clothing, 500 pcs of men's clothing, 200 pairs of shoes, 200 winter hats, scarves and gloves. Most NFIs were distributed in Vinojug and Tabanovce.



Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Winterization of short-term accommodation facility at the Tabanovce exit point is delayed. This, in combination with the fact that the capacity is insufficient, creates the greatest gap in the humanitarian response at the moment. Winterization activities were ongoing in Vinojug with the installation of a number of 5 typhoon heaters and protective casing in the two Rubb halls outside the center and the three inside the center, which will be used once the issue with the electricity is resolved.
- While UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, Samaritan's and UNICEF, distributed food, blankets, hats, gloves and a limited number of rain jackets (among other relief items), the lack of rain jackets was a problem, especially for small children who had to walk a long way on a muddy road towards Serbia without the proper protection. The issue has been resolved, with 8000 raincoats of various sizes currently in the UNHCR Skopje warehouse ready for distribution.
- The electricity was spotty in both sites, the power grids were overloaded causing water problems and lack of heat throughout the reporting period.



Logistics

Achievements

- 'SET- scouts' present at Tabanovce. They stated they would be present 3 days a week to provide logistic support. They asked the Red Cross and UNHCR if a Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) could be assembled for their use.

Working in partnership

Achievements and Impact

- The weekly coordination meeting in Gevgelija took place on 26 November and 3 December, as well as the Tabanovce meeting on 26 November.
- Partners working with the Ministries and municipalities to provide protection and assistance to refugees are: Agape, ASB, Caritas, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Macedonia, Danish Caritas, DRC, Dorcas, Euro Human, GLZ, Grain of Goodness, Habitat for Humanity, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, HERA, IOM, JRS, Kalliri, La Strada Open Gate, Legis, MCMS (Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation), Mercy Corps, Merhamet, MYLA, Nun, Op-

eration Mercy, People in need, Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, SoS Children's Village, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), Terre des hommes, Vlazzia Kumanovo, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.

Contacts: Lauren Panetta Chammas, Reporting Officer, panetta@unhcr.org, Cell + 389 (0) 70 298 101
Ljubinka Brashnarska, PI/External Relations, brashnar@unhcr.org, Tel: +389 2 311 8641, Cell + 389 (0) 72 269 346