

KEY FIGURES

28,596

Medical interventions provided

2,952

Medical assistance to children

18,115

Unaccompanied children registered

71,806

Food packages & food parcels

16,636

Hot soups distributed

9,817

Blankets distributed

PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and

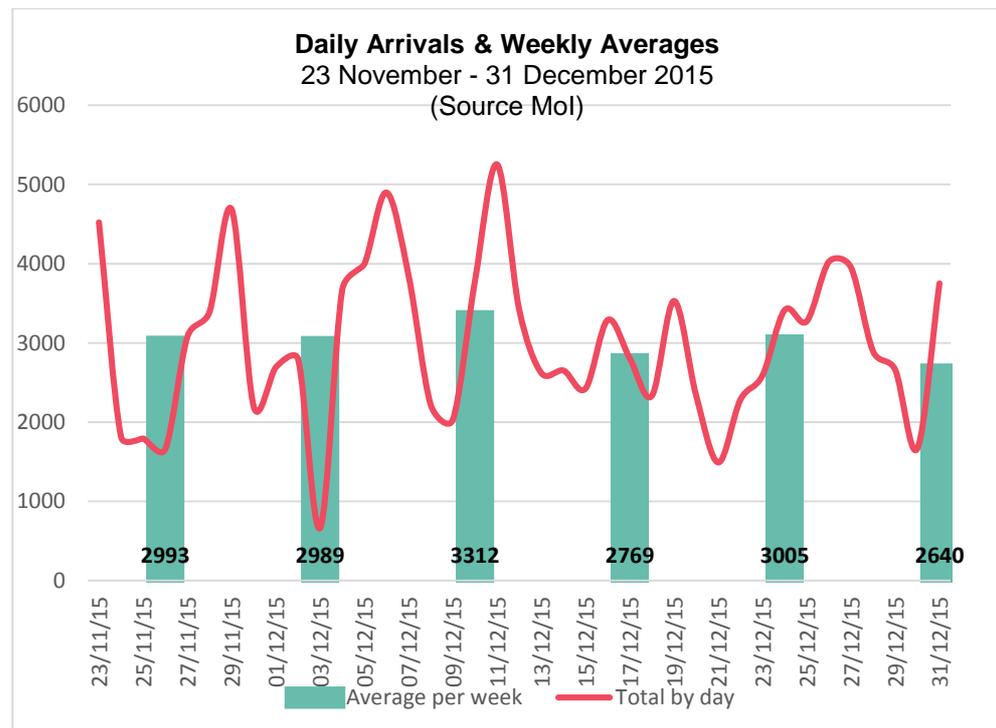
FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

18-31 December 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- 39,572 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 18-31 December 2015, with a daily average of 2,827. Since UNHCR began monitoring departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **687,047** refugees and migrants have departed.



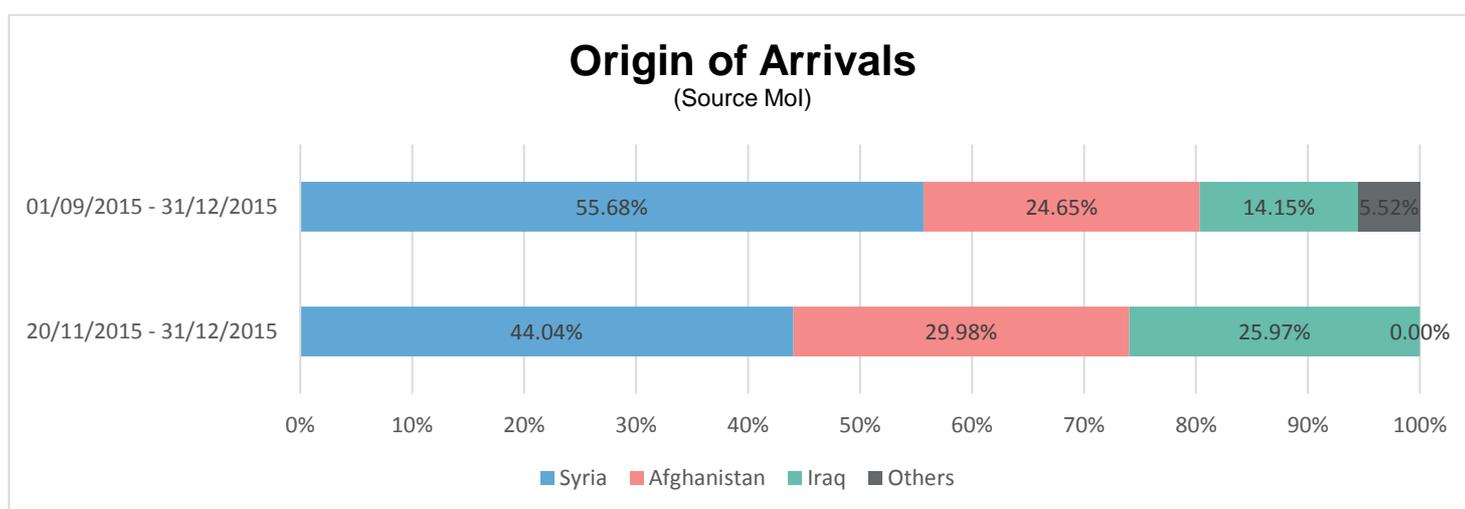
- In the period from 18 to 31 December, out of the intentions to seek asylum 82 applications for asylum were filed. While from January to end of December 2015 1,896 asylum applications were submitted out of which 997 were submitted by Syrians, 358 by Afghans, and 172 by Iraqis. So far only two persons have been recognised as refugees in 2015, both unaccompanied children, one from Iraq and one from Syria.
- The Deputy Commander of the border police informed UNHCR that as of 22 December ten Croatian police officers were deployed on the border area near Bogorodica to strengthen monitoring. If needed the Croatian police will also support the police in the Vinjug reception centre. In addition, as of 29 December Serbian police were deployed to assist in the southern border area. Police support from Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Poland, is expected beginning of January.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

39,572 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 18-31 December, with a daily average of 2,827. Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some 687,047 refugees and migrants have departed.

The Ministry of Interior's statistics of refugees and migrants declaring their intention to apply for asylum reached 388,233, including 113,426 (29%) children, of whom 18,115 (5%) were registered as unaccompanied since 19 June until 31 December 2015. Of these 216,157 (56%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 95,691 (25%) Afghans, 54,944(14%) Iraqis, and the remaining (5%) represent other nationalities such as Iranians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Congolese and Bangladeshi.



Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- During a meeting with the Minister of Interior, Ministry officials confirmed to UNHCR that they were provided with static biometric equipment for registration, which will be installed in the Vinojug centre once an optic cable connection is made available, in order to enable secure data transfers. Mobile biometric equipment is still required.
- The representatives of the national institutions – the Crisis Management Centre, the MOI, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as the Ombudsman office joined humanitarian partners for the Protection Coordination Meeting. This practice will continue, allowing for discussion about all important protection issues among the relevant stakeholders, in the interest of improving the protection response.
- The border police continue to accurately register unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), and refer them to UNHCR for Best Interest Assessments. The implementation of the national Standard Operating Procedures for the protection of UASC in the current emergency context was discussed at a workshop organised by La Strada and UNHCR. MLSP will take the lead in adapting the national SOPs to the current context, and will produce a simplified version, easy to implement by all concerned humanitarian partners. Presence of social workers from the competent Centres for Social Work will be ensured, thus allowing for the national authorities to assume full responsibility for the BIA process and the protection of the UASCs. UNHCR, with the support of trained staff from partner organisations, the Macedonia Young Lawyers Association and La Strada, will continue filling the gap in the meantime. So far, all of the cases have been referred to UNHCR Tabanovce for follow-up, and subsequently to UNHCR Serbia. Most of the UASC

have continued their journeys towards Serbia by joining their respective groups, from whom they are reluctant to separate. Often, the UASCs are travelling with relatives and are in regular contact with their families

- During 21-23 December 2015, the UNHCR Protection Team in cooperation with the FYR Macedonian Police and Army organised workshops for commanders of different ranks within the border police, the special police unit for support and training, the police unit for fast deployment, as well as army officers deployed at the southern green border (Greece) and the Vinograd registration site, as well as the Tabanovce exit point (50 commanders in total). During the workshop, the impact of the selective approach by nationality and fences on the southern border were discussed. UNHCR emphasised the right to asylum in FYR Macedonia irrespective of nationality. UNHCR also provided country of origin information on Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and specific registration procedures were also discussed. The workshops are expected to contribute to improved management of the refugee crisis and the establishment of a 'protection-sensitive entry system' in border areas.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy stepped up their presence in Tabanovce in order to manage activities in the site geared for vulnerable populations. MLSP representatives coordinated with MercyCorps to organise effective transfer of extremely vulnerable individuals to Serbia. During the reporting period 73 Extremely Vulnerable Individuals and 169 members of their families/groups were transported by MercyCorps from Tabanovce Transit Centre to the borderline with Serbia, and referred to MercyCorps and MSF teams in Miratovac RAP and at border.
- On 22 December, in partnership with Terre des Hommes, UNICEF conducted a one-day Training of Trainers (ToT) on child protection for humanitarian staff working in Gevgelija and Tabanovce. Participants included staff from UNHCR, MYLA, Macedonian Red Cross, the Centre for Social Work, SOS Children's Village and La Strada.
- In partnership with Terre des Hommes, UNICEF developed a trainers' guide and session plan for a one-day training on child protection in emergencies. This was shared with key actors to empower organisations to replicate the training to reach a greater number of staff and organisations in contact with children, responding to the refugee crisis.
- UNICEF and Terre des Hommes developed guidance and tools on child protection in emergencies covering the areas of cultural sensitivity, understanding the impacts of being a refugee on children, working together for the benefit of children, and child safeguarding. This was shared with organisations responding to the refugee crisis.
- On 21 December, UNICEF chaired a meeting to discuss additional capacity building needs for child protection in emergencies, to increase the quality of the response. The meeting was attended by UN agencies, government and national and international organisations.
- *Situation Analysis of Children on the Move in Macedonia:* Following completion of data collection on 11 December, a draft report was produced and is being finalised. The results will be shared with the government and partners to inform advocacy and humanitarian programming to reduce the vulnerability and risks to children.
- From 18-31 December approximately 4,268 children and 3,261 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance, in the UNICEF Child Friendly Space operated by the NGO La Strada in Vinograd. La Strada identified and assisted 442 vulnerable individuals. In Tabanovce La Strada assisted and supported approximately 3,560 children and 2,791 women. The activities are funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, GIZ, People in Need, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes.
- From 18-31 December approximately 3,543 children and 1,971 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance in the Child Friendly Space operated by the SOS Children's Village in Tabanovce. Additionally, 450 vulnerable individuals were identified and assisted. The activities are funded by the SOS Kinderdorf International and UNICEF.
- During the reporting period 795 refugee group leaders, around 39,600 refugees, were given information about their rights and obligations in FYR Macedonia at the Vinograd site by MYLA, who also assisted 70 asylum seekers at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedures. MYLA also ensured prioritisation of 261 cases, around 600 vulnerable individuals, with their registration in Vinograd. MYLA's data entry clerks assisted the Border Police in issuing 40,216 intentions for asylum during the reporting period.



David Babunski and friends playing football with young refugees during the holidays. ©UNHCR/L.Brashnarska, Vinojua reception centre (FYR Macedonia), December 2015

- David Babunski, FC Barcelona Team B player, along with 6 other supporters of refugees from Barcelona, played football with refugees at the Vinojug reception centre. The team will spend five days entertaining refugees.
- TV Zdravkin visited the Tananovce transit site and filmed an episode documenting the refugee movement with the UNHCR field team.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Since 26 December, UNHCR has observed that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border police has only admitted nationals from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq who possessed Greek registration documents. Previously, persons with identity cards or other documents proving nationality or residence, such as Palestinians from Syria, were also admitted, although not in a systematic way. UNHCR is monitoring the situation in order to take action when needed.
- As the result of the selective admission practice, people not belonging to any of the three admitted nationalities are entering the country outside of the unofficial border crossing point, and are increasingly claiming they have paid smugglers to transit the territory. Many have been promised to be dropped off in Europe but find themselves stranded, and sometimes abused by smugglers along the route in FYR Macedonia. Also, a number of individuals have been arrested for irregular entry and detained; only then, some of them seek asylum in the country, to avoid detention and deportation. UNHCR is following the trend.
- During the period the presence of unauthorised persons in Tabanovce continued to be reported. The Crisis Management Centre's site manager was made aware of more thefts of used UNHCR blankets and other humanitarian items, as well as other potential security threats. The Minister of Interior and UNHCR discussed safety concerns for those in the site. The Ministry of Interior stands ready to deploy the necessary police forces to maintain security in the centre.
- Taxi drivers held a number of strikes blocking the railways, not allowing any trains to pass as taxis were no longer allowed to transport refugees. Refugees were left to wait in Vinojug for long periods as authorities deliberated on how to resolve the situation. Police decided to let taxis and busses transport them on and off again throughout the period as the site began to overflow.
- On 24 December, UNHCR participated in a meeting with local NGOs in Gevgelija. The NGOs were briefed on refugee law, the Government's leadership role and responsibilities in the crisis, and UNHCR's and civil society's role. The NGOs' main concern is that they did not receive enough information as to developments in Vinojug, and that they were not given a role in the operations. They also expressed concern that there was a lack of employment opportunities for locals with the NGOs and International Organisations that operating in the transit centre.
- Refugees approached UNHCR to ask for help to retrieve money from Western Union. Many people had no solution to pay for the train, while others managed to borrow money from their groups. Logistics need to be put in place by the authorities for people to access money wiring services.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period the Red Cross provided 28,596 medical interventions out of which 333 were pregnant women and 2,952 were children. 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.
- IOM procured two sets of PCs and two printers which were distributed to the Ministry of Health for improved e-registration of interventions; one set is in Tabanovce and one in Gevgelija respectively; and Medical supplies (disinfection liquid) and equipment (2 atomisers) were procured for the Ministry of Health.

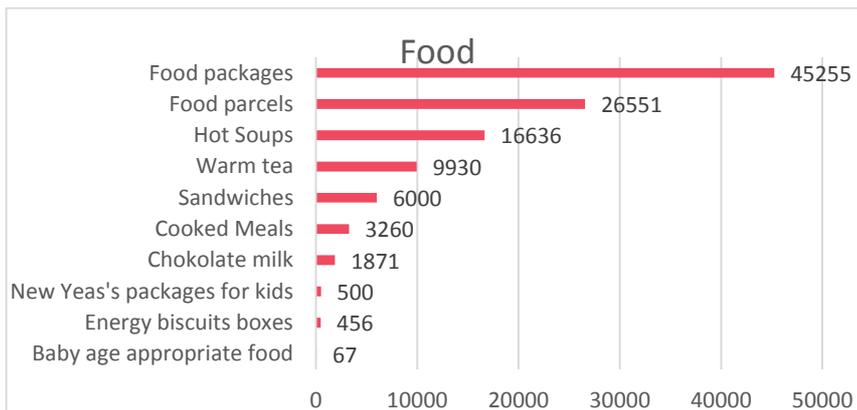
- In addition to the two mobile gynecological clinics that are expected to be operational soon in the reception and transit centres, UNFPA supplied the city hospitals in Gevgelija and Kumanovo with the following medical equipment: two labor delivery beds, two ultrasound scanners, two sterilizers, two CTGs, two Doppler fetal heart monitors, two adult resuscitators, two neonatal resuscitators, two aspirators, two oximeters and two infusion pumps. Training was done by the distributors on usage of the medical equipment.
- Additional sets of supplements for pregnant women (folic acid, heferol, vitamin c) were delivered to the Red Cross. Printed IEC materials for SRH (in Arab, Urdu and Farsi) are distributed in the TCs through the implementing partners (Red Cross and HERA) and other partner organisations.
- The second workshop on the development of the GBV SOPs in the country was held in Skopje on 30 December. Chaired by the Ministry of Health, participants included representatives from Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Institute of Public Health, University Clinic of Gynecology and Obstetrics, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, Red Cross, H.E.R.A. and Open Gate La Strada. Initial draft steps to be included in the SOPs were agreed for each sector and feedback is expected by all participants by 10 January 2016 to be provided to the Ministry of Health, which is leading the drafting process. The final text of the SOPs is envisaged to be completed in the first trimester of 2016.



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:



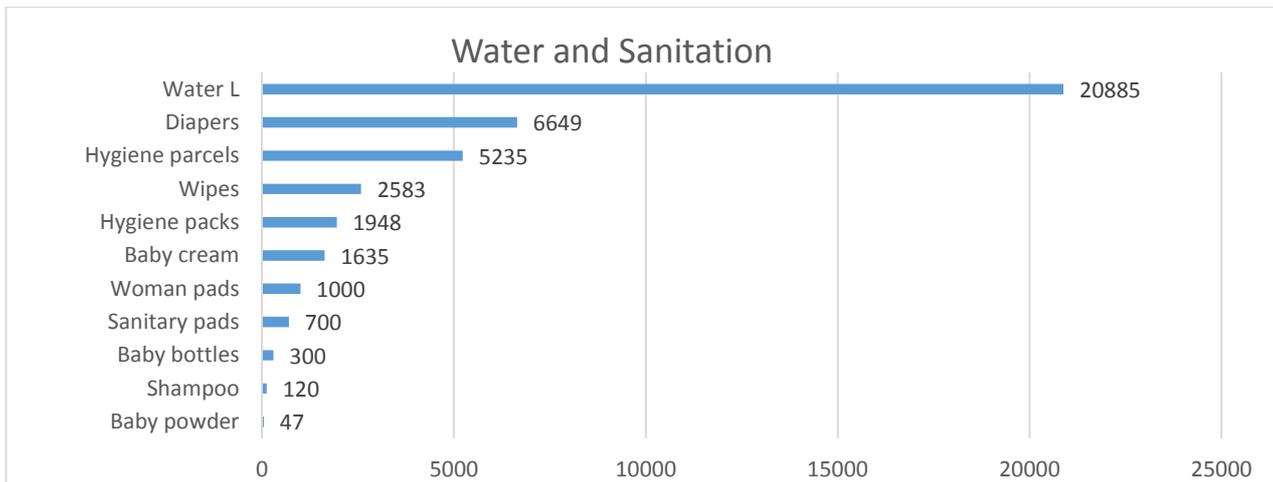
- The baby food that is distributed in the child friendly spaces in Gevgelija and Tabanovce is funded by UNICEF.
- On 26 December, construction of the kitchen for hot meals continued.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- Red Cross, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, La Strada and other NGOs distributed :



- Legis and Solidarité Internationale installed five portable toilets for refugees waiting to enter the Vinojug site. One of which is designated for disabled persons. They will be maintained and cleaned on a daily basis.
- The hygiene items that are distributed in the child friendly space in Tabanovce are funded by UNICEF.
- UNICEF is undertaking market research to construct two sanitation blocks at the Vinojug transit centre to provide toilet facilities near the queueing area for boarding trains to Tabanovce and at the exterior of the centre for the use of people waiting to have their papers processed by authorities. A biodegradable septic tank will also be installed to service the two sanitation blocks. Once market research is completed, installation will begin in the first half of January.
- In Tabanovce, UNICEF is in the process of purchasing a submersible pump and pressure vessel to provide back-up water supply to the transit centre. This equipment will be handed over to the Centre for Crisis Management, to be installed if the existing pump fails.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- A number of taps and flushes in the sanitation blocks were broken in the Tabanovce transit centre.

Communication and Information

Achievements and Impact

- The ICT corners hosted by SOS Children's Village in Vinojug and Tabanovce were operational, with charging stations for mobile phones, printers for photocopying and scanning documents, free internet access, internet-international calls through Skype, Viber etc. Currently the ICT corner is open 16 hours a day, 7 days in a week. Plans are in place to hire two additional ICT staff to ensure 24/7 coverage.
- The MercyCorps team produced and shared information leaflets in Arabic, Farsi and English to refugees arriving at Tabanovce transit centre, as well as the organisations active in Tabanovce, in order to unify the information shared by the various actors present on site. MercyCorps is the only organisation with a cross-border team and directly working in two sites, the information about current situations and updates from the sites are shared at the Tabanovce coordination meeting and via a cross-border info whats app group.
- Organisations active in Gevgelija (LEGIS, LaStrada, NUN) were added to the cross-border info group initiated by MercyCorps for exchange of information about the current situation and concentration/flow of people.

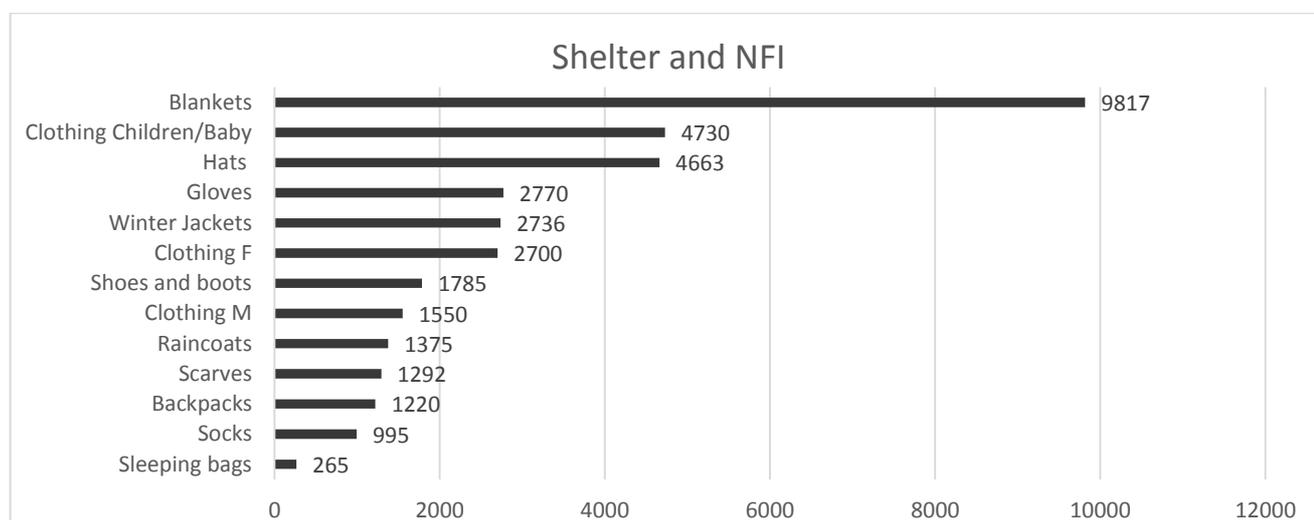


Direct communication with most actors present in the sites was established between Gevgelija-Tabanovce-MiratovacRAP-MiratovacBusPoint-Presevo and Sid.

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia and UNICEF distributed:



- Winterisation activities advanced rapidly in both the Vinojug reception site and the Tabanovce transit centre with the colder weather on the doorstep. In Vinojug, connection to the enhanced electricity grid was completed on 30 December, allowing proper heating in all facilities, including those for the accommodation of refugees. 60 beds were installed in 10 of the new RHUs. In Tabanovce, three UNHCR Rubb Halls were erected, and all of them have been insulated and the flooring was installed. They are heated with typhoon heaters and gas heaters are also in place as backup. The Site also has 20 Refugee Housing Units available to accommodate refugees. They will be heated as soon as the upgrade of the electricity network is complete. SOS Children's Village also has a 140 sq metre space that is heated and can accommodate refugee children, their families, and other vulnerable individuals. Insulation in the food distribution Rubb hall began.
- IOM, with the support of the Japanese Government, procured 19 containers for temporary shelter for migrants and refugees, and distributed (nine in Kumanovo and ten in Gevgelija); one tent of 200 square metres for temporary shelter of migrants and refugees was purchased and installed in Tabanovce; and the first batch of 49 bunk beds and mattresses were purchased and delivered to Gevgelija.
- The new 120 square metre UNICEF Child Friendly Space was opened in Vinojug on 24 December. It is insulated and heated and has two large rooms where children can rest and play, a room where mothers can breastfeed and a storage facility for children's winter clothes for distribution to children in need.
- MercyCorps set up two heated containers for vulnerable individuals and their families in the Tabanovce transit centre. Equipment is in the process of being procured by UNHCR and is expected to be delivered on Friday, 8 January 2016.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Tabanovce light bulbs, damaged light switches and sockets in the Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) still need to be replaced. The electricity network was connected to the site, but the Centre for Crisis Management said that before they connect the typhoon heaters and lighting reconstruction of the RHUs needed to be finished and locks had to be placed on the doors as they were afraid that the heaters and lights would be stolen. The CMC said they would speak to colleagues in Skopje about the situation.

- A group of two men and one woman were caught stealing clothing from one of the containers. They were reprimanded, and left after promising not to return to the site.

Logistics

- IOM procured two vehicles – one minivan for transportation of vulnerable categories of migrants and one transport vehicle for food and NFI items. Both vehicles have been procured with the support of the Japanese Government and donated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Working in partnership

Achievements and Impact

The weekly coordination meetings in Gevgelija on 18 and 27 December 2015 as well as in Tabanovce took place on 17 and 30 December 2015.

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



©UNHCR/L.Brashnarska, Tabanovce (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), December 2015

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