



11 JANUARY 2016: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE

Highlights

- In 2015, 1,014,836 people crossed the Mediterranean, arriving on Europe's shores. One in four of all arrivals was a child, but in South-Eastern Europe this proportion is one in three.
- The proportion of children amongst refugees and migrants continues to increase. In Serbia it currently stands at 35 per cent in comparison to 27 per cent in September, while in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia this ratio is 37 per cent compared to 23 per cent in September.
- To date UNICEF has reached 100,000 children in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Of these, 81,000 children received services through the network of UNICEF supported child-friendly spaces, and nearly 18,000 babies and infants received specialized services through UNICEF mother-and-baby care spaces.
- Between 14 December 2015 and 3 January 2016, UNICEF reached 7,380 babies with health and nutrition services, and 21,397 children with recreational and other activities in child-friendly services. This is 20 per cent more compared to the previous reporting period.
- UNICEF's response to the needs of children on the move and their families continues to be provided within short time of interaction due to still prevailing high dynamics of population movement. One of the main factor influencing the response are selective processing of refugees and migrants based on their nationality at border crossing points.
- UNICEF has raised US\$ 12,069,461, which is 86 per cent of the total appeal of US\$14,019,135 to respond to the crisis. UNICEF is revising its funding needs to better reflect resources needed for scaling up its response to the evolving situation.

Regional Humanitarian Situation Report # 7

unicef 

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

18,384

of arrivals in Europe by sea in 2016
(UNHCR, 11 January 2016)

18,334

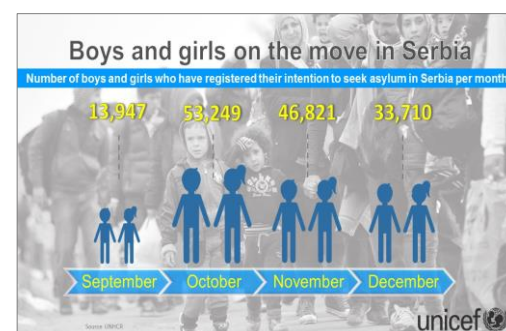
of arrivals by sea through Greece in 2016
(UNHCR, 10 January 2016)

1,014,836

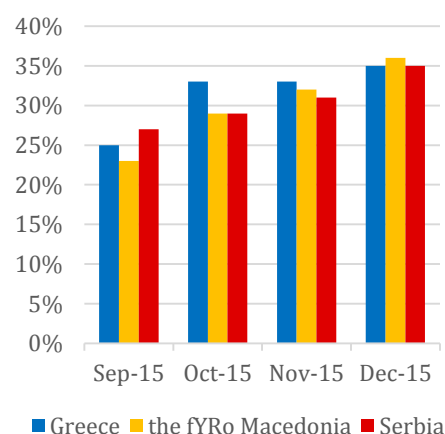
of arrivals in Europe by sea in 2015
(UNHCR, 31 December 2015)

851,319

of arrivals by sea through Greece in 2015
(UNHCR, 31 December 2015)



Proportion of Children along the Eastern Mediterranean Migration Route



Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

A total of 1,014,836 people arrived in Europe by sea in 2015, according to UNHCR, of whom estimated 253,700 were children. More than half of them entered Europe between October and December 2015, using the Eastern Mediterranean route- through Greece and the Western Balkans, escaping mostly conflicts and insecurity in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite the deteriorating winter weather, and amidst stepped-up efforts by the Turkish authorities to stem the flow of people on the move, people continue to take the perilous journey to Europe. Casualties are frequent- only the latest accidents on 24 December 2015, 2 January and 5 January 2016 claimed the lives of at least 10 children, some as young as 2 years of age. On 3 January 2016, a WhatsApp message was received by a UNICEF translator in Slavonski Brod, Croatia about a boat with 80 people caught in a storm in the Aegean Sea. After receiving the exact coordinates of the boat, UNICEF and UNHCR quick reaction enabled the Turkish Navy to save all passengers on board.

Between August and December 2015, 147,727 children were registered crossing the borders into Serbia. 62 per cent of them were boys, and 38 per cent were girls. There was a spike in the number of children on the move through Serbia in October (53,249), which was a four-fold increase since September (13,947). This number, however, then slightly decreased in November and December due to the introduction of new border restrictions. The proportion of children, however, steadily increased from 27 per cent in September to 35 per cent in December. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, this increase is even more visible: in September, children were 23 per cent of all registered refugees and migrants, while in December 37 per cent were children. UNICEF in Serbia has also noted that in December most children transiting through UNICEF child-friendly spaces were young children- babies and infants, and children aged 5 to 9 years. Children with disabilities represent an average 13 per cent of all children on the move.

Children arriving in South-eastern Europe continue to be physically exhausted, scared, distressed and often in need of medical assistance. The harsh winter conditions are exacerbating the situation as most of the children on the move are without adequate clothing and limited access to age-appropriate nutrition. This, along with limited shelter capacity and inadequate heating in the reception centers and buses/trains on the route are the key challenges confronting the response by UNICEF and its partners.

During the month of December 2015, authorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other countries in South-eastern Europe continued to allow only Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan nationals. Since the beginning of 2016, Serbian police is submitting a list with the names and nationalities of refugees and migrants to Croatian police before they get on the train, which will then take them further to Western Europe. The same procedure is being applied to refugees and migrants travelling from Croatia to Slovenia. As an additional measure to improve border control, Croatia and Slovenia have limited the daily arrivals to a maximum of 3,760 refugees and migrants travelling on four trains (each carrying 940 people) every six hours.

Humanitarian strategy

In line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF continues to respond to the crisis in Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia through a combination of advocacy, capacity building and service delivery response. UNICEF is working to extend support to children and women throughout their entire journey, also in Greece, Austria, Slovenia, Germany and Italy. Preparedness support to countries and territories considered to be at higher risk of being affected by the crisis is already taking place. UNICEF has developed preparedness plans with partners in Bulgaria, Albania, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is expected to be extended to cover Romania and Montenegro as well. In view of the possibility that population movements slow-down and number of people stranded along the route increases, UNICEF is engaging with its partners and counterparts in developing contingency plans for such scenarios.

Through its country offices and in collaboration with its National Committees and other partners, UNICEF is engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy with Governments and the institutions of the European Union as the voice for refugee and migrant children in national and regional policy processes undertaken in response to the present crisis.

Coordination

UNICEF is actively engaged in regular Government and UN country team coordination mechanisms on the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. This includes consultation with all relevant Government ministries, as well as UNHCR, respective national branches of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, IOM, and key international and national NGOs. As the global humanitarian and development agency for the child rights, UNICEF has taken the lead in mobilising all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the rights of refugee and migrant children, and improve assistance to children and their families during their journey across Europe, both as part of the immediate humanitarian response and through longer term support to national child protection systems. In addition, UNICEF ensures cross-border coordination through its network of country office and National Committee teams along the Western Balkans route so as to facilitate response planning, advocacy and family tracing and reunification.

UNICEF continues to be the lead of child protection coordination mechanisms in Croatia and Serbia. In Croatia, UNICEF is also the lead for inter-agency coordination related to infant and young child feeding and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in the reception centre in Slavonski Brod.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response



Girls play with dolls at the refugee shelter at Templehof Airfield in Berlin. (Left-right) sisters Isree, 10, and Ilaf, 12, from Hassaka, Syria with friends Helen, 10, from Qaamishle, Syria; and Noor, 10, from Idlib, Syria. Templehof Airfield is a former airport dating back to the 1920s, and was used during the Berlin Airlift in 1948. The hangers are today housing 2,000 refugees, and while designed for transiting within two weeks, many families living there have been there since the shelter opened 6 weeks ago. © UNICEF/UN04026/Gilbertson VII

To ensure that the individual needs of children, UNICEF is finalising in close partnership with UNHCR and IOM a joint Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP). This plan will cover Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

Child Protection

Protection dimensions of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, especially for children and women, remain a priority for UNICEF and efforts to respond to the various protection needs of children include direct services provision, coordination, capacity building and other technical support to Governments.

Social workers, psychologists and pedagogues continue to work in shifts to ensure continuity of child-friendly services in six locations (Gevgelija and Tabanovce, the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia, Miratovac, Presevo and Adasevci, Serbia, and Slavonski Brod, Croatia), where child-friendly spaces are open 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Since October 2015, UNICEF has been able to reach 81,000 children with emotional, stress management and psycho-social support, family reunification, recreational and basic education and early childhood development activities. The Child-friendly spaces (CFSs) are evolving to social services hubs, where all family members, including elderly, receive assistance and are referred to specialized services including medical care. Given the fast movement of population towards countries of final destination, the time people spend in the CFSs is limited – varying between half an hour to a maximum of couple of hours – thus the services provision is adapted to most effectively respond to the needs of children and their families within relatively short period of time.

Between 14 December and 3 January, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 9,970 children, including 88 children with disabilities and 71 unaccompanied and separated children, were able to rest and play in a safe environment. Additionally, 381 women and 131 children (65 boys and 66 girls) were provided with psychosocial support. In Serbia, 4,157 children and 2,772 mothers benefitted from services in the CFSs, while in Croatia UNICEF reached 7,270

On 7 January 2016, an Afghan family of mother and three children (one to seven years old) stayed in the UNICEF child-friendly space in Gevgelija in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for some hours during the daytime.

After an hour, the boy of five said to his mom in Dari: *'Mom, why don't we just settle down here? It is so nice here ...'*

This story illustrates how important it is for children to be able to have a safe place to rest and place during the long journey to Europe.

children during the same period. In addition to the regular activities in the child-friendly spaces in Serbia, UNICEF organised special programs for children to celebrate the New Year's Eve.

UNICEF in Serbia has successfully negotiated to move into a larger child-friendly space in the reception centre in Adasevci, with a separate room for a mother-and-baby space, which will operate 24/7. New activities started in the Miratovac reception centre, with a CFS opening doors on 17 December. Permission was also received to establish a CFS and mother-and-baby space in the town of Dimitrovgrad, on the border with Bulgaria, to respond to the increasing number of families with children arriving from Bulgaria. UNICEF has been requested by the Government of Serbia to open a CFS near the railway station in Sid, where refugees and migrants

wait for the train to Croatia, and UNICEF and World Vision have initiated preparations for these activities.

UNICEF continues to build the capacity of frontline workers and improve the quality of service provision by investing in trainings. This is especially important when it comes to addressing the needs of unaccompanied and separated children on the move. So far 344 frontline workers, including interpreters, have been trained (92 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 95 in Serbia and 157 in Croatia). In a close collaboration with the Child Protection Hub for South Eastern Europe (CP Hub), UNICEF has developed training modules and materials on child protection in emergencies, cultural sensitivity, basic case assessment and planning, safeguarding, referral mechanisms, etc. So far, up to 200 frontline workers have been trained in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. In addition, the trainings were rolled out through a Training of Trainers session held on 22 December 2015 for humanitarian staff from Gevgelija, Tabanovce and Skopje. All resources were shared with the key actors to empower them to replicate the training and reach a greater number of staff and organizations in contact with the refugee and migrant children. UNICEF convenes the work of the child protection actors in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and as part of this initiative on 21 December it chaired a meeting with the state entities, UN agencies, national and international NGOs to discuss additional capacity-building needs to increase the quality of the response. In addition, in Croatia, UNICEF conducted two trainings for social workers, staff, implementing partners and other NGOs in Slavonski Brod on child protection in emergencies and communication/interviewing skills with children during the second half of December 2015. In Serbia, UNICEF is currently supporting the training of new social workers in Presevo, Bujanovac, Belgrade and Sid to address the needs of vulnerable children and families. In addition, UNICEF has been discussing with partners in the child protection working group capacity-building in the area of psychological first aid. In Bulgaria, UNICEF provided training on the rights of refugee children and age assessment of unaccompanied minors to 60 social workers of the Agency for Social Assistance and the State Agency for the Refugees.

In Serbia, the child protection working group is currently supporting the Government of Serbia with the development of guidelines for implementation of national Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and indicators for vulnerability and protection risks assessment.

Following the advocacy efforts by UNICEF and UNHCR, it has been agreed that the regular formal care system in Serbia be accessible for child refugees and migrants. In Croatia, where this is already possible, UNICEF has been engaged in monitoring and supporting five cases of unaccompanied and separated children in institutional care facilities and providing technical support to the Croatian Government with the revision of the national protocol for unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF in Croatia is also working with authorities to ensure structured and recreational activities, the provision of psychosocial support and access to Arabic and Pashtun interpreters for unaccompanied and separated children in Croatian institutional care facilities. In Bulgaria, UNICEF with support from partners is developing a demonstration service for guardianship and legal representation for unaccompanied and separated children, which will help municipalities better handle cases. In addition, UNICEF, UNHCR and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee are developing an analysis of the legislative and institutional coordination gaps with recommendations to ensure the effective protection of unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

A nine year old Iranian girl, whose family is stranded in Greece, has been placed in foster-care by the Sid Centre for Social Work, Serbia, while the reunification is being arranged. She has been provided with a translator and a mobile phone to be able to contact her family anytime.

UNICEF country teams in the Western Balkans have been continuously coordinating/communicating and liaising with family reunification services to help identify unaccompanied and separated children. Cross-border family reunification and tracing, however, remains a key challenge.

Health and Nutrition

The provision and availability of age appropriate food for children on the move remains challenging along their entire journey across South-eastern Europe, and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) is therefore another key component of UNICEF response. Specialized mother-and-baby spaces (MBS) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia – 5 in total at present - are supporting IYCF practices for children on the move 24hours/7days. In Serbia, a new mother-and-baby corners opened doors in the Miratovac reception centre.

Since October, some 18,000 babies and infants have benefitted from services provided by the MBSs across the region. Between 14 December and 3 January, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 6,406 women, 514 of whom were pregnant, were assisted with emotional and psychosocial support and have received counselling on child health and nutrition and safety. 420 women and 523 children (278 boys and 245 girls) were referred to health services. In Serbia, 487 mothers were provided with counselling and support on breastfeeding, child health and nutrition, and a total of 2,041 babies benefitted from different health, nutrition and hygiene services, which is an increase of 50 per cent compared to the previous reporting period. In Croatia, more than 1,200 babies and infants were attended at the mother-and-baby space, and 352 mothers were provided with breastfeeding support. This is an increase of 43 per cent compared to the previous reporting period. 78 per cent of children who attended the mother- and baby spaces were under 2 years old and 16 per cent were between 2 and 4 years of age. 49 per cent of these were girls and 51 were boys, mainly from Syria, but also Iraq and Afghanistan.



8-year old Sandy Bizri was able to rest and play with other children in the UNICEF-supported child-friendly space in Preševo. UNICEF, thanks to European Commission - Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO) funds, provided Sandy with a warm blanket to help her weather the cold winter. ©UNICEF Serbia/Emil Vas

The UNICEF-supported MBS in Croatia was moved to a much larger tent, which enabled services to reach more mothers and children, and provide warm waiting area for family members. The expanded MBS is shared with the NGO MAGNA who is providing health services, thus enabling a more efficient referral of children in need of medical assistance.

During the second half of December, UNICEF in Serbia organised trainings and orientation sessions for nurses in the MBS in the reception centres in Adasevci, Presevo and Sid about infant and young child feeding, and ensured the deployment of accredited nurses to support breastfeeding in Presevo. It is estimated that 40 per cent of mothers on the move do not exclusively breastfeed, and the lack of standards and guidance on infant formula can seriously affect infant health. To that effect, UNICEF, WHO and the Serbian Ministry of Health are developing Standard Operating Procedures to provide appropriate guidance on safe usage of breastmilk substitutes, good nutrition practices and related standards, with breastfeeding being key to infant feeding.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

UNICEF continues to support WASH infrastructure, procure hygiene kits and promote good hygiene among refugee and migrant children and their families. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, between 14 December and 3 January, 4,140 babies and children were provided with hygiene services, mostly at the MBS. UNICEF is working on the establishment of two sanitation blocks at the Vojnog transit centre in Gevgelija to provide latrines for people waiting for the trains to Tabanovce. A biodegradable septic tank will also be installed to service the two sanitation blocks. 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 Crisis Management Centre, to be installed if the existing pump fails as no other water supplies exist. In Serbia, further assessments of situation with WASH in Presevo, Miratovac, Sid, Principovac and Adasevci has been conducted by UNICEF WASH expert aiming to identify key gaps and needs in that sector.

In Turkey, UNICEF, together with national partner ASAM, distributed all but 300 of 11,625 family hygiene kits (serving approximately 60,000 people) and 4,200 baby hygiene kits throughout the provinces of Balıkesir, İzmir, Çanakkale, Kırklareli, Muğla and Edirne, as well as in Istanbul.

Winterization

To address the needs of children on the move in harsh winter conditions, UNICEF continues to make every effort to support the provision of sufficient shelter and heating capacity and medical assistance at the main border entry and exit points. In addition, distribution of procured winter clothes and shoes continues. Between 14 December and 3 January, UNICEF Serbia reached 5,668 children through the distribution of winter clothing including sets of winter hats, scarf and gloves, winter shoes/boots, winter jackets, thermal underwear sets for children and other winter items. UNICEF also distributed 841 baby blankets and 460 baby changing mats. In Croatia, 6,050 children received winter jackets, sweaters, gloves, scarves and hats and other winter items, while in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, this number was 6,162.

Monitoring, Data Collection and Information on Available Services

UNICEF continues advocating with Governments to establish as a standard the age and gender disaggregated data collection as part of registration procedure for refugees and migrants on the move. As a member of the newly established regional UNHCR/IOM-led Information Management Working Group, aiming at improving the availability of data on refugees and migrants on the move, UNICEF will address existing data gaps and improve availability of data on refugee and migrant children in Europe to inform its programming, policy and advocacy.

A deployment from the Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) Innovation Unit assisted UNICEF in Serbia in conceptualising solutions for real-time monitoring and data gathering. An application for tablets was finalized and pre-tested on 29 December, and will be used in 2016 to better understand the profile of children attending child-friendly services and their needs. To monitor and better understand the situation of refugee and migrant children in Bulgaria, UNICEF participated in UNHCR AGD annual assessment, through conducting interviews with refugee children and women and providing analysis in the final report.

New Developments

On 4 January 2015, the UNICEF National Response Coordinator arrived in Germany to start UNICEF's support to the Government of Germany in improving the care and protection of refugee and migrant children that have reached their final destination in Germany. UNICEF response in Slovenia has also been finalised and the UNICEF national response team has already started activities on the ground. UNICEF is working on the soonest possible start of operation in Greece focusing on child protection, health and water, sanitation and hygiene.



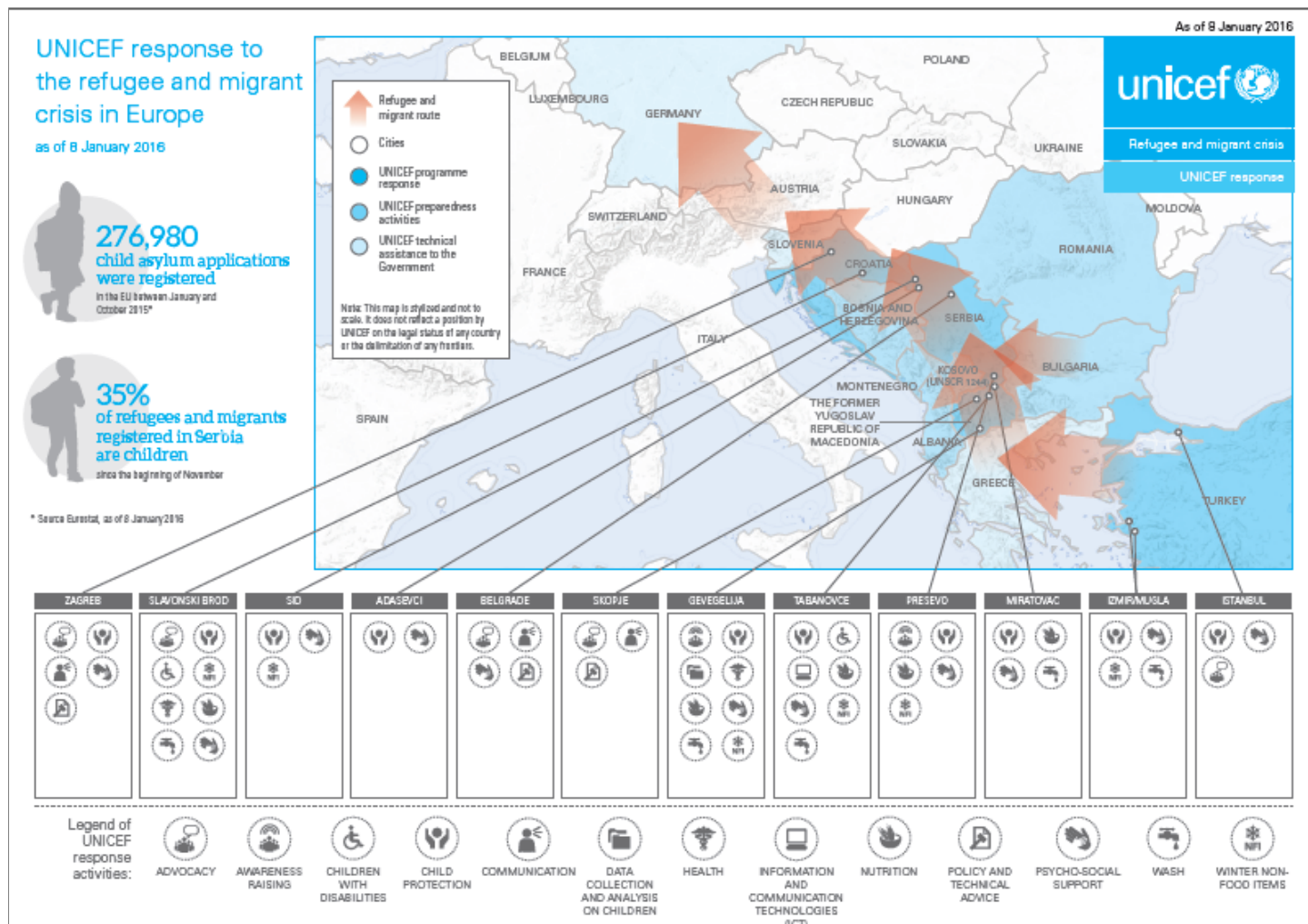
Mira, 9, holds a new toy at a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, after losing her teddy bear on the journey to Greece. Although toys cannot replace a child's normal environment, they can help relieve some of the emotional distress during crises. © UNICEF/UNI201671/Georgiev

Communications and Advocacy

Throughout 2015, UNICEF has been a strong voice for the rights of all children - whether refugees or migrants - with the European Union, Governments and partners. UNICEF at national, regional and global level continued to produce and publish digital content on the plight of children on the move and on the response in south-eastern Europe, including under the #FightUnfair digital campaign. Several photo essays were published at the end of December and beginning of January on the refugee and migrant crisis, which were widely shared by users across digital platforms, including one comparing the current crisis with the refugee aftermath of World II and the second highlighting lost childhoods and the hardships they face as they cross borders after leaving home.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF released a video, "Five refugee children, five wishes for the New Year" on 1 January. In Serbia, UNICEF highlighted the establishment of a child-friendly space in Adasevci thanks to ECHO funds. In Croatia, a daily newspaper published a story about children on the move from the point of view of one of

UNICEF's associates who works on the promotion of breastfeeding. On 4 January, Croatian National Television broadcast a story about one of UNICEF front-line workers, who has recently been publicly recognised for their good work. In Bulgaria, UNICEF continues to address negative attitudes and to promote tolerance and social change through all communication channels. As part of these efforts, UNICEF organized a photo exhibition of refugee and migrant children, displayed in schools and public places, including the international airport of Sofia and the representation of the European Commission in Sofia during high-level conferences on refugees and migrants.



Next SitRep: 26/01/2016

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