

KEY FIGURES

1 January 2015 - 18 February 2016

471,421

Registered intentions to apply for asylum

31%

of registered intentions were expressed by children

2,121

Applications for asylum

80%

of asylum applications were from the top ten refugee-producing countries

2

Persons granted refugee status

12 – 18 February 2016

5,958

Registered intentions to seek asylum

12

Applications for asylum

1,907

Persons provided first aid

83

Number of pregnant women assisted

4,744

Food packages distributed

2,755

Pieces of clothing 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 international standards

FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

12 – 18 February 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 18 February, the Heads of Police Services of five countries on the refuge/migrant route – Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and FYR Macedonia, signed the Joint Statement, outlining the joint measures of the respective countries, in relation to the regulation of the migration flow. The Statement introduced a number of criteria, that are supposed to be jointly implemented at the border between FYR Macedonia and Greece. The new practice may significantly influence the protection and humanitarian response in FYR Macedonia.
- A Deutsche Welle article quoting German Chancellor Merkel's interview for Stuttgarter Zeitung stated that Merkel is against closing the FYR Macedonian-Greek border. She said that the key external Schengen border of the EU when it comes to the refugee flow is the border between Turkey and Greece. She stated, "to simply build a protective fence in Macedonia, which is not an EU member, without worrying what position that would put Greece in, would not only be non-European behaviour, but it would also not solve our problems" (unofficial English translation from the DW portal in Macedonian [article here](#)).
- 5,958 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia from 5 – 11 February 2016, with a daily average of 851 (source: MOI). Since UNHCR began monitoring departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **772,142** refugees and migrants have departed.
- In the period from 12 – 18 February 2016, 12 applications for asylum were filed, while from 1 January 2015 to 18 February 2016, 2,121 asylum applications were submitted out of which 1,012 (48%) were submitted by Syrians, 395 (19%) by Afghans, and 176 (8%) by Iraqis (Source: MLSP). So far only two persons have been recognised as refugees in 2015-2016, both unaccompanied children, one from Iraq and one from Syria.
- For the period 1 January – 18 February total of 224 applications, out of which 15 were submitted by Syrians, 37 by Afghans and 4 by Iraqis (Source: MLSP).
- During the reporting period, 105 people were pushed-back from Vinojug transit centre, on the southern border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to the Greek border for possessing forged documents, no documents, or for being nationals of countries other than Afghanistan, Iraq, or Syria.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

5,958 refugees and migrants crossed the border into fYR Macedonia during the reporting period 12 – 18 February 2016, with a daily average of 851, compared with 2,441 the previous week (5 – 11 February 2016). Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **772,142** refugees and migrants have departed.

The Ministry of Interior's statistics of refugees and migrants declaring their intention to apply for asylum reached 471,421 including 146,156 (31%) children, of whom 18,321 (4% of children) were registered as unaccompanied since 19 June 2015 until 18 February 2016. Of these 256,334 (54%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 121,802 (26%) Afghans, 71,844 (15%) Iraqis, and the remaining (5%) represent other nationalities such as Iranians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Congolese and Bangladeshi. Women and children registered made up 64% of the refugee flow.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- On 14 February, Mr. Bert Koenders, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs accompanied by Ms. Anastasija Ilieska, fYR Macedonia Ministry of Interior State Secretary visited the Vinojug reception centre. They had a meeting with the authorities regarding registration and site operations in general. They were briefed by the UNHCR Representative and the Minister had conversations with UNHCR and UNICEF, and their partners working in the site as well as conducted some interviews with refugees. After the tour, they held a press conference for both fYR Macedonian and Dutch journalists during which the Minister stated that closing borders was not an appropriate solution, instead better border management should be put in place.
- On 12 February, UNHCR facilitated a cross-border mission of fYR Macedonian authorities to the Presevo and Miratovac refugee reception and registration centres in Serbia. The fYR Macedonian delegation was composed of eight representatives from the border police, Crisis Management Centre, and officials responsible for social and humanitarian aid. The primary objective of the mission was to visit the Presevo reception centre and share experiences/practice, with a particular focus on the the registration procedure.
- The Crisis Management Centre in Tabanovce and Macedonian Railways agreed that refugees/migrants who are unable to continue the journey (undocumented, returned from Serbia, etc.) wishing to return to Greece, will be transported by train to Gevgelija, free of charge. This will solve the problem of people stranded in Tabanovce at the northern border, offering a way to transport them back to Greece.
- During the reporting period a number of refugees who entered the Vinojug site went through security checks. Female refugees were searched by female police officers, including foreign police forces. According to the Police Commander this is a safety procedure that has been put in place to ensure the wellbeing of all of the people inside the camp as well as national security.
- From 12 – 18 February 2016, approximately 2,703 children and 1,186 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance, in the UNICEF Child Friendly Space operated by the NGO La Strada in Vinojug. La Strada identified and assisted 169 vulnerable individuals. In Tabanovce La Strada assisted and supported



Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR Representative speaking with refugees in Vinojug. ©UNHCR, Vinojug reception centre (Gevgelija, fYR Macedonia), 14 February 2016

approximately 873 children and 876 women. The activities are funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, GIZ, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes.

- Approximately 1,163 children and 689 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, 16 pregnant women identified and assisted. The activities are funded by the SOS Kinderdorf International and UNICEF.
- During the reporting period 114 refugee group leaders, around 5,921 refugees, were given information about their rights and obligations in fYR Macedonia at the Vinojug site by MYLA, who also assisted 11 asylum-seekers at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedure. MYLA also ensured prioritisation in 46 cases, around 55 vulnerable individuals for their registration in Vinojug. MYLA’s data entry clerks assisted the Border Police in issuing 6,253 intentions for asylum during the reporting period.
- As of 18 Friday a new registration form was issued to the refugees therefore the registration process will slow down since the data entry clerks need to fill out the new document manually since the software system is not ready yet.
- During the reporting period, in close coordination with UNHCR, the Red Cross, DRC and La Strada staff in Tabanovce, 32 EVIs and 67 members of their families/groups were transported by Mercy Corps from Tabanovce transit centre to border with Serbia, and referred to the MSF and DRC teams to be picked up at the border, and to the Mercy Corps team at Miratovac RAP. The Mercy Corps Tabanovce team has been supported by two volunteers of Operation Mercy, experienced in emergency work and work with EVIs.
- UNICEF is working with the MLSP on engaging additional social workers and translators in the two transit centres. Staff would report to the Centre for Social Work in Gevgelija or Kumanovo, and would be out-posted in the respective transit centre. During this reporting period, the terms of reference for the social workers were agreed together with the MLSP.
- A joint UNICEF/Save the Children workshop to take place in early March will bring together both agencies’ implementing partners from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Serbia to discuss activities, data collection, referral processes and challenges faced. The aim of the workshop is to increase mutual understanding, cooperation, coordination and information sharing and to improve the intra- and inter-country referrals.
- Visits:
 - On 12-13 February, the UNHCR (Sarajevo) Regional Representative accompanied by the UNHCR Skopje Representative and other team members went to Tabanovce transit centre and the Vinojug reception centre to monitor infrastructure and other developments on site. They were briefed by different actors working in the sites and visited the fYR Macedonia-Greek border.
 - On 12 February, the German Ambassador visited the Vinojug reception centre and took a tour of the site. She then had a short meeting with the UNHCR Regional Representative.
 - On 16 February, UNHCR colleagues from Montenegro accompanied by representatives from IOM, the Red Cross, the Ministries of Social Work and Health from Montenegro and Albania visited the Vinojug reception centre. They were briefed about the general situation and operations in the site, and went to the border with Greece (“stone 59”).
 - On 17 February, the OSCE Police Advisor and his team visited the Tabanovce transit site and met with Crisis Management Centre staff and local Police Commander.
 - On 18 February, the Croatian Ambassador visited the Vinojug reception centre and was briefed on developments in the refugee crisis as well as the services provided in the site.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- For mixed nationality families, the fYR Macedonian police requires an original marriage certificate, without which families are returned to Greece.
- Throughout the period a number of refugees were returned to Greece to obtain new or amend registration documents due to errors produced in Greece.
- A few groups of individuals were seen jumping onto and off cargo trains, and the police discovered another group of 23 people in sealed containers on a cargo train transiting through fYR Macedonia territory during the reporting period.

- On 17 February, surveillance cameras are being installed on the route from the exit point towards the “border stone” in Tabanovce.
- Complaints about the treatment of refugees on the trains continued. On 12 February, a number of refugees who arrived with the morning train to Tabanovce complained that they were made to sit on the floor and by the door putting them at risk. On 18 February, UNHCR observed mistreatment of refugees during the boarding of the 04:15 am train; railway staff forced refugees to enter crowded carriages. A total of 707 refugees were embarked on a 5 carriage train. The seating capacity of a single wagon is 60 people.
- Currently, there is no presence of the Centre for Social Work (CSW) in the transit centres, due to social workers from the CSW in Gevgelija and Kumanovo being overstretched with their common caseload. There is a need to guarantee the presence of the CSW and the compliance of its mandate towards in-transit refugee children and families while they are in the country. UNICEF is working with the MLSP and CSW to address this issue.
- There is a need to ensure support to unaccompanied and separated children outside transit centres. On 12 February, UNICEF met with Save the Children to discuss a plan of action in relation to unaccompanied and separated children who are taken to or hosted at the Jesuit Refugee Service safe-house and at the government-run asylum centre and detention centre in Skopje.



Refugees boarding the train in Vinojug reception centre. ©UNHCR/H.Hababbeh, Gevgelija (fYR Macedonia) 18 February 2016



Health

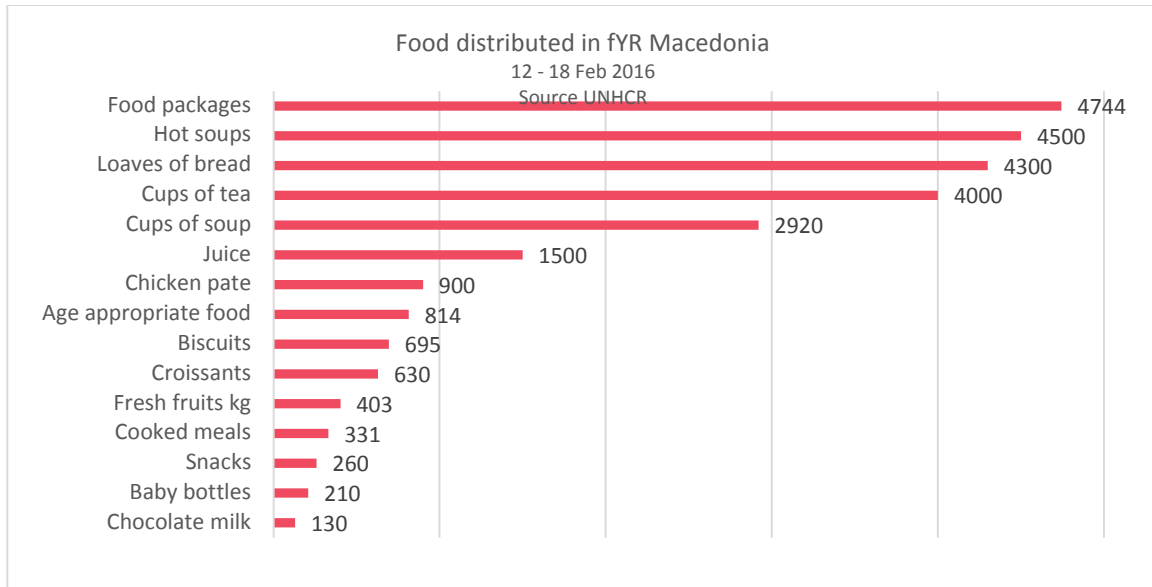
Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period the Red Cross assisted 6,538 individuals, out of which 83 were pregnant women and 326 were children. 1,907 persons received first aid. 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.
- One pregnant woman was assisted in the gynaecological clinic managed by the NGO HERA (with UNFPA support) in Vinojug reception centre.
- On 17 February the mobile gynecological clinic procured by UNFPA was operational and provided sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls at the TC Vinojug. The Ministry of Health is responsible for further planning and management of the mobile gynecological clinic.
- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, supported by UNFPA, a workshop for the annual revision/ update of the Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health in crisis started on 18 February. During this revision special focus was given to the lessons learned from the current refugee/migrant crisis and relevant actions were included in the Action Plan for 2016. Representatives from different state institutions were present, as well as civil society organisations.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Legis, Nun, Kalliri, Agape, Dorcas, La Strada, Help the Refugee in Macedonia, Caritas, UNHCR, UNFPA and Red Cross distributed:



- The baby food that is distributed in the child-friendly spaces in Gevgelija and Tabanovce is funded by UNICEF and SOS Children's Village.

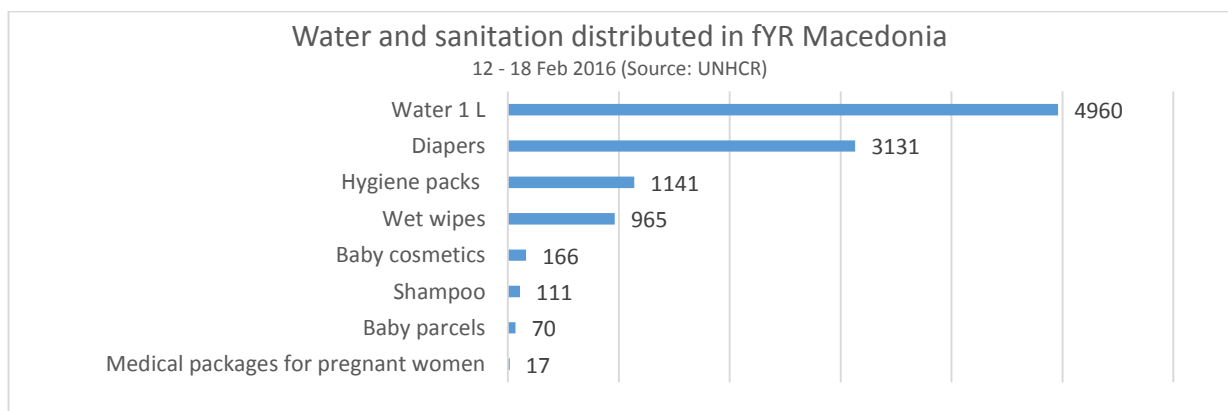
Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- On 14 February, the Kitchen Rubb hall in Gevgelija was on hold as necessary equipment had not yet reached the site.

Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

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



- By 18 February, the new toilets in Vinojug reception centre were in the final stages of construction (one inside and one outside the centre). They are expected to be operational on 25 February. UNICEF is funding the sanitation block inside the centre, and the septic tank that serves both sanitation blocks, while the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation is funding the sanitation block outside the centre.
- DRC started the construction of additional toilets in Tabanovce.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Tabanovce, UNICEF has been advocating for improved sanitation facilities and working with UNHCR's regional WASH specialist to improve facilities.



Communication and Information

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

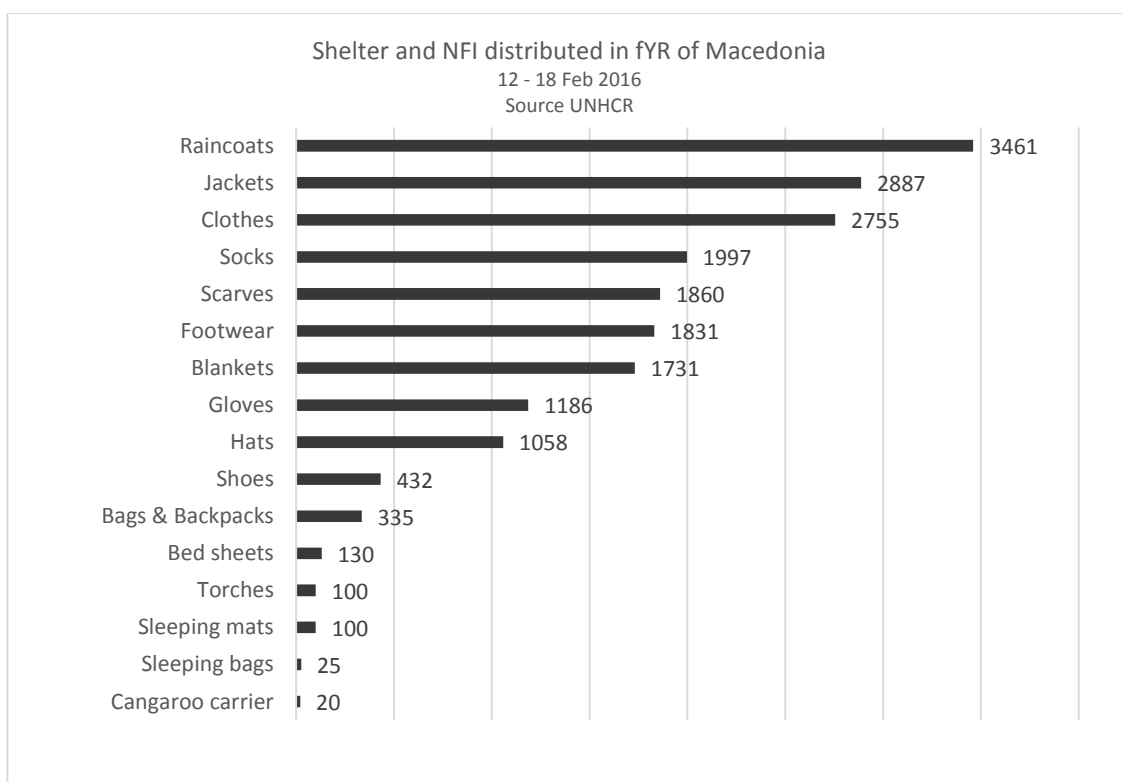
- Refugees/ migrants and humanitarian actors have highlighted that they feel there is a lack of clear and timely information on changing border restrictions.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia, MSF, SOS Children's Village, and UNICEF distributed:



- The longer term reception capacity for refugees in Vinojug reception centre is being increased. A total of ten UNHCR Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) and ten containers with beds and heating are available for approximately 100 persons.



New flooring being installed in the Habitat for Humanity Rubb hall in the Vinojug reception centre. © UNHCR/H.Hababbeh Gevgelija (FYR Macedonia) 18 February

- Flooring in the Habitat Rubb hall at the entrance of the Vinojug site was completed.
- Construction of the steel structure for the NFI distribution point was progressing well.
- On 13 February four IOM containers replaced the large Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) for disabled persons. Electricity needs to be

installed to make them functional.

- Three new RHUs were installed at the request of the Crisis Management Centre in Tabanovce on 17 February for the Rubb hall maintenance team.
- Norwegian Church Aid installed four containers in Tabanovce to increase reception capacity and MLSP started installing beds and mattresses in them.

Working in partnership

Achievements and Impact

The weekly coordination meeting took place on 15 February in Tabanovce and on 18 February in Gevgelija.

In Gevgelija partners discussed NGO activity schedules, and it was agreed that NGOs should be present at the site only during approved upon time slots.

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, Secours Islamique France, SOS Children's Village, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), Terre des hommes, Vlaznia Kumanovo, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.

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