

Refugee and Migrant Children's Perceptions of Access to Services in Accommodation Sites

Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, April 2017

Context

As of March 2017, it is estimated that more than 20,000 (or one third) of the recent refugee and migrant population in Greece are children.¹ More than one third of them (34%) live in accommodation (open) sites across the country.² Government actors, national and international NGOs, UN agencies and volunteer groups offer services at these sites with many catering specifically for the needs of children. This factsheet presents a snapshot of children's perceptions of services provided with a focus on healthcare, legal advice, food, education and protection.

Methodology

This factsheet presents findings from an assessment conducted by REACH, in the framework of a partnership with UNICEF, on refugee and migrant children's perception of services available in accommodation (open) sites in April 2017. The data was collected from one safe zone for unaccompanied and separated children in an open site near Thessaloniki and one accommodation (open) site near Athens. On each site, three key informant (KI) interviews were conducted with service providers, coordinators and child protection officers. In addition, focus group discussions took place with children and mothers living in these sites; three discussions with unaccompanied and separated children aged 15 to 17, and one discussion with mothers. As data collection took place in two locations only, findings are not representative of the entire refugee and migrant children population in accommodation (open) sites in Greece and should be considered as indicative only.



Children's Concerns over available Services



Healthcare

2/2 sites reported **healthcare to be easy to access**, as medical care was available in the location, as indicated by KIs.

Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing healthcare, by number of group discussions:³

1. Long waiting times for appointments (2)
2. Lack of specialised care (2)
3. Lack of psychological support (1)



Legal advice

2/2 sites reported **legal advice to be easy to access**, as lawyers were regularly visiting the location (twice per week), as indicated by KIs.

Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing legal advice, by number of group discussions:³

1. Slow procedures with getting documents (3)
2. No one available to give legal advice (2)
3. Lack of information about procedures (1)

In **2/2** sites, KIs reported that children of certain nationalities have more challenges in accessing legal advice.



Food

2/2 sites reported **food to be easy to access**, as food was provided three times a day, as indicated by KIs. However, in both sites, KIs reported the food was either of poor quality or not enough.

Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing food, by number of group discussions:³

1. Food is of poor quality (3)
2. Not enough food is provided (2)
3. Children not allowed to buy and cook on their own (2)



Education

41% of school-aged children attending **formal education**.

19% of school-aged children attending **non-formal education**.⁴

Barriers to access to formal education

Key informants and children reported different barriers in accessing education. Most reported barriers included:³

Key informants	Children
Difficulties with language	1 Lack of awareness why children cannot go to school
Children do not want to stay in Greece	2 Non-formal education is not sufficient
Enrolment time has passed	3 Long waiting times to register

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Children who stop attending formal education⁵

2/2 sites reported that at least one child had stopped attending formal education, as indicated by KIs.




Reported reasons for children dropping out of school, by number of sites:³

1. Difficulties with language **2/2**
2. Lessons are not helpful⁶ **2/2**
3. School is too far away **1/2**

Activities

Children and mothers reported that there were not enough freetime activities offered on site.

Most frequently reported concerns about activities for children, by number of group discussions:³

1. Not enough activities provided (3) 
2. Boredom (3) 
3. Low mood due to inactivity (2) 

Protection concerns on site

2/2 sites reported child-specific protection concerns occurring on site, as indicated by KIs.

Most reported concerns, as reported by children, mothers and key informants, included:³

	Reported by children	Reported by mothers	Reported by key informants
1.	Fights on site, including people carrying knives	Fights on site	Drug use on site
2.	Children want to work irregularly to meet their needs	Risk of sexual abuse for children	Violence towards children
3.	No further concerns	Children engage in transactional sex	Strangers on site

End notes

1. Sources include: MoMP, MoD, RIS, EKKA, ARSIS, ASB, DRC, IOM, NRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, as of 25 March 2017.

2. UNICEF, Refugee and migrant children in Greece, as of 31 March 2017.

3. Respondents could provide multiple answers.

4. 'Non-formal education' is an organised educational activity, which takes place outside the established formal system, but is administered by trained personnel. This data pertains to the assessed population only. For attendance rates across Greece please consult: -UNICEF/REACH Education FS Link to be added once final-.

5. As reported by key informants on site.

6. Lessons were reported as not helpful because children were waiting to be relocated and, as such, not interested in classes taught in Greek, or because lessons were not adapted to children's skill level.

Mother's Voices

“ We left our country to get a good education for our children, but now we can see that it was a mistake. They aren't learning anything. **”**

Mother, Afghanistan

“ When I talk to my sons at night they always ask me when we will find a house to live in. They ask 'When will we get a home?' And I really don't know what to tell them. **”**

Mother, Afghanistan

“ We ask for advice from people who themselves don't know what to do. We need an organisation in the camp to help with health, legal services or problems inside our families, and where it will be kept secret. **”**

Mother, Afghanistan

Children's Voices

“ I went to school but I didn't know Greek so I couldn't understand what was going on, so I stopped going. It's just a waste of time. **”**

M16, Afghanistan, unaccompanied

“ I don't know who is responsible for us. The organisations in the camps always come and say they are responsible for us, but when we have a problem they say they can't help us and send us to someone else. **”**

M16, Afghanistan, unaccompanied

“ They give us these coupons, but the place where we can use them to buy things is twice as expensive, so we can only buy one piece of clothing a month. Sometimes I need money for my phone. And sometimes we have to buy medicine. **”**

M16, Afghanistan, unaccompanied