

Aegean Islands

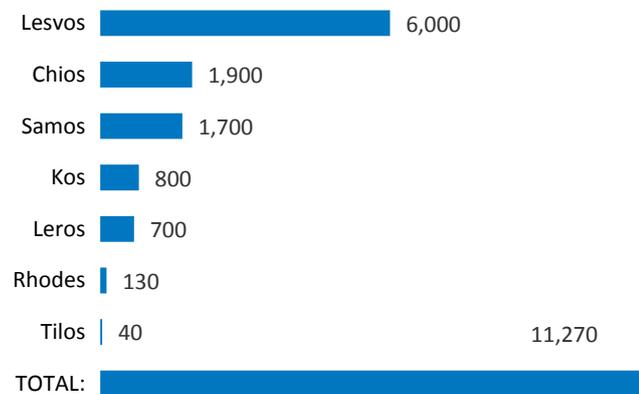
Reception conditions slightly improved as, since December, the **population** on the islands **decreased** by 12 per cent, **sea arrivals dropped** by 30 per cent and **transfers continued**.

The Government, with the support of UNHCR, transferred to accommodation facilities on the mainland over **2,100 vulnerable asylum-seekers, and 237 unaccompanied children**.

Women and children continued to be at **heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence**, while security remained inadequate at the reception centres.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Islands

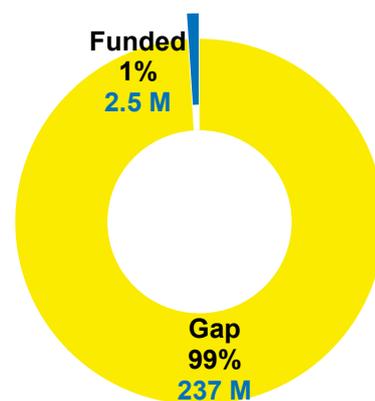


* UNHCR Greece estimate as of 31 January 2018 of those who remained on the Aegean islands since the 2015-2016 mass flow.

FUNDING (AS OF 13 FEBRUARY 2018)

USD 239.3 M

requested for the Greece operation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

57 National Staff
8 International Staff

Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens
1 Sub Office on Lesvos
3 Field Offices on Chios, Samos, Kos
2 Field Units on Leros and Rhodes



Refugees and asylum-seekers face overcrowded conditions on the island of Lesvos. © UNHCR/Yorgos Kyvernitis.

Working with Partners

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who coordinates the refugee response. The Office works with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, state institutions, community-based organisations, refugees, and host communities through sectoral working groups on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#), [Samos](#), [Kos](#) and [Leros](#).

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, asylum procedures and offers legal counselling and representation to asylum-seekers directly and through partners. UNHCR identifies and refers people with specific needs to responsible authorities and service providers for targeted assistance.
- Sea arrivals continued mainly to [Lesvos](#) and [Samos](#), but decreased this month to 1,633 people. The majority came from Syria and Iraq, and 59% were women and children.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

- Despite slight improvements in reception conditions, UNHCR continued to receive reports from asylum-seekers of sexual harassment and violence in the reception centres, particularly Moria on [Lesvos](#) and Vathy on [Samos](#).
- UNHCR welcomes measures taken by the Government to reduce the risk of SGBV, but further improvements can be made on: appropriate allocation of shelter; ensuring gender separation, security and lighting in WASH areas; improving medical and psychosocial support, and cultural mediation; increasing police presence and patrolling, including with additional policewomen; more lighting in public areas; continued transfers to the mainland to ease overcrowding; hiring additional staff dedicated to address SGBV; and enhanced awareness raising activities.

Child Protection

- UNHCR supports the identification of children at risk and assists in building the expertise of national and local actors. UNHCR coordinates with humanitarian actors and stakeholders to monitor and develop Standard Operating Procedures and minimum standards to enhance the protection of children.
- UNHCR supported the authorities in transferring 237 unaccompanied children from [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#), [Samos](#) and [Leros](#) to temporary facilities on the mainland until their referral to appropriate shelters.

Education

- UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available as access to education, especially for children over 15 years old is limited. UNHCR through partners runs recreational spaces to

ensure that the development and well-being of refugee children and youth is supported in a conducive learning environment.

- In collaboration with the University of Aegean on [Lesvos](#), UNHCR facilitates classes in 12 European languages for adult and child asylum-seekers through the European Commission's online learning programme.

Health

- Vulnerability assessment – which is an integral aspect of the asylum process – and the provision of medical services is limited due to the low number of national service staff under the Ministry of Health in the reception centres and hospitals on the islands; in particular doctors and cultural mediators.
- UNHCR offers primary health services to the residents of Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).

Food Security

- UNHCR provides food tailored to the specific needs of the population in Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).

Shelter, Water and Sanitation

- Despite continuous efforts to transfer asylum-seekers authorised to continue their asylum applications in the mainland, access to warm and safe shelter with adequate sanitation facilities, water and electricity is limited for thousands people, especially on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#) and [Samos](#).
- In Moria on [Lesvos](#), while hygiene and sanitation has significantly improved, the site remains overcrowded with some 4,000 people staying in the reception centre, the adjacent Olive Grove and a nearby land field.
- The situation is critical also for 1,500 people in the Vathy reception centre on [Samos](#) where half of the population – a quarter of which are vulnerable people – is living in tents or makeshift shelters exposed to cold and flooding.
- On [Chios](#), following the closure of Souda site, UNHCR has been offering targeted shelter and hygiene solutions in the expanded area of the Vial reception centre, including with the provision of housing units for 300 people.
- While the reception conditions on [Kos](#) and [Leros](#) have improved, vulnerable people on [Rhodes](#) have limited options but to stay in a derelict building.

Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities, convenes regular community discussions on the islands. These platforms serve as a channel of communication amongst asylum-seekers, humanitarian actors and authorities where issues such as hygiene and childcare are discussed.
- UNHCR provides leaflets in different languages about the asylum procedures and access to key services.

Support to local community

- UNHCR organises events and implements projects that bring closer the refugee and local population and help build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.

- UNHCR donated a minivan to the Public Hospital on **Samos** to facilitate the transportation of asylum-seekers from the reception centre.

Accommodation and Cash assistance

- UNHCR works with the Government, local authorities and NGOs to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees through the ECHO-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (**ESTIA**).
- Cash assistance and accommodation help provide people with a sense of normalcy and contribute directly to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods, and the renting of apartments.
- In January, 985 people were accommodated by UNHCR in apartments on the islands and an additional 308 in hotels on **Lesvos** and **Chios** under a temporary emergency scheme for the winter.

Logistics

- In January, UNHCR assisted the transfer of over 2,100 asylum seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and Government-run sites on the mainland and Crete. Since June 2016, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of 23,100 such transfers which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands.
- UNHCR offers local transportation from remote sites to key facilities and the Regional Asylum Offices on the islands in order to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the asylum procedure and the necessary services.

Partners

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: **International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Doctors of the World, Metadrasi, Arsis, Praksis** and **Iliaktida**.

Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds

Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

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Thanks to the donors for the Greece Operation

European Union (2.5 M)

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