



GREECE

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1 – 16 September 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

307,327

Refugees and migrants arrived to Greece as of 16 September

72,946

Arrivals during the first two weeks of September (1-16 September)

4,500

Average daily arrivals in September

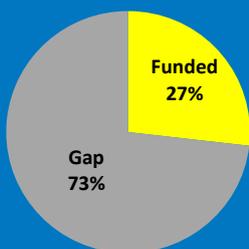
21%

Of arrivals are children

FUNDING

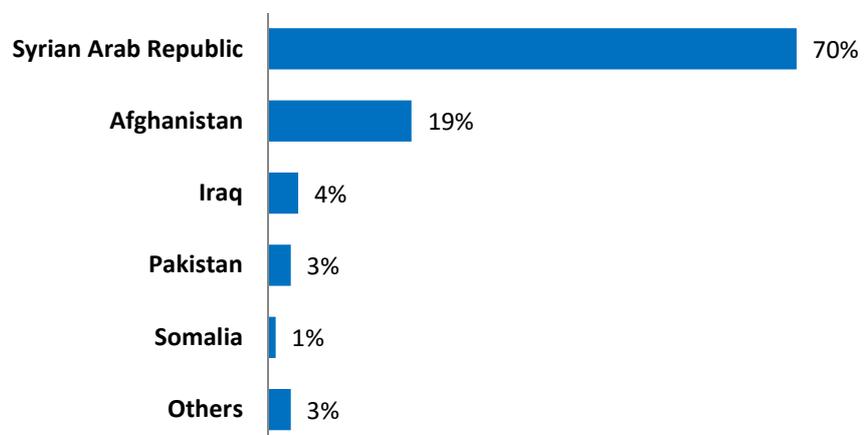
USD 8.3 million

requested for the situation in Greece in 2015



- The sea arrivals continued unabated during the first two weeks of September, with almost 73,000 people arriving (1-16 September), leading to an increasing congestion on the islands.
- With more than 20,000 refugees present on Lesbos, counting for a quarter of the population of the islands, the humanitarian situation became dire and required exceptional measures. The Government implemented some exceptional measures for the accelerated preregistration for Syrians and started to gradually decongest the island of Lesbos. In less than 3 days, 17,000 refugees had left the island.
- Tensions with the police, between different groups of refugees and migrants as well as with the local population were reported, mainly on Lesbos, Kos and Leros, as a result of the congestion on the islands, backlog on registration, changing registration policies and lack of dedicated sites.
- A peak was reached on September 13, with more than 8,600 people crossing the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The average number of crossing being 5,800 people. While some tensions, as well as health and hygiene concerns, were reported, the overall situation has been enhanced and the humanitarian assistance improved.
- Two shipwrecks occurred during the reporting period counting for the lives of 38 people, while 123 people were rescued.

Top-10 nationalities of Greece sea arrivals



PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and civil society in responding to most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of refugees
- Support the Government to establish reception facilities for persons in need of international protection and adequately respond to register, receive and process asylum requests
- Enhance the coordination role of the Government; support the relocation plan by the EC and implementation of the hotspot approach in Greece.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

During the reporting period, sea arrivals to Greece and onward movement of refugees through mainland, continued unabated. Between 1 and 16 September, almost 73,000 refugees and migrants arrived on the Greek Islands, mainly from the Syrian Arab Republic (70%), Afghanistan (19%) and Iraq (4%).

Tensions between the police and refugees, between different groups of refugees, as well as with the local population, were reported on Lesbos, Kos and Leros as a result of the congestion on the islands, backlog on registration, changing registration policies and lack of dedicated sites. To ease these tensions, and decongest the islands, the Government increased the registration capacity, by deploying additional registration officers, and implemented some exceptional measures for the accelerated registration for Syrians. The need for decongesting islands was especially urgent on Lesbos where the number of refugees and migrants reached 20,000 people, at the end of the first week of September, while the total population of Mytilini, main city of Lesbos, is home to 27,000 inhabitants. In three days, over 17,000 refugees and migrants have left Lesbos to the mainland. Since then, an average of 5,000 refugees and migrants left islands to the mainland on a daily basis.

Following the implementation of exceptional measures on Lesbos, and the reduction of registration backlog, especially on Kos, the Greek Government expanded the full registration of Syrians on all islands. However, the Government sporadically resumed pre-registration procedures (referral to Athens for fingerprinting) on some islands in order to speed the process and avoid increasing backlogs and congestion on the islands.

The decongestion efforts by the Greek Government led to increasing numbers of refugees moving throughout the mainland to Idomeni, the crossing point between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The number of arrivals from Greece to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia peaked at 8,660 persons on 13 September.

Two new tragedies took place close to the coasts of Greek islands, on 12 and 13 September, claiming for the lives of 38 people, while 123 people were rescued.

The caretaker Government established a Coordinating Body to play a catalytic role in managing the emergency. The Coordination Body is composed of some key Ministers involved in the migration and refugee issues, as well as with the Heads of the Police and of the Coast Guards.

Achievements

UNHCR intervention in Greece is time-limited and targeted, focusing on support for the government's response and temporarily addressing urgent gaps on the islands. UNHCR is mobilising emergency teams and resources, while continuing advocacy for an adequate European response.



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continued to monitor new arrivals and to provide information on procedures, rights, responsibilities, and assistance to new comers. Daily information sessions held by UNHCR in **Leros** and **Samos** reached over 16,000 people during the reporting period.
- UNHCR monitored the implementation of registration procedures on the Islands and to support local authorities to prioritize people with specific needs. On **Kos**, UNHCR had actively been involved in the registration of almost 6,000 people, in support of the police. UNHCR ensures initial screening and listing of refugees aiming at easing the process and therefore reducing the backlog of registration from 2,500 people to close to zero.
- On **Lesvos** UNHCR supported the registration of more than 17,000 people, in three days, by implementing a community based approach with regards to identification of vulnerable people as well as by ensuring mass information flow on procedures related these exception measures, undertaken by the Government.
- UNHCR's partners, the Ecumenical Refugee Programme, Praksis and Metaction, supported the provision of legal assistance and information on rights and obligations, the addressing of immediate relief/medical needs of people of concerns and the transfer of unaccompanied children to specialized facilities on the mainland.

- UNHCR supported the authorities in ensuring that no families are separated when crossing the border into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- UNHCR and partners provided support to the survivors of two shipwrecks, which took place off the coast of Samos and Farmakonisi islands on 12 and 13 September. These two tragedies claimed for the lives of 38 people, out of which 34 for the sole shipwreck off Farmakonisi. UNHCR supported 102 survivors by coordinating the assistance with public services and other humanitarian actors, as well as by ensuring regular information to the survivors on procedures, providing accommodation, communication means, and with the support of its partner, Metaction, by ensuring interpretation service. Psychological support was also provided at the public hospital and by partners.
- UNHCR played a substantial role in mitigating tensions between refugees, the police, local population as well as between different groups of refugees, which occurred in particular during the first week of September. Increasing number of refugees on the islands, lack of information regarding the registration process, limited capacity of registration as well insufficient reception capacities led to riots and clashes on Lesbos, Kos and at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The reception infrastructure, services and registration procedures still fall short of real needs.
- A system to ensure the identification, referral and follow up on people with specific needs is needed.
- Health and hygiene concerns were reported on the islands as well as at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, together with a heightened risk of sexual and gender based violence due to lack of privacy.
- The humanitarian assistance and protection for refugees and migrants calling at Farmakonissi, military base in Aegean sea, from where they are transferred to Leros, needs to be enhanced.



Site Planning, Shelter and Basic Relief Items

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR provided technical advice to the Greek authorities on assessment and identification of sites which could accommodate transit sites, in Lesbos, Kos, Samos, Chios as well as in Idomeni.
- UNHCR shipped, from its stockpiles, and procured over 230,000 core relief items, including blankets, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, hygiene kits, baby kits, solar lamps, energy biscuits, wheelchairs and crutches, as well as 670 shelters (refugees housing units and family tents). These items have been dispatched to islands as well as in Idomeni for distribution. Distributions, through direct implementation or with the support of partners, such as Praksis, targeted in particular the most vulnerable. During the reporting period, UNHCR distributed 800 sleeping bags, 100 sleeping mats and 150 hygienic kits to children, pregnant women and persons with specific needs arrived on Leros.
- On **Lesbos**, UNHCR, in collaboration with MSF, IRC, Save the children, MDM, IOM, Metaction, set up a temporary site, similar to a transit center, in order to ensure the registration of 17,000 Syrian refugees between 7 and 9 September. Priority was to ensure water and sanitation capacity, health post as well as food distribution. Since then, this site has been closed and registration resumed in Kara Tape, for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Refugees from other nationalities are registered in a site named Moria.
- UNHCR Site Planners rendered expert advice to the Greek authorities in the improvement of a registration and transit sites in Kara Tape, on **Lesbos**, where 15 refugee housing units have already been set up to accommodate refugees, especially the most vulnerable, as well as registration offices. A transit site in **Idomeni** is being set up in line with UNHCR site planners recommendations.
- On **Rhodes**, UNHCR, in support of authorities, set up 5 tents and distributed blankets and sleeping mats to 390 people rescued at sea off Rhodes islands. Interpreters and psychologists provided support to new arrivals.
- UNHCR installed a rub hall in **Idomeni**, where 1,400 people can be accommodated and receive assistance. This rub hall is part of the transit site being set up. UNHCR, together with partners, provide information and assistance, such as food, water and medical services, to over 5,800 people a day in Idomeni.



A Syrian child in front of a RHU in Kara Tape, Lesbos

- NGOs, civil society and volunteers provided assistance to the group of some 200 Afghans resting at Victoria Square, in **Athens**, and contributed to the cleanliness of the area. UNHCR ensure a daily presence at the Elaionas site, accommodation center in Athens.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Absence of accommodation remains problematic in the majority of islands. While two military sites were offered for reception on **Kos** and **Lesvos**, and one site was identified in **Leros**, following negotiations with authorities, the formal approval is still pending. The potential establishment of these sites is source of tensions with the local population.
- Some improvement of basic reception conditions have been noted, with for example the installation of 15 toilets by the Red Cross in **Kos** and the setting up of 15 RHU in **Lesvos**. However, basic reception conditions continue to be from far insufficient on many islands.

Working in partnership

- UNHCR continued to closely cooperate with the European Commission and relevant EU Agencies (including Frontex and EASO) to jointly assess the needs on the ground and seek complementarity in the support provided.
- UNHCR worked in close cooperation with the Greek authorities, at national and local levels, to support their coordination efforts and the development and implementation of the humanitarian response.
- UNHCR's emergency assistance and protection services in Greece were delivered through several partners including the Greek Refugee Council, Ecumenical Refugee Programme, Praksis and METAction, which had supported the provision of legal assistance and information on rights and obligations, the addressing of immediate relief/medical needs of people of concerns and the transfer of unaccompanied children to specialized facilities on the mainland. UNHCR cooperated also closely with other national and international NGOs, such as International Rescue Committee, Médecins du Monde, Médecins Sans Frontières, involved in the humanitarian response.
- The civil society, local and international volunteers played an impressive and essential role in supporting and assisting refugees and migrants.

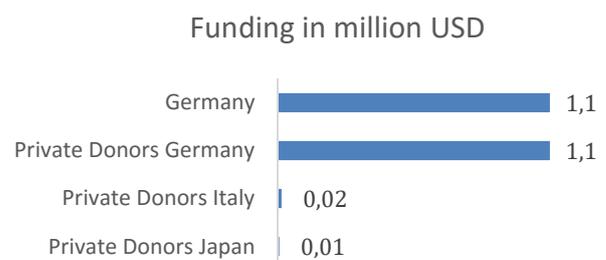
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

On 8 September, UNHCR launched its Emergency Appeal for the Initial Response Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe. A total of USD 30.5 million is requested from June 2015 to December 2016 for the initial response in the affected countries. Out of this total amount, USD 14.6 million are requested for the humanitarian response in Greece (USD 8.3 million for 2015 and USD 6.3 million for 2016). The planning assumptions at the time of the launch of the appeal have been challenged by the recent developments, which urgently require the scaling up of UNHCR's emergency response to address catalogued protection and humanitarian assistance gaps. A revised appeal will be issued in the coming weeks to reflect these additional financial requirements.

A total of USD 2.7 million has so far been received for this emergency appeal from Germany, Portugal and private donors, including USD 2.2 million for activities in Greece. UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation.

Funding :

A total of **USD 2.2 million** has been funded out of **USD 8.3 million** requested for activities in 2015



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