

KEY FIGURES

17,303

Medical interventions provided

1,766

Medical assistance to children

17,971

Unaccompanied children registered

59,376

Food packages & hot soups distributed

5,625

Blankets 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

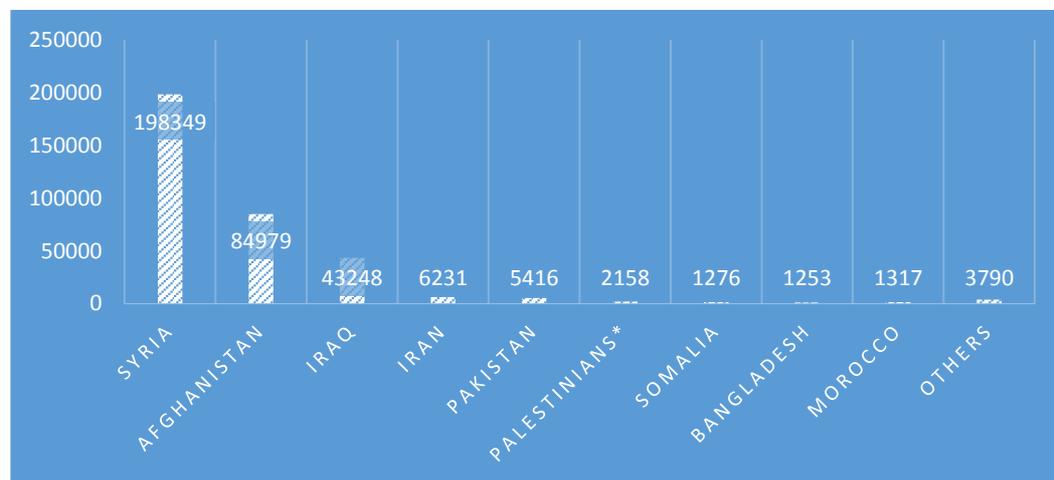
FYR MACEDONIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

11-17 December 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- 20,774 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 11-17 December, with a daily average of 2,968. Since UNHCR began monitoring departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some **648,178** refugees and migrants have departed.
- Intention to apply for asylum: **348,017** applications have been filed from 19 June through 17 December 2015 (source: Ministry of Interior).



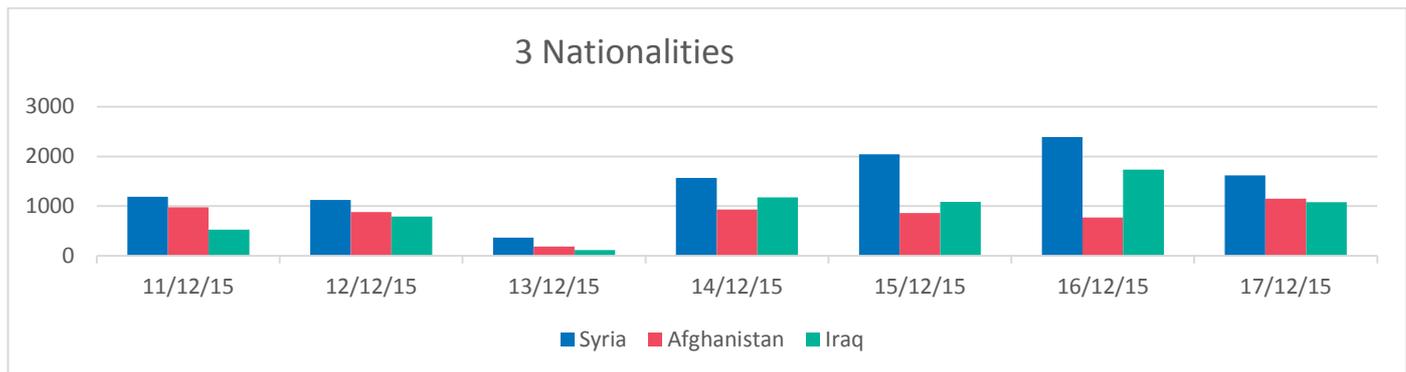
- In the period from 11 to 17 December, 14 applications for asylum were filed, while from January to end of November 1,803 asylum applications were submitted out of which 993 were submitted by Syrians, 349 by Afghans and 156 by Iraqis. So far only two persons have been recognized as refugees in 2015, both unaccompanied children, one from Iraq and one from Syria.
- On December 16, during a meeting President Ivanov initiated in Brussels with Donald Tusk, President of the European Council; Mr. Tomislav Nikolic, President of Serbia; and Johannes Hahn, EU Enlargement Commissioner, he reiterated that FYR Macedonia only has the capacity to receive 2,000 refugees for short-term transit, as was pledged during the Leaders' meeting held in Brussels in October, and will not put in place any longer-term stay capacity in the country. (Official press release in Macedonian can be found at <http://president.gov.mk/en/media-centre/news/3571.html>)

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

20,774 refugees and migrants crossed the border into FYR Macedonia during the reporting period 11-17 December, with a daily average of 2,968. Since UNHCR began monitoring the departures from Gevgelija on 1 July 2015 some 648,178 refugees and migrants have departed.

The Ministry of Interior's statistics of refugees and migrants declaring their intention to apply for asylum reached 348,017, including 98,151 (28%) children, of whom 17,971 (5%) are unaccompanied since 19 June until 17 December 2015. Of these 198,349 (57%) of the arrivals are Syrians, 86,979 (24%) Afghans, 43,248 (13%) Iraqis, and the remaining (6%) represent other nationalities such as Iranians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Congolese and Bangladeshi.



Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continued to intervene in cases of deportation to Greece when necessary, including for mixed families, Palestinians originating from Syria, and/or when proof of Syrian, Afghani or Iraqi nationality could be obtained. An average of 50 cases of deportations per day have been recorded since the discriminatory admission practice was introduced by some of the EU and Western Balkans countries on the Mediterranean route. The vast majority presented either forged Greek registration documents, Greek registration documents indicating nationalities other than Syrian, Iraqi, or Afghan or have no documents at all.
- UNHCR supported the police to improve identification and registration of unaccompanied children. The number of registered unaccompanied children was vastly inflated. It was established that the Greek authorities were registering children, in general, individually, and issuing them separate documentation from their parent's or guardian's. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia authorities replicated the practice and identified them as unaccompanied. In order to resolve the situation, the Police, supported by input from UNHCR, produced a note informing the registration team on the procedure for identifying and registering unaccompanied children. It was agreed that UNHCR would interview identified unaccompanied children before registration, and advise the police on how to proceed following the interview. The procedure will become official in the near future. From 11



Providing support to both the Ministry of Interior and refugees
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through 17 December there was a notable decrease in the number of unaccompanied children being registered from an average of 205 a day the previous week to 20 per day during the reporting period. Best Interest Assessments/interviews were conducted with the majority of identified cases.

- UNHCR presented at a conference titled “Migration and Refugee Flows in the Transit Countries: Security Implications” on 16 December organized by the Institute for Geostrategic Research and Foreign Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia in cooperation with the Central European Initiative Secretariat. The session looked at the collective response, and UNHCR explained the Refugee Coordination Model and the Humanitarian community’s strategy and priorities for the response.
- From 11-17 December approximately 4,041 children and 3,436 women were provided with support, including emotional and psychosocial assistance, in the UNICEF Child Friendly Space operated by the NGO La Strada in Vinograd. La Strada identified and assisted 238 vulnerable individuals. The activities are funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, GIZ, People in Need and Terre des Hommes.
- From 11-17 December approximately 1,517 children and 591 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, 6 vulnerable individuals were identified and assisted. The activities are funded by the SOS Kinderdorf International and UNICEF.
- During the reporting period 456 refugee group leaders, around 22,150 refugees were given information about their rights and obligations in Macedonia at the Vinograd site by MYLA, who also assisted 19 asylum seekers at the Vizbegovo Reception Center with their asylum procedure. MYLA also ensured prioritization in 155 cases, around 410 vulnerable individuals, for their registration in Vinograd. MYLA’s data entry clerks assisted the Border Police in issuing 21,015 intentions for asylum during the reporting period.
- A number of delegations visited and were briefed by UNHCR, the CMC, and partners in both transit sites throughout the reporting period. **In Vinograd:** The British Ambassador to FYR Macedonia, Mr. Charles Garrett, visited the Vinograd site with his family. A journalist from Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung visited the site and UNHCR briefed him on the operations and procedures on the site. The FYR Macedonia Chief of Police briefed a FRONTEX delegation visiting from Eidomeni on registration procedures.
- On 11 December Mr. Markus Dullaert, chairman of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children's Affairs, concluded his visit to FYR Macedonia with a delegation of representatives from SOS Children’s Villages Netherlands and several media. SOS Children’s Village Macedonia hosted the delegation, led by Julijana Gapo, National Director. The FYR Macedonian delegation consisted of representatives of the FYR Macedonian Ombudsman, headed by Deputy Ombudsman Vaska Bajramovska – Mustafa. The purpose of the visit was to better understand the circumstances children in the Gevgelija and Tabanovce transit centers. Dullaert and Gapo expressed their concern about the situation of refugees children, especially in the cold weather as that is one of the greatest threats to their health.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The registration process faced some challenges. Refugees complained that the police did not provide them with the FYR Macedonia registration documents after submitting their Greek registration documents. UNHCR observed that when large numbers of people were in the site, the police relied on group leaders to distribute the registration documents. UNHCR raised the issue with the Police Commander, who acknowledged the challenge and agreed to monitor the situation. He also concurred that UNHCR would bring these cases to the attention of the authorities as they happen.
- UNHCR continued to observe cases of UAMs aged between 14 and 17 registered as adults in Greece (dates of birth 1996). The border police registered them as adults according to the Greek registration documents in Vinograd; however, their cases were signaled to UNHCR in Tabanovce and UNHCR Serbia for follow-up.
- Since the implementation of restrictions on the nationalities that are granted access to the territory, some arrival patterns are pointing to the re-emergence of smuggling/trafficking routes. A number of individuals arrived in Tabanovce without having passed through the Vinograd transit site, and are without FYR Macedonia registration paperwork. Many claim they have arrived to the site on foot or with other means. Authorities have also apprehended others in private vehicles. UNHCR and legal partner, Macedonia Young Lawyers’ Association, advised these individuals on the asylum procedure, but none of them have opted to apply.

- Religious brochures were found in some of the leftover food packages in the Rubb halls in Tabanovce. The Crisis Management Committee was informed and will follow-up.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period the Red Cross provided 17,303 medical interventions out of which 183 were pregnant women and 1,766 were children. 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.
- On 16 December UNFPA together with officials from Ministry of Health delivered life-saving Reproductive Health Kits to the gynecology obstetrics departments at the hospitals in Gevgelija and Kumanovo. The Reproductive Health Kits (RH kits) contain supplies needed for deliveries, including caesarian sections and other obstetric surgical interventions. RH kits were procured by UNFPA in response to the current refugee crises, and include treatment for: management of the immediate consequences of sexual violence; treatment of sexually transmitted infections, normal clinical delivery assistance (reusable equipment; drugs and disposable equipment); management of miscarriage and complications of abortion; treatment of suture of tears (cervical and vaginal) and vaginal examination; and a referral level kit for c-sections and complicated deliveries (reusable equipment; drugs and disposable equipment).
- Two mobile gynecological clinics have been procured, one for the Tabanovce transit centre and one for the Vinojug transit centre. The Ministry of Health will provide a utilization plan for presence and staffing of the clinic in the following period. Also, 345,600 condoms were procured and will be distributed Red Cross and NGO HERA.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

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



Afghan toddlers having sandwiches while their parents wait for their turn to be registered and admitted to the reception centre.
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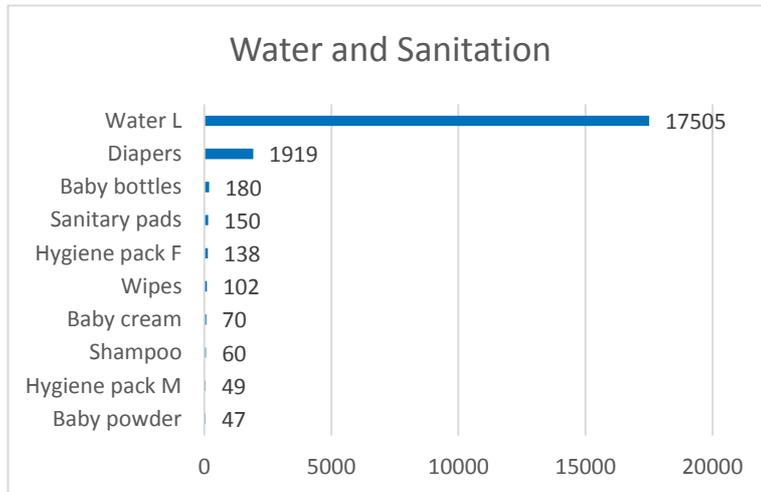
- The food that is distributed in the UNICEF child friendly spaces in Gevgelija and Tabanovce is funded by UNICEF.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

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



- The hygiene items that are distributed in the Child Friendly Space in Tabanovce are funded by UNICEF.

- On 14 December, UNICEF, UNHCR and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy agreed on the locations for two additional sanitation blocks in Vinojug (one for people waiting to enter the transit centre and one for people waiting to board the train), as well as an additional biodegradable septic tank. The need for these facilities was identified through a UNICEF WASH assessment conducted between 27 November and 4 December. Construction will commence once technical drawings are completed by the site planner (UNCHR/DRC).

- DRC completed work on the septic tank for the 12 additional toilets in Tabanovce. The toilets were installed and connected to the water and sewage systems. They will be operational as soon as they are connected to the electricity grid.
- MSF held a training for the cleaning staff for both inside and outside the Vinojug reception center on Friday, 11 December, and will be providing more cleaning products for the site. The same training will be held in Tabanovce.



Communication and Information

Achievements and Impact

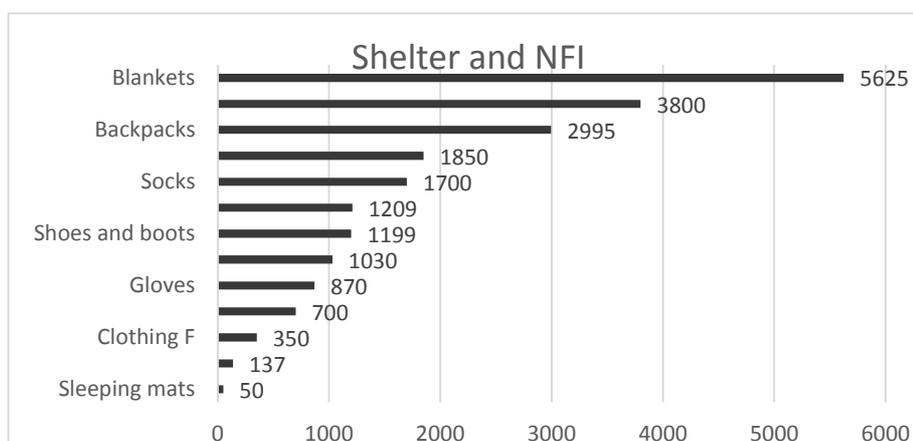
- UNHCR placed a whiteboard near the Red Cross RHU to share information with partners on train departures and expected arrival times in Tabanovce.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, Red Cross, La Strada, Nun, Legis, Help the Refugees in Macedonia and UNICEF distributed:



- Construction of the new UNICEF Child Friendly Space in Vinojug is on track to be completed by 24 December.

- The Red Cross took used and leftover blankets to be washed at the Vizbegovo Reception Center for asylum-seekers.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- With the cold weather, insufficient heating and electricity remained the biggest gaps; however, winterization activities in both the Vinojug reception centre and the Tabanovce transit site were underway and amplified during the period. In both sites, flooring, additional heating devices and cabling to upgrade the power networks were underway. UNHCR received insulation kits for the Rubb halls that are being put in place. Nine of the additional Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) for Vinojug were erected, and around 20 IOM containers will also be set up. Flooring in the 22 RHUs in Tabanovce started to be replaced. Habitat for Humanity connected the cabling that was completed in Vinojug to the EVN generator. UNICEF-supplied heaters and generators are being used daily to provide power and heating for the whole Tabanovce site, including refugee housing units.
- The new DRC site manager completed an assessment for the electric cabling of the three new rub halls, installment of generators (as a back-up power supply for the heating in the new rub halls) and heating for the new RHUs, which are used by refugees. DRC offered to provide generators that could be used as backup power supply for the heaters in the Rubb halls.
- Unregulated vendors were still present in the Tabanovce site, and have been trying to sell UNHCR blankets.
- During the period, unknown perpetrators stole blankets from containers in the Tabanovce transit centre, and put them in a private vehicle. Police arrested the offenders, and after searching their vehicle found 64 UNHCR blankets.



As part of the winterization, UNHCR RHUs received insulated flooring ©UNHCR, Vinojug (fYR Macedonia) December 2015

Working in partnership

Achievements and Impact

The weekly coordination meetings in Gevgelija on 11 December as well as in Tabanovce took place on 16 December.

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



There is clear understanding among all partners what the priority is – to relieve further suffering and protect refugees from the biggest risks ©UNHCR/L.Brashnarska, Vinojug (fYR Macedonia) 10.12.2015

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