

Refugee and Migrant Children's Perception of Access to Rights and Protection outside Accommodation Sites

Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, March 2017

Context

As of 25 March 2017, it is estimated that more than 20,000 of the refugee and migrant population in Greece are children (zero to 17 years).¹ Many have been in the country for more than one year and are living outside accommodation sites (camps), including in shelters for unaccompanied and separated children, hotels, apartments and shelters for vulnerable asylum seekers.² This factsheet presents a snapshot of children's awareness of and perceived access to rights in their respective locations. It also provides an overview of protection concerns in assessed locations, as reported by children and service providers working in the respective sites.

Methodology

This factsheet presents findings from an assessment conducted by REACH, in the framework of a partnership with UNICEF, from February to April 2017. Findings are based on 35 key informant interviews with service providers and 15 focus group discussions with 81 children aged 15 to 17 in 10 locations, including 60 unaccompanied and separated children. The types of locations assessed were as follows: six shelters for unaccompanied and separated children, two shelters for vulnerable asylum seekers, one apartment building and one hotel. Six of these locations were in or near Thessaloniki, and four were in Athens. Only 16 girls could be found in the age category at the time of the assessment. Data given by three or four key informants at each location was aggregated, and refers to the whole population of children living in each location; children talked about their own experiences and perception. Findings are not statistically representative of the refugee and migrant child population in Greece and should be considered as indicative only.

Map: Locations assessed



Awareness and Access to Rights

Children's awareness about rights

When children were asked to list the rights they think they are entitled to in Greece, the following categories of rights were the most commonly reported, by number of locations reported (out of 10 locations assessed):³

1. Education **10/10**
2. Financial support/money **6/10**
3. Home/shelter **6/10**
4. Safety and security **6/10**
5. Personalised and targeted care⁴ **5/10**
6. Food **5/10**
7. Healthcare **5/10**

The **right to asylum** was stated by children as a right in only one of the locations.

Children's perceived access to rights⁵

Children were asked to give colour indications according to a traffic light system to show to what extent they felt they had access to a selected number of rights:

Financial support/money

- **91%** No access
- **9%** Limited access
- **0%** Good access

Children reported that they did not have sufficient financial support to meet some of their needs, including paying transport, clothes and phone credit.

Personalised and targeted care

- **89%** No access
- **8%** Limited access
- **3%** Good access

Children, and in particular unaccompanied children, reportedly felt service providers in the locations did not care about them and that attention provided was generic, not tailored to their individual needs.

Safety and security

- **38%** No access
- **31%** Limited access
- **31%** Good access

In **9/10** locations, most children reported they felt safe in their location. However, many children in shelters for UASC reported occurrences of theft inside the shelter. Additionally, many children across different types of sites, and particularly girls, reportedly did not feel safe outside of their location, due to people using and selling drugs, and fear of racist behaviour (verbal abuse).

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Protection Concerns

7/10 locations reported protection concerns for children within or around the site, as indicated by KIs.

Of these, most reported protection concerns were, by number of locations reported (out of 10 locations assessed), as indicated by KIs:

1. At least one child engages in exploitative work (working with little to no pay) **6**
2. At least one child engages in petty trade **6**
3. At least one child uses drugs **5**
4. At least one child engages in transactional sex **4**

Relations in Locations Assessed

Relations among refugee and migrant children and between children and service providers were rated, by number of locations reported (out of 10 locations assessed), as indicated by KIs:⁶

6/10 Very good
4/10 Neutral

However, in **5/10** assessed locations, children reported tensions between children of different nationalities. Tensions were particularly often recorded in shelters for UASC.

Who children go to for help

According to key informants, when children have a problem they ask for help from:

1. Officials running the location
2. Interpreters or cultural mediators
3. Parents and family in the location

Disabilities

4/10 locations reported that there were children with disabilities, as indicated by key informants.⁷

Children's Voices

“ It's like running in an empty circle, we're not adults, so we can't work, but they also don't give us money. ”
M17, Iraq, unaccompanied

“ I wish somebody would offer work to us, even in building construction, we don't care where, any kind of work. ”
M17, Syria, unaccompanied

“ Money and work are the main reasons children are abused; because they need money they go into drug dealing. ”
M17, Syria, unaccompanied

“ I have become so tired and bored in this site, I have developed a mental health problem and sometimes I want to kill myself. It's just for my family I have not done this. I feel very sad here in this place and I want to leave soon. ”
M17, Afghanistan, unaccompanied

“ Noone supervises the entrance, so we get scared that people we don't know enter here (location assessed) and steal or do worse things still. ”
F17, Syria, accompanied

“ In the building there is security and we are safe, but outside in Omonia (neighbourhood in Athens) it's not safe, because there are drug users. ”
F15, Syria, accompanied

“ Since the war started I have this problem with memory loss, and they said they cannot pay for this. I also started smoking since we came here and maybe it makes it worse. Since I came here I have nothing to do. I feel trapped and I think it gets worse. I feel very stressed. ”
M17, Syria, unaccompanied

End notes

1. Sources include: MoMP, MoD, RIS, EKKA, ARSIS, ASB, DRC, IOM, NRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, as of 25 March 2017.
2. The majority of the current refugee and migrant population on mainland Greece has been in Greece since the closure of the Western Balkans route and the EU Turkey statement in spring 2016.
3. This was an open ended question and children could report as many rights as they believed they were entitled to in Greece.
4. This category was repeatedly mentioned by children in group discussions as a 'right' to have as a child that someone cares about and looks after the child, like, as children reported, a 'parent' or someone close to a person, who cares about the person.
5. As reported by children. Percentages are calculated out of total number of children assessed N=81.
6. 'Very good' was defined as 'no problems or tensions among children or between children and service providers with friendly relations'; 'neutral' was defined as 'few problems or tensions among children or between children and service providers with neither particularly friendly nor hostile relations'.
7. No more information on children with disabilities were available at the time of the assessment.