SERBIA
INTER-Agency Operational Update
21 December 2015 - 3 January 2016

Highlights

- The number of daily refugee arrivals averaged 2,953.
- Of the total of 92,826 expressed intentions to seek asylum in Serbia in December 2015, 99.9% originated from refugee-producing countries, including 39.7% from Syria, 30.1% from Iraq and 29.9% from Afghanistan. 36% of expressed intentions were made by minors.
- According to official statistics, 577,995 refugees and migrants expressed intention to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia in 2015 as at 31 December.

Intention to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia)
41,353 refugees and migrants registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.

Priorities

- Assist the Government and civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of refugees
- Strengthen the asylum system in line with applicable international standards
UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Serbia is situated along the preferred route through the Western Balkans for refugees originating from the Middle East and Asia, aiming to seek asylum in Europe. UNHCR estimated that at any given time some 2,500 refugees were on Serbian territory in the reporting period. During this week, the weather remained very cold with heavy snow, blizzard and temperatures down to -11 degrees Celsius at the end of the reporting period. As the weather got seriously colder, distribution of winter items for adults and children (especially jackets and boots, blankets, hats, gloves and scarves) increased significantly. Similarly, an increasing number of refugees and migrants had medical complaints, particularly concerning flu and colds, as well as stomach problems noted prevalingly with small children.

The number of arrivals into Serbia from Bulgaria further decreased, with an average of 94 asylum-seekers arriving daily across the entire stretch of this border. Around 220 asylum-seekers were assisted in Belgrade on average each day.

The practice of denying entry to refugees and migrants from countries other than Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq continued.

As of 01 January, maximum 940 asylum-seekers are allowed to board per train, and a maximum of four train departures daily are provided from Šid in Serbia to Slavonski Brod in Croatia.

UNHCR, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), Police, the Medical Centre, Red Cross, UNICEF/DRC, Caritas, DRC, and Remar assisted asylum seekers 24/7 at Preševo Reception Centre (RC). UNFPA, IOM, Natan, Humedica, ADRA, Care international/Nexus, SOS Children, OXFAM, Group 484, Global Medic and Youth for Refugees were present during the day. Save the Children, Asylum Protection Centre (APC), Atina and MSF were present outside the RC. Police, Gendarmerie, IOM, Philanthropy, Remar, Medical Center, UNHCR, MSF, DRC and UNICEF were assisting refugees and migrants at Miratovac refugee aid point (RAP).

UNHCR, HCIT, WAHA, and SCRM were assisting asylum-seekers 24/7 at the Šid train station. In Adaševci RAP, SCRM, Police, APC, Red Cross Serbia, UNHCR, MSF, BCM, and Czech Volunteers assisted asylum-seekers 24/7 and other organisations providing assistance during daytime were CRS/Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation, World Vision, Terre des Hommes, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) and Operation Mobilization (OM).
Achievements

Protection

Achievements and Impact

- In Preševo and Šid, UNHCR, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), IOM and Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) assisted over 1,500 persons with special needs (PSNs) and reunited at least 25 families.
- A Red Cross family reunion tent was opened on 3 January at Preševo RC, and will operate with the assistance of UNHCR and UNICEF.
- UNHCR buses continued to transport up to 3,100 refugees and migrants daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre (RC). UNHCR/DRC, IOM, Mercy Corps and MSF vans transported up to a dozen PWSNs and their family members from the border with FYR Macedonia to Preševo RC each day.
- UNHCR identified at least 20 UASCs and referred them to local authorities and UNHCR Croatia for further protection.
- UNHCR’s implementing partner HCIT maintained a 24/7 presence at the Šid train station and provided legal aid and protection information, border monitoring and fast tracking and referrals (mostly to medical staff and CSW in Šid in case of UASC identification).
- HCIT conducted detailed personal interviews with 30 asylum-seekers who shared important information on transit and treatment, including problems related to their countries of origin.
- HCIT intervened in 7 cases of family reunification. 160 asylum-seekers were referred by HCIT to medical staff (WAHA and Šid health centre doctors) and its staff provided interpretation during examination and treatment.
- HCIT assisted more than 2,800 asylum-seekers with protection and practical information, including during boarding and transit.
- On December 25th, Philanthropy started the distribution of cash cards (worth €40) in Preševo and Zaječar. Cash cards are distributed to vulnerable refugee families in order to satisfy their immediate needs while they are in Serbia. In the reporting period period, Philanthropy distributed 1,056 cash cards to 834 refugee families (3,900 individuals).
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Mobile Teams continued conducting protection activities primarily in three locations: Adaševci, Miratovac/Preševo and Dimitrovgrad. DRC assisted 1,169 persons, through immediate response and referrals to relevant organisations and authorities and provided relevant information to 8,673 refugees and migrants. Child Friendly Space (CFS) and Mother and Baby (M&B) Corner in Preševo hosted 1,434 children and 740 mothers, while in Miratovac 675 children and 363 mothers were assisted by DRC.
- IOM mobile team deployed to support the Border Police at Miratovac refugee aid point (RAP) assisted approx. 39,000 refugee and migrants upon their arrival from FYR Macedonia by providing them with necessary information and referrals towards the registration center (RC) in Preševo. IOM mobile team assisted vulnerable families and individuals.
with transportation assistance from Miratovac RAP to Preševo. The average number of assisted refugees and migrants was 2,600 per day. Out of this number approx. 3,940 were children, elderly, disabled, etc.

- In Preševo RC, IOM mobile team engaged in assisting the work of the police in preparatory activities for registration of refugees and migrants (filling in the questionnaires prior to registration) and assisted the refugees/migrants in filling in 25,000 questionnaires.

- UNICEF continued to support CFSs operating in Preševo and Miratovac (operating in partnership with DRC) and in Adaševci RAP (operating in partnership with World Vision). In all three locations, UNICEF supported the Centres of Social Work (CSW) to deploy outreach workers to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families. Support to the CSW in Preševo has been expanded and 24/7 presence by the Centre’s outreach workers will be in place from 15 January 2016, following the completion of training of new workers which is currently underway. 2,836 children and 1,943 were assisted through services provided in the three child-friendly spaces in the reporting period.

- World Vision is in the process of preparing the renovations in the Grey-House Šid RAP where a new CFS will be opened.

- INTERSOS provided phone charging and internet access services at Adaševci RAP.

- The 24/7 Save the Children (SC) Safe space in Preševo, with 13 beds, 2 showers, a bathroom and a kitchenette assisted 630 adults and minors (364 children in total, including 75 babies and 18 potential UAM). The following support was provided: 221 overnight stays, 48 showers and 14 referrals to other services in the community; 130 hygiene kits for babies and 16 for mothers and 141 clothing items were distributed. The outreach team assisted 249 parents and 741 children, of which 173 were potential UASCs. Key non-food items, baby food, clothes, hygiene items for mothers and boots were distributed to provide immediate support and prevent further harm from cold weather conditions. On 31 December, the Safe space was moved to a new location - 300 m2 facility with separated areas for: sleeping area for UASC boys, sleeping area for UASC girls and vulnerable cases, sleeping area for mothers with babies, M&B corner, CFS and youth corner. On New Year’s Eve, SC provided accommodation for over 100 mothers with small children in the two Safe Spaces in Preševo, and organized a distribution of winterization items during the night.

- Through Mobile Child Safety Unit, SC assisted 150 children (1 girl and all of them potential UAMs) with information and referral in Dimitrovgrad. SC is still awaiting formal permission to work inside the RAP in Dimitrovgrad.

- SOS Children’s Villages Serbia CFS team at the Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade provided support to 141 children and 25 families.

- The SOS Children’s Villages Serbia IT spot at Adaševci RAP (charger units and Wi-Fi internet) had 500-1,000 users per day. Number of mobile charging stations was increased from 48 to 84. SOS provided connection on the web page www.refugeeinfo.eu with information available in 4 languages concerning the asylum-seekers’ present location/map, registration process, legal rights, transportation, accommodation and shelter, medical aid, other services/support organized at the RAP and important contacts along the transit route in the Balkans. IT charging stations were placed in different tents at RC Preševo.

- Through the static CFS in Belgrade, SC assisted 420 children (284 boys and 162 potential UASCs). SC Child Friendly Space at Miksalište was running a program for adolescents, using unique tools and instruments, such as maps of the journey and different activities adjusted to transition areas. Through M&B Corner at Asylum Info Center, SC reached 132 mothers and 175 babies, delivering 137 hygiene kits for babies and 84 for mothers and 164 food kits for babies.

- SOS CV Serbia was responsible for overall organization of activities for refugee children at RC Presevo during the New Year’s holidays. SOS mobile team, together with DRC/UNICEF and SC staff implemented different games, animations and music, on the spot made toys etc. and distributed 2,154 New Year’s parcels for babies and children donated by SOS CV Serbia, Philanthropy, Foundation Youth Refugees and IOM.

- During the New Year’s Eve, SC and its partner Centre for Youth Integration organized transportation for more than 30 refugees incl. children from Belgrade train station to the Asylum Centre (AC) in Krnjača.

- SC assisted 493 children (375 boys and 262 girls) at Adaševci RAP.
9 y.o. girl, separated from her family in FYR Macedonia, was traced by SC with the support of colleagues from Greece and identified in Serbia at Adaševci RAP. In cooperation with the local authorities, this girl was placed in the care of a foster family and the reunification process was initiated by UNHCR.

As part of GBV prevention activities, UNFPA distributed torches and whistles to refugee women in Preševo, especially targeting those women arriving/traveling during the night.

ADRA was involved in the following 24/7 protection-related activities in Preševo, Miratovac and Bujanovac: communication, translation (10 translators) and assistance to public officers, identification of hidden basic needs, medical assistance, monitoring of unaccompanied minors and other persons with special needs, referral to the protection mechanism and assisting UNICEF, social care institutions and other agencies.

Balkan Center for Migration (BCM)/Catholic Relief Service (CRS) interpreters assisted refugees arriving to Šid.

The Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade, supported by ADRA, Klikaktiv, Savski Venac municipality and UNHCR, as well as Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) continued providing information, referrals, aid, counselling and Internet access to refugees in Belgrade.

SCRM continued to provide free shuttle bus service to the asylum centre in Krnjača for refugees in Belgrade region to shelter from the elements.

UNHCR's partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot and Knjaževac, who provided assistance and information to refugees and migrants and referred UASCs to local centres for social work.

Praxis and the Norwegian Refugee Council started implementing the project “Emergency protection, shelter and assistance for refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia”. As of 21 December 2015, their teams have been present in Dimitrovgrad 24/7, while new teams will begin covering the area of Bosilegrad 24/7 (border police stations in Strežimirovc and Ribarci) as of 4 January 2016, providing protection/information and referrals, distributing food and non-food items to refugees and asylum seekers.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees and migrants continued to arrive into Serbia without the means to purchase transportation tickets to continue their trip.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- In the Banja Koviljača, Krnjača, Bogovađa and Krnjača asylum centres, UNHCR funded DRC activities for children, including a kindergarten supervised by qualified care-givers, and English and Serbian language lessons three times per week to improve their chances of integration within the community.

- The Bogovađa asylum centre conducted sewing classes for women and mothers who are protégés of this centre. This activity boosted refugees’ psychological well-being and self-confidence, and empowered them with transferable skills. Products include bed sheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Notwithstanding the above-mentioned efforts, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection continued to face challenges of integration and education opportunities.
Health

Achievements and Impact

- WHO provided medical supplies for the RAP in Miratovac as well as medical supplies to 16 health centres in most affected locations, including Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and Šid.
- Caritas was providing medications and vitamins in the amount of 300 € per month, at the request of the Health Centre Dimitrovgrad.
- Two medical teams of DRC and UNHCR continued providing medical assistance to refugees and migrants in Miratovac and Preševo, as well as in Belgrade, through another two medical teams engaged through the local Primary Health Centres.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac and Belgrade and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- MSF provided medical assistance at their camper in Adaševci to up to 250 asylum-seekers daily. BCM/CRS medical team and IDC/Šid Health Centre provided medical assistance from the main lobby of Adaševci Motel to up to 150 refugees each day, and BCM ensured interpretation services used by the medical team.
- WAHA provided medical care at Šid train station 24/7, supported by day by the Šid Health Centre team.
- WAHA medical team in Dimitrovgrad had up to 30 interventions daily.
- UNFPA distributions of dignity items in cooperation with DRC were ongoing in Preševo as per local needs.
- UNFPA distributed Leaflets on Reproductive Health in crisis areas in cooperation with DRC and other partners present in the field. Leaflets on complications in pregnancy, antenatal and postnatal care, developed jointly with the Ministry of Health, were made available in Serbian, English, Arabic, Farsi and Urdu.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- SC noted lack of coordination among the medical aid providers outside Preševo RC.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre.
World Vision distributed 5,214 food packages and hygiene items (tooth brush, toothpaste, wet wipes and tissues) in Adaševci RAP and Šid train station.

UNICEF-supported mother-and-baby corners, where lactating mothers can continue to breastfeed, receive information on breastfeeding, and access necessary hygiene items, continued to be operational in Preševo and Miratovac (operating 24/7 in partnership with DRC), and in Adaševci (operating 24/7 in partnership with WV). UNICEF supported 1,483 babies and 323 mothers in the three mother-and-baby corners.

WV and SOS Children Villages’ nurses were providing around the clock support to mothers who were breastfeeding or required infant and young child feeding (IYCF) in Adaševci RAP.

In coordination with UNICEF, WV distribution team, Red Cross, REMAR, Philanthropy, Caritas and Save the Children ensured sufficient supplies of supplementary food for young children, including formula milk provided by Philanthropy, at Adaševci RAP.

Nurses were deployed in Adaševci to the UNICEF-supported mother-and-baby corner as of 21 December 2015 and are now operational 24/7.

Philanthropy and Remar continued to deliver food 24/7 in Miratovac RAP.

In cooperation with Red Cross, Philanthropy continued to provide food parcels in Šid for 250 asylum-seekers per day.

SCRM provided water and food to refugees temporarily accommodated in Šid RAP.

Red Cross, CRS/Divac Foundation and EHO distributed food parcels in every bus at Adaševci RAP, while REMAR served soup and tea to asylum-seekers.

Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade, based on the needs. Caritas provided 11,000 food parcels. Caritas was also providing hot soup portions at the RC in Preševo, together with the local organization “Life Aid” from Vranje. 13,200 portions of soup were distributed.

UNHCR, HCIT and EHO distributed 7,930 litres of water, 1,583 kgs of WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and 153 kgs of biscuits in Preševo and Šid.

The Red Cross, UNCHR IP Sigma Plus, Amity, ADRA and the Divac foundation distributed food, water, clothes and blankets at the border with Bulgaria.

Red Cross and Mikšalište distributed food and clothes/shoes to refugees in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NTR

Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR was providing for the rental and maintenance of mobile toilets at Miratovac, Preševo, Šid and Adaševci.
- DRC/UNHCR were in the closing phase of works on two sanitary blocks (containing toilets and showers) and outdoor infrastructure (roofed sidewalks and platforms), aimed at providing dignified sanitary and reception conditions for the asylum seekers at Preševo RC. The NGO Philanthropy participated in the implementation of the WASH component of this project.
- UNICEF’s expert on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene was deployed to assess the situation in Preševo, Miratovac, Šid, Principovac and Adaševci to identify gaps and needs in WASH.
- UNDP continued to rent a garbage truck on behalf of the Preševo municipality from Vranje PUC, which served to keep Miratovac and Preševo litter-free.
- Oxfam/Group 484 provided garbage bins for Preševo RC.
- Operation Mobilization was cleaning the Adaševci RAP bus parking area.
- Caritas/CRS bathroom container with showers, located in Mikšalište in Belgrade, was used to provide refugees a chance of taking a free shower during their travel.
Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees complained about the unhygienic conditions at the Šid RAP across the train station.
- Office for Health protection of Serbian railways reported on unsatisfactory sanitary and hygiene conditions at Šid Railway station.

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR’s implementing partner DRC delivered equipment to the fully rehabilitated accommodation pavilion within the RC Preševo, thanks to the funding of the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the implementation of DRC with the support of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social and Veteran Policy and the SCRM. The premises will enable for dignified accommodation conditions for up 180 asylum-seekers and reception conditions for additional 150 asylum-seekers. DRC immediately commenced the larger scope of works on Phase II which will involve rehabilitation of two other family pavilions (accommodating additional 350 asylum-seekers), a warehouse, a public health unit, laundry room and access to the new entry to the RC compound. The project will significantly increase the capacity of direct response of Serbia to the refugee crisis.
- The winterisation (heating, electrification and furnishing) of temporary structures in RC Preševo, such as Rub halls and 35 refugee housing units was finalised thanks to joint efforts of the UNHCR and DRC technical teams.
- DRC is in preparation/tendering process of rehabilitation of social space within the RAP in Šid.
- UNHCR delivered extra gravel for backfilling (around 80 tons) to Preševo RC, for the RHU area. The flooring in the rub halls was repaired and metal strips on edges for floor security and for separation between benches and inner sheets were put in place. Backfill for the rain water drainage was also put in place.
- UNHCR delivered 120 benches: 70 were placed in Adaševci RAP and 50 were delivered to Šid RAP.
- On 2 January, UNHCR bought 160 l of Euro-Diesel for the heating system in the Rub halls at Šid RAP due to the fact that fuel provided by SCRM had frozen. MSF provided 80 l for the night of January 1 and SCRM asked UNHCR to step in and deliver additional quantities for the following two days.
- SOS Children Villages Serbia donated 5,000 EUR to Šid Municipality for repairing the roof of the hotel Adaševci RAP. On 25 December, SOS donated a car to the Center for Social Work in Preševo, for support to refugees, especially families with small and sick children and UASCs.
- UNHCR distributed 8 wheelchairs and 3 sets of crutches in Preševo and Šid.
- UNHCR and partners DRC and HCIT distributed 1,429 blankets, 1,367 jackets, 27 sleeping bags, 774 hygiene gels, 1,400 bags, 639 pairs of socks and 831 pairs of footwear in Preševo and Šid.
- Philanthropy continued to deliver NFIs in Miratovac RAP. Aid was distributed 24/7. 903 persons received assistance. Delivered aid included 1,643 non-food items (diapers, baby wet wipes, winter clothes for children, boots, raincoats, etc.).
- On 2 January, World Vision started operations in Miratovac with distributions of winter items to 915 refugees in the first two days.
- In partnership with Group 484, SC organized the distribution of 1,860 cold food parcels, 1,860 hygiene kits and 4,305 clothing items (gloves, hats, underwear, socks and boots) for children and adults in Šid-Adaševci area.
- UNFPA procured additional sets of underwear as these proved very much needed by the refugees. Additional sets of underwear were delivered in cooperation with the Red Cross.
120 Christmas parcels were donated to refugee children in Preševo on 30 December and 50 packages were donated to the children in Vranje hospital on 31 December by SOS Children Villages Serbia.

Red Cross donated 5m3 of firewood to the Šid RAP.

UNICEF, through its partners DRC, World Vision and HCIT, distributed the following items in Preševo, Adaševci and Šid: 3,395 sets of winter hats, scarves and gloves, 2,912 pairs of winter socks, 301 baby changing mats, 55 baby carriers, 434 baby blankets, 665 pairs of winter shoes/boots, 340 overall outerwear for babies, 1,806 winter jackets, 839 thermal underwear sets for children, 200 thermal cover baby sets, 8 pairs of women's tights, 728 pairs of winter trousers, 30 children raincoats.

Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide hygiene packs for women and babies daily in Preševo, Belgrade and Adaševci. Caritas distributed 2,170 hygiene packs for women and 605 baby hygiene packages. As well as 135 sleeping bags with isomat, 848 fleece jackets, 1028 rain jackets, 2175 winter hats, 3,263 pairs of socks and 1,751 winter shoes for both children and adults in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade.

Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade distributed clothes and hygienic packages.

DRC teams distributed NFIs in three main locations: Adaševci, Preševo/Miratovac and Dimitrovgrad. With the funding from ECHO, DRC provided winterisation items, targeting mainly PWSNs. DRC assisted 217 asylum-seekers in Adaševci, 294 refugees and migrants in Miratovac and 171 asylum-seekers in Dimitrovgrad. DRC distributed 5,214 winterisation items, through DRC/UNICEF CFS. 2,036 women were provided with dignity kits (underwear, hygiene pads, intimate wet wipes, disinfection gel) and 598 women with lamps and whistles.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NTR

Support to local communities

Achievements and Impact

- NTR

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NTR
**Working in partnership**

- The internal coordination mechanism of the UN system in Serbia is the **UN Refugee Theme Group (RTG)**, which meets every Friday under UNHCR chairmanship. RTG coordinates the 4 sectorial working groups (WGs): a) Refugee Protection WG (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Employment Veteran and Social Policy (hereinafter: MoL) & UNHCR), b) the WG on Shelter/NFI/WASH (Co-chaired by Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), MoL & UNHCR), c) WG on Health/Food/Nutrition (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Health & WHO) and d) WG on Local Community Support (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Local Self-Government & UNDP), which meet on a fortnightly basis. RTG meeting took place on 18 December.

- Field coordination group meetings take place every second day in Preševo (chaired by UNHCR) and Šid (chaired by SCRM).

- **Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG)**, co-chaired by the UNHCR and the MoL, currently makes for the key coordination mechanism for agencies/NGOs operational in the country, as well as a source of information for donors/diplomatic missions who also attend its meetings largely as observers. RPWG has over 150 members, and is constantly growing. Under UNHCR lead, RPWG has given rise to three sub-working groups (SWGs) on: a) Information for Refugees, b) Child Protection and c) Non-Food Items (NFIs). The RPWG last met on 17 December in Belgrade.

- **A Partners’ Briefing** where the UNHCR, UNRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & MoL/Chair of Government WG on Mixed Migration update the diplomatic corps/donors and NGOs on the current refugee situation and the response of the UN agencies in the previous period, took place on 9 November. Partners Briefing takes place every first week of the month and the last meeting took place on 9 December.

- The **Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO)** hosts **Donor Coordination Meetings** every first week of the month. The last Donor Coordination Meeting took place on 9 November in Belgrade.

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**Contacts:**
Ms. Indira Beganović, Reporting Officer, E-mail: beganovi@unhcr.org, Tel: +381 (0) 63 431 886
Ms. Vera Dragović, Information Management, E-mail: dragovic@unhcr.org, Tel: +381 (0) 63 343 521

**Links:**
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