

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

18-31 January 2016

2016 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-JANUARY)

58,464

Transit registration papers issued

456

Registered intentions to seek asylum in Serbia

35.7%

of registered refugees and migrants were minors

11

Applications for asylum

0

Persons granted refugee status

3

Persons granted subsidiary protection

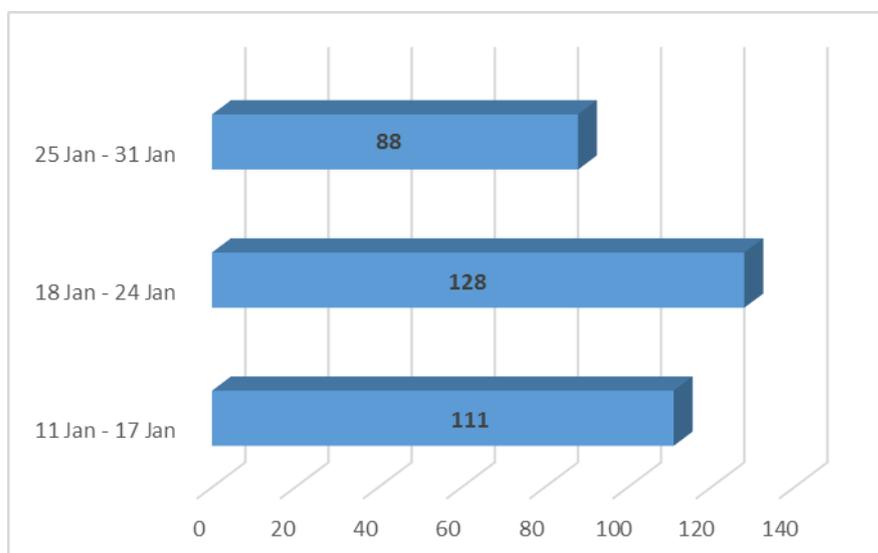
Highlights

- The number of average daily refugee arrivals again decreased slightly to 1,840.
- Especially undocumented refugees/migrants transiting or stranded in Belgrade faced problems with accessing accommodation. An average of 300 were assisted in Belgrade on a daily basis.
- As a result of the practice of screening out of asylum-seekers, dozens of migrants gathered at Šid refugee aid point and other sites. Authorities, UNHCR and partners counselled them on the possibility to seek asylum in Serbia or to apply for assisted voluntary return to their home countries.



Intentions to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia)

216 refugees and migrants registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



PRIORITIES

- Ensure that urgent humanitarian and protection needs of refugees are being met.
- Assist the Government to strengthen the asylum system in line with applicable international standards

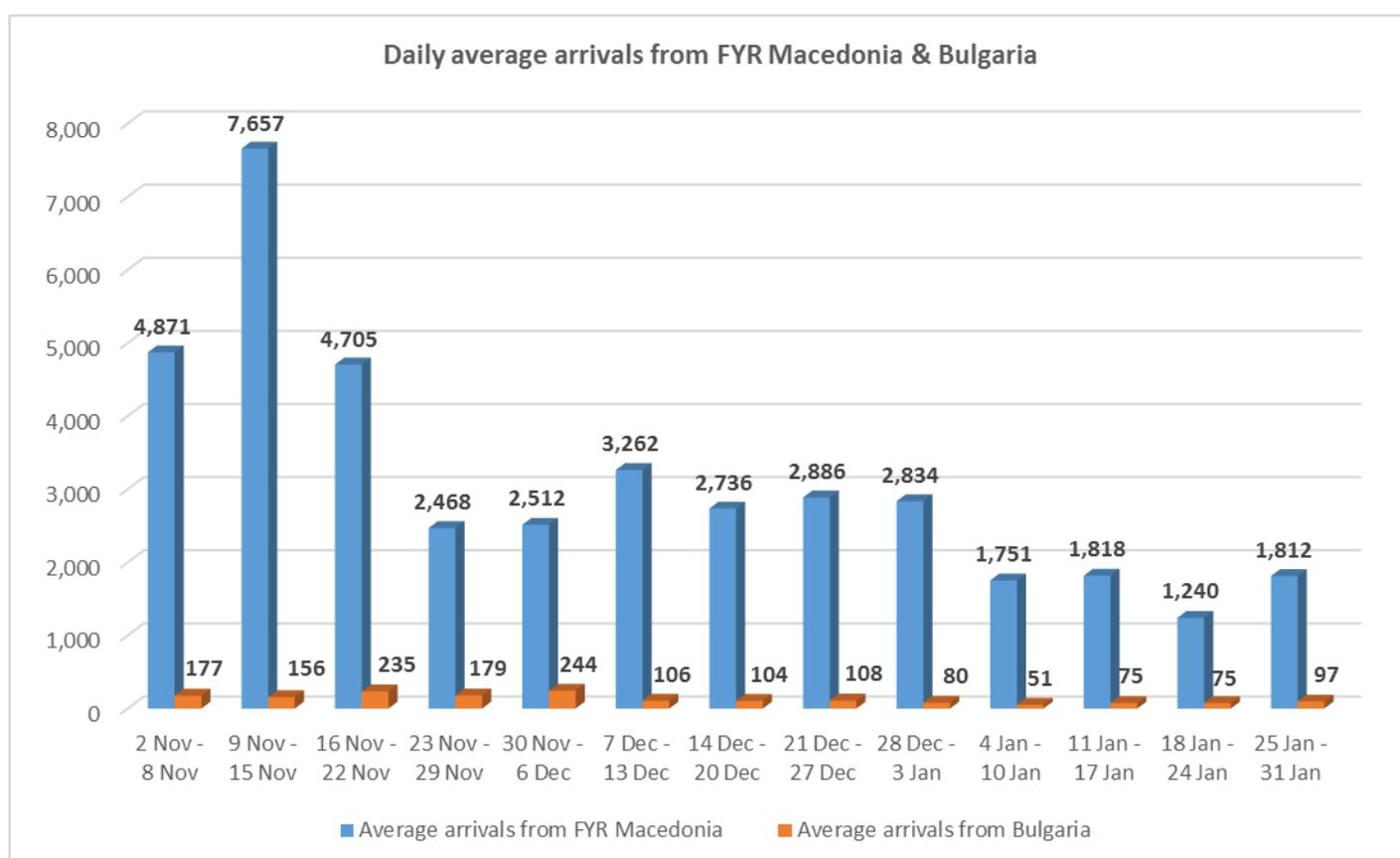
UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

The weather turned warmer and remained dry with temperatures rising up to 15 degrees during daytime, which made the situation in the waiting and transit areas, and especially for the refugees and migrants having to walk 2.5 km on the dirt road (green border) from the FYR Macedonia to Serbia, somewhat better.

In addition to the discriminatory treatment as per the country of origin introduced on 18 November 2015, an additional limitation was introduced on 20 January 2016 where only refugees stating either Germany or Austria as their final destination in the transit papers issued by the Serbian authorities are allowed to continue their journey to/through the EU.

Also on 20 January, the Government of Japan approved additional grant funding in the amount of USD 4.6 million for UNHCR, UNDP, IOM and UNICEF projects to help Serbia deal with the refugee emergency. A total of USD 1.83 million was allocated for UNHCR projects aimed at improving the reception conditions and support to local health centers in the municipalities affected by the refugee crisis and USD 900,000 for IOM projects aimed at improving border management. UNDP will be awarded USD 1.1 million in support to the municipalities affected by the refugee influx and UNICEF is to receive USD 750,000 to assist the refugee women and children.



Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- In Preševo and Šid, UNHCR, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), IOM and Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) continued to assist persons with special needs (PSNs) and reuniting families separated along the way.
- In the Preševo Registration center (RC), IOM mobile team engaged in assisting the work of police in preparatory activities for registration of refugees and migrants (filling in the questionnaires prior to registration), and assisted the asylum-seekers in filling in 22,000 questionnaires.
- Given the threat posed to refugees in transit by smugglers and/or traffickers, and an increase in Belgrade in the number of persons not yet registered, NRC-Praxis started a pilot 24/7 protection project round transport hubs in Belgrade, with capacity to circulate to other arrival or concentration points in Belgrade, as needed. The action aims to provide protection by presence as well as provision of basic humanitarian assistance.
- UNHCR buses continued to transport up to 2,000 refugees and migrants daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre (RC). UNHCR/DRC, IOM, Mercy Corps, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) 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's implementing partner HCIT maintained a 24/7 presence at the Šid train station and Šid refugee aid point (RAP) and provided legal aid and protection information (1,600 asylum-seekers), fast tracking (49 PWSNs) and referrals (242 referrals to medical staff of WAHA and Šid doctors), assistance to Serbian Police in crowd control and assistance to Croatian Police with interpretation during short interviews conducted while checking the paperwork of asylum-seekers. HCIT conducted detailed interviews with 39 asylum-seekers and assisted in 3 cases of family reunification. One PWSN received a wheelchair and one was referred to Šid Health Centre with HCIT interpreter assisting with examination at the Hospital. HCIT interpreters assisted in over 2,300 cases. 1,643 asylum-seekers who



*Presevo - Sifar Shaabu kisses her three year old daughter Nur, while her older daughter, Lin is drawing in the UNICEF-supported child-friendly space,
Photo@UNICEF Serbia/Emil Vas*

were refused entry on board of trains headed to Croatia were counseled about the asylum procedure in RS. HCIT engaged Centre for Social Welfare (CSW) in at least 10 cases when UASCs were identified in Šid.

- Mercy Corps launched Cash Transferring Program (CTP), to be implemented in Preševo over a period of 9 weeks. MC intends to assist around 1,600 beneficiaries - extremely vulnerable families and/or individuals, by distributing pre-credited Master Cards to enable them to continue their trips and in a more dignified manner. The amount of envisaged assistance is 210 EUR per family or 70 EUR per individual. The program is implemented in collaboration with UNHCR and ADRA as referring partners on the ground.
- Mercy Corps' team continued provision of internet connection, information via distribution of updated leaflets in Arabic and Farsi/Dari and translation services at the train station and RC in Preševo. Approximately 21,000 people were reached by Mercy Corps staff in the reporting period.
- Video presentations developed in several languages by Mercy Corps began to be used/run at Šid Grey House RAP on TV screens provided by MC and Divac Foundation. The videos provide relevant information related to migrants' temporary stay in Serbia as well as to continuation of their trip towards Western Europe. Another presentation helps migrants adopt behavioural practices related to personal hygiene, environment protection and interaction with host-country institutions.

- Mercy Corps continued provision of transportation and shelter assistance to PWSNs in Miratovac and Preševo. Over 1,878 PWSNs were transported and additional 1,008 individuals used MC's heated containers as temporary shelter.
- Mercy Corps continued provision of internet coverage, information and translation services at Šid train station and the Grey House. Information leaflets in Arabic and Farsi were being distributed and printed material exhibited at information boards as well. Approximately 8,400 persons were assisted.
- Philanthropy continued distribution of cash cards (worth €40) in Preševo and Zaječar. Cash cards were distributed to vulnerable refugee families in order to satisfy their immediate needs while they are in Serbia. In the reporting period, Philanthropy distributed 2,996 cash cards to 2,078 refugee families (9,471 individuals).
- DRC Mobile Protection Teams continued conducting regular protection monitoring and assistance, in two shifts, covering Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and Šid/Adaševci 24/7. 17,994 asylum-seekers were assisted with information at the three locations, and 5,754 were assisted through immediate response, internal/external referrals and reporting. DRC Protection Officers also conducted 31 comprehensive interviews with the asylum-seekers.
- DRC assisted and followed up cases of UASCs, in cooperation with the Local Social Welfare Centre, HCIT, UNHCR and other relevant national institutions.
- IOM mobile team deployed to support Border police in Miratovac transit entry point assisted approx. 21,450 refugees and migrants upon arrival by providing necessary information and referral towards RC Preševo. IOM mobile team assisted vulnerable families and individuals with transportation assistance from the Miratovac RAP to Preševo. Approx. number of assisted/transported migrants was 6,500, of which around 4,000 were PSNs (children, elderly, disabled, etc.) and around 2,900 were children.
- World Vision (WV) served 2,304 children and mothers in the child-friendly spaces (CFS) and mother and baby corners (MBC) in Adaševci and Šid train station.
- WV assisted with 7 temporary separated minor cases. All 6 children were reunified with their parents in 15 minutes. Three reported cases occurred in Adaševci and four in Šid during preparation for train departure.
- INTERSOS provided phone charging and internet access services at Adaševci RAP 9am-5pm.
- UNICEF organised two trainings on Child Protection in Emergencies and Psychological First Aid on 28 and 29 January, in order to strengthen the capacity of child protection partners operating in Preševo and Miratovac. Some 40 participants attended, including DRC child-friendly spaces' staff, social workers from the Centre for Social Work and UNHCR protection staff.
- UNICEF supported 3,479 children and 1,347 mothers in the period of 18-31 January through the services provided in four child-friendly spaces: in Preševo and Miratovac (operating in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council) and in Adaševci and Šid (operating in partnership with World Vision and SOS Children's Villages).
- SOS Children's Villages Serbia (SOS CV) IT spot in Adaševci RC (charger units and Wi-Fi internet) had 5,640 Wi-Fi connections during the reporting period. Charging stations provided electricity to around 4,000 users.
- SOS CV Wi Fi spot in Šid Train Station provided connection to 5,500 users of the Info web page www.refugeeinfo.eu with information in 4 languages regarding the location/map, registration process, legal rights, transportation, accommodation and shelter, medical aid, other services/support organized at the RC and contacts along the Balkan route (in cooperation with Mercy Corps). Wi Fi spot at the train station in Preševo provided 1,200 connections (in cooperation with Mercy Corps).
- As part of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention activities, UNFPA distributed 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,



Preševo – UNHCR assists a refugee man with a pair of crutches, Photo@UNHCR

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.
- 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.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Migrants who do not apply for asylum in Serbia and/or whose transit registration papers have expired risk being denied accommodation in reception centres, asylum centres and/or refugee aid points. Also, the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Padinska skela is reportedly fully occupied.
- UNICEF and UNHCR discussed the establishment of family reunification points in the transit areas in Miratovac and Preševo, in order to prevent family separations, as part of the Children and Family Protection Support Hub.
- World Vision noted an increase of children with special needs, including children with developmental disabilities, mental and physical impairments attending CFS activities. 14 children with developmental disabilities attended CFS activities in the reporting period.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- Bogovađa asylum centre (AC) was temporarily closed due to lack of asylum-seekers in October 2015, when all the activities were relocated to Krnjača asylum center in the vicinity of Belgrade.
- In Banja Koviljača AC, UNHCR-funded and DRC-implemented sewing workshops and language lessons were taking place, language lessons and activities for refugee children were being provided in Krnjača while no activities were taking place in Bogovađa as it was temporarily closed and all the activities were transferred to Krnjača. The aim of the activities is to improve the asylum-seekers' chances of integrating within the community.

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

- MSF reestablished its presence in Belgrade 7 days a week from 6pm-2am with a mobile team providing primary health care and NFI distribution.
- DRC and UNHCR continued providing medical assistance to refugees in Miratovac and Preševo, through two medical teams, as well as in Belgrade with two medical teams engaged through the local Primary Health Centres. DRC/UNHCR continued to provide medicines through contracted local state pharmacies. DRC Medical Team continued to monitor hospitalised PWSNs in order to provide additional support.
- 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 medicaments and vitamins in the amount of 300 € per month, at the request of the Health Centre Dimitrovgrad.
- UNFPA distributed Leaflets on Reproductive Health in crisis areas in cooperation with local health centers and other partners present in the field. Leaflets on complications in pregnancy, antenatal and postnatal care, developed jointly with the Ministry of Health (MoH), were available in Serbian, English, Arabic, Farsi and Urdu.
- Mobile clinics donated by UNFPA to the Health Centers in Vranje and Šid are operational. First pregnant women received services in UNFPA mobile clinic in Šid. UNFPA and MoH, together with local health centers, were exploring opportunities for hiring additional medical staff for the clinics.
- Regional GBV Coordinator joined UNFPA Office in Serbia to conduct an assessment on GBV-related issues and identify key priorities for UNFPA involvement.
- Caritas was providing medicaments and vitamins in the amount of 300 € per month, at the request of the Health Centre Dimitrovgrad, for the needs of the refugees.
- Local health centre, MSF and Natan were assisting over 200 refugees and migrants in Miratovac and Preševo daily.
- MSF provided medical assistance at their camper in Adaševci to over 200 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 100 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, and was present in Dimitrovgrad RAP 24/7.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Lack of antiepileptic, anti-hepatitis and other drugs in Šid.



Šid – Asylum-seekers waiting to board the train to Croatia, Photo@UNHCR

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade (Krnjača AC and the Red Cross container in the park near the central railway and bus station), based on the needs - 10,000 food parcels were distributed. Caritas was also providing hot soup portions at RC Preševo, together with the local organization “Life Aid” from Vranje. 15,400 portions of soup were distributed.
- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre.
- UNICEF-supported MBSs, where lactating mothers can continue to breastfeed, receive information on breastfeeding, and access necessary hygiene items, continued to be operational in Preševo, Miratovac, Adaševci and Šid 24/7. 1,466 babies and 717 mothers were assisted.

- UNICEF facilitated two infant and young child feeding (IYCF) in emergency sessions for 27 front-line workers on 26 January in Preševo. Participants were from 11 NGOs and partner agencies. The sessions aimed to build the capacity of front-line workers on ways to promote and support breastfeeding and appropriate infant feeding in line with international guidelines on IYCF in emergencies.
- UNICEF facilitated two technical trainings on IYCF in emergencies for nurses working at UNICEF's supported MBSs in Sid and Adaševci. An introductory training on IYCF in emergencies and counselling was held on 23 January, for nine new nurses that will be deployed to the MBS in Sid. A follow up training for seven nurses working at the MBS at Adaševci was held on 24 January. Participants included nurses from World Vision, SOS Children's Village and nurses from the Primary Health Centre in Sid.
- SOS CV Serbia distributed water, food and NFIs (hygiene parcels) in CFSs and MBSs, as well as through mobile teams in Adaševci, Belgrade and Preševo. Mobile team in Preševo distributed 1,842 NFIs and 1,273 food items.
- World Vision distributed 10,707 food packages and hygiene items (tooth brush, tooth paste, wet wipes, dry tissues) in Adaševci and Šid train station.
- Philanthropy and Remar distributed food to refugees and migrants at Miratovac RAP. Philanthropy distributed food items 24/7 according to refugees' needs, without criteria.
- 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.
- UNHCR and partners HCIT, DRC and Asylum Info Center distributed 8,970 litres of water, 1,670 kgs of WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and 29 kgs of biscuits in Preševo, Šid and Belgrade.
- The Red Cross, UNHCR IPs Amity and Sigma Plus, ADRA, Ana and Vlade Divac foundation, Praxis and "I am Human" NGO distributed food, water, clothes and blankets at the border with Bulgaria.
- Red Cross and "Refugee Aid Miksalište" distributed food and clothes/shoes to refugees in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Need for warm meals at entry points for Bulgaria as well as in Belgrade and Šid.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- Regular UNHCR-funded and DRC-monitored WASH activities concerned indoor and outdoor capacities of the Preševo RC compound (sanitary blocks, containers, RHUs, the open area, etc.).
- UNICEF's expert on WASH was deployed to assess the situation in Dimitrovgrad at the Transit Refugee Centre and provided technical advice on the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities at this site.
- UNICEF's expert on WASH continued to assess the situation in Preševo, Miratovac, Šid, Principovac and Adaševci to identify gaps and needs in WASH and provided technical recommendations to SCRM.
- Caritas-CRS bathroom container with showers, located in Miksalište-Belgrade, was used to provide refugees with a chance of taking a free shower during their travel. Because of the relatively cold weather in the reporting period, there were fewer beneficiaries, 171 in total. The container was also used for hand and face washing and shaving, by around 100 asylum-seekers.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Need for more access to warm showers along the refugee route.

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- Rehabilitation works in Phase II of the Tobacco Factory in Preševo, conducted by DRC thanks to Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) funds, were progressing well. Reconstruction works in the newly formed warehouse facility were in the closing phase, enabling safe and purposeful sections for the NFI storage/delivery. Works were ongoing on the newly formed infirmary: plastering, water supply network and heating. Two family pavilions, together with the section for the child friendly corner and mother-child area within the Tobacco company premises, were in closing phase of rehabilitation, soon to be ready for refurbishing. A tender was issued for the provision of washing and drying equipment together with hygiene and disinfection material for the laundry facility.
- 28 containers were placed on top of the ground level containers in Čakanovci, as accommodation premises for the MoI staff, funded by UNHCR. Final installation works were ongoing on binding structures, stairs, ceilings, roofing, as well as connections for electricity and water supply. DRC continued regular monitoring of temporary structures such as RHUs and Rub halls, providing instructions and advice in relation to proper handling of equipment and adequate provision of services.
- DRC was working on the final phase of rehabilitation of premises intended for social activities at Šid RAP (works funded by DANIDA and DFID). The construction works on the prefabricated facility within the transit station in Šid, initiated on 25 January, were given full priority and intensity by DRC.
- Adaptation of 3 accommodation pavilions, funded by EUD, was ongoing at the Asylum Centre Krnjača, under the supervision of DRC technical staff.
- At the request of the Commissariat, NRC -Praxis laid 200 m² of vinyl flooring in the communal areas of Adaševci Motel to increase the useable space, allowing for an increased coordination meeting room. Within the Miksalište humanitarian compound in Belgrade, flooring, heaters and containers for a child friendly space were provided.
- NRC-Praxis in Dimitrovgrad undertook 24/7 distribution of winter clothes to 255, including warm jackets, boots, jumpers, scarves, hats and gloves. The rapid distributions take place after migrants have crossed the Bulgarian border en route to registration within the Police station, once inside the compound while registration is ongoing, and upon their departure for onward travel.
- UNHCR and partners HCIT, DRC, Society for Peace Development and Ecology (SPDE) and Asylum Info Center distributed 1,370 blankets, 2,939 winter jackets, 79 raincoats, 88 sleeping mats, 200 hygiene gels, 921 plastic bags, 730 hygiene packs, 205 plastic sheets/tarpaulins, 2,412 pairs of socks and 3,832 pairs of footwear in Preševo, Šid and Belgrade.
- DRC teams conducted distributions of various NFIs in three main locations: Adaševci, Preševo/Miratovac and Dimitrovgrad. Through ECHO funds, DRC provided winterisation items - mainly clothes for men, women and children, targeting the PWSNs. During the reporting period DRC assisted 1,500 persons in Adaševci, Miratovac and Dimitrovgrad. DRC distributed 6,788 winterisation items through DRC/UNICEF Child Friendly Space.
- CARE/Nexus distributed 98 pairs of boots in Preševo RC.
- Number of refugees assisted in Šid and Dimitrovgrad through NFI distribution and provision of information by Divac Foundation's mobile team funded by Mercy Corps reached 13,010 in the past period.
- WV assisted 7,610 refugees in Miratovac RAP with winterization items.



Adaševci - Fully winterized rub hall equipped with benches and blankets and prepared for new arrivals. Photo@UNHCR

- Philanthropy continued to deliver NFIs in Miratovac RAP. Aid was distributed 24/7. 2,495 non-food items (diapers, baby wet wipes, winter clothes for children, boots, raincoats, etc.) were delivered in this period for 1,073 beneficiaries.
- UNFPA distributed additional sets of underwear in cooperation with the Red Cross.
- UNICEF, through its partners DRC, World Vision and HCIT, reached 2,647 children with winter items (raincoats, sets of winter hat, scarf and gloves, winter jackets, thermal underwear sets, pairs of winter boots, pairs of winter socks, overall outerwear for babies and thermal cover baby sets).
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide hygiene packs for women and babies daily in Preševo, Belgrade and Adaševci. Caritas distributed 1,790 hygiene packs for women and 560 baby hygiene packages. Caritas also distributed 1,058 fleece jackets, 500 rain jackets, 1,790 winter hats, 3,684 pairs of socks and 1,666 winter shoes for children and adults in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Shelter which would welcome refugees and migrants regardless of their registration status was needed in Belgrade.
- Within the Dimitrovgrad Police station, heating is required in the garage space where refugees are temporarily held before registration. NRC Praxis has been discussing with UNHCR the modalities required to provide the equipment.



Support to local communities

Achievements and Impact

- CARE/Nexus continued to provide financial support to the public utility company Moravica for daily garbage collection in Miratovac RAP and twice per week in Miratovac village (the Mosque), for the period up to 30 April 2016.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR

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 met on 22 and 29 January.
- **Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG)**, co-chaired by the UNHCR and the MoL, which last met on 28 January in Belgrade, is the key coordination mechanism for agencies/NGOs operational in the country, as well as a source of information for donors/diplomatic missions who attend its meetings largely as observers. RPWG has over 150 members and meets on a fortnightly basis. 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 Child Protection Sub-Working Group, co-chaired by MoL & UNICEF, last met in Belgrade on 26 January.
- Field coordination meetings take place every week in Preševo (co-chaired by MoL & UNHCR) and Šid (co-chaired by SCRM & UNHCR).
- 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 26 January in Belgrade. Partners' Briefing takes place every first week of the month.

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Links:

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