UN COUNTRY TEAM OPERATIONAL UPDATE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SITUATION



Bosnia and Herzegovina

01 - 31 May 2018

On 15 May, the BiH Council of Ministers discussed and adopted the Emergency Measures Action Plan to address needs vis-à-vis the current refugee and migrant situation at their 142nd session.

The BiH Authorities opened the Refugee Reception Centre in Salakovac for 269 asylum seekers on 18 May. The UN is a key partner working closely with MHRR and MoS.

Despite the high proportion of arrivals expressing intention to seek asylum, the number of asylum application interviews offered and conducted by the Sector for Asylum fell in May.

KEY INDICATORS

5,290

Detected arrivals 1 Jan - 31 May 2018

63 (2 girls, 61 boys)

Unaccompanied and separated children identified 1 Jan - 31 May 2018

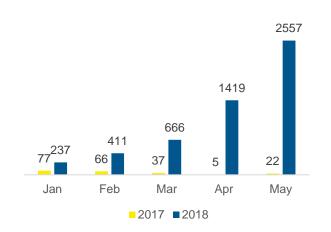
UN agencies assisted 1,840

people with transport, food, NFIs, accommodation, and psychosocial counselling

1 Jan - 31 May 2018

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Number of detected refugee and migrant arrivals to BiH per month



ACCESS TO ASYLUM

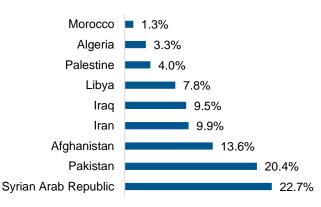
427 Asylum applications

People who have expressed an intention to seek asylum must then wait for the Sector for Asylum to invite them for an asylum registration interview. Those with no registered address cannot schedule an interview.



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Top refugee and migrant CoO* to BiH 2018



*Refugee and migrant country of origin is self-declared when documents are not available.

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Operational Context

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) officially requested assistance from the European Commission vis-à-vis the refugee and migrant situation in the country at the end of May 2018, with reference to the Emergency Measures Action Plan that was discussed and adopted at the 142nd Session of the BiH Council of Ministers.

Refugee and migrant arrivals to BiH increased from 237 in January to 2,557 in May. There have been a total of 5,290 detected arrivals in 2018. While early in the year over 90 percent of arrivals were single men, the proportion has been changing and over 50 percent of arrivals in May were women and children. The majority arrive from Serbia and Montenegro in an irregular manner (i.e. at non-official border crossings). The number in need of assistance at various locations throughout BiH continues to increase with large numbers in Sarajevo, its vicinity, and increasingly in Una-Sana Canton. The latter location is linked to increased attempts to enter Croatia. The UN in BiH is concerned by reports received from police in Velika Kladuša regarding refugees and migrants who allege to have experienced violence and sustained physical injuries during unsuccessful attempts to cross the border due to violent deterrent measures used by Croatian police.

Many refugees and migrants sleep on the streets, in abandoned buildings, and in fields without adequate shelter, sanitation, food, or medical care. Without shelter they also lack the ability to register their residence, a key step to access the asylum procedure. It is now estimated that over 2,000 refugees and migrants are in Una-Sana Canton and the humanitarian situation is acute; local civil society and government actors are struggling to provide food, shelter and assistance. In Bihać, since April, migrants and refugees have found temporary shelter in the former, long-term uninhabited, student dormitory of Borići. In May, in Velika Kladuša, the Municipality allocated a land plot with a water source and mobile toilets on which refugees and migrants can pitch tents and where actors can provide assistance.

The UN in BiH commends and supports the Mayor for great efforts in proactively coordinating a response and engaging local actors. At the same time, the UN in BiH recognizes that more sustainable solutions must be sought in Una-Sana Canton and elsewhere, especially with respect to accommodation, and firmly advocates for a state-managed response, supported by national and international stakeholders.



IOM Sarajevo Mobile Migrant Protection Team assisting a group of migrants/refugees with transportation and temporary accommodation IOM/4 May 2018.

Priorities

- Improve access to fair and efficient asylum procedure by, among other actions, enhancing capacities of Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) Terrain Centres to issue attestations of intention to seek asylum, advocating for the SFA to systematically renew expired attestations of intention to seek asylum, and strengthening the asylum registration capacities of the Sector for Asylum.
- Improve screening and referral mechanisms for refugees and vulnerable migrants in tandem with the systematization of the provision of basic assistance services, including those pertaining to emerging health issues, irrespective of the status of individuals in need.
- Continue advocating with BiH authorities to urgently open additional adequate accommodation facilities.
- Continue supporting BiH authorities at all levels to respond to existing and emerging needs.
- Improve systemic identification, referral, and support services to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).
- Release and promote findings of the MIRA follow-up assessment on the situation of refugee and migrant children, their families, and UASC in BiH.



UNHCR staff profiling refugee and migrants sleeping rough in Una-Sana Canton. Accommodation (registered residence) and free legal aid are key to accessing the asylum procedure and related services.

UNHCR/D.Klasnić/May 2018.

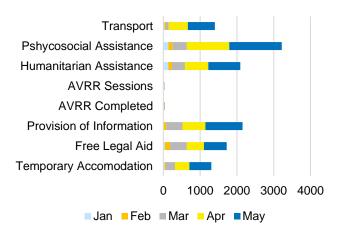
Achievements



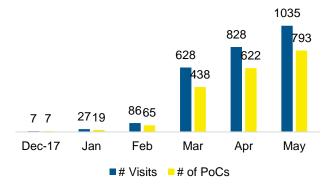
Achievements and Impact

- In May, UNHCR partnerships with Vaša Prava BiH (VP) and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI), ensured basic protection, including temporary accommodation for 304 individuals, transport for 441 individuals, free legal assistance for 617 individuals, psychosocial support on 1,208 occasions, and access to the asylum procedure for 43 people in need of international protection.
- In May, 405 (222 male and 183 female, of which 209 minors) refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations were assisted by IOM Mobile Teams with temporary accommodation, transport, medical assistance. NFIs, food, psychosocial support, and interpretation services across the country (in total, 1,295 services and 211 referrals were made).
- The UNHCR Information Centre continued to coordinate services for asylum seekers including accommodation in the Asylum Centre (AC) in Trnovo, provision of temporary accommodation to particularly vulnerable asylum seekers unable to be

of refugees and migrants and type of assistance provided by UNHCR and IOM



#of asylum seekers assisted and number of visits to UNHCR Info Center



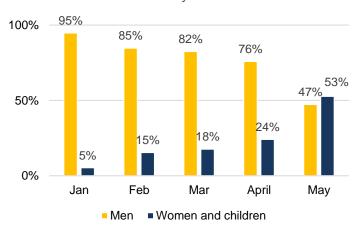
accommodated in the AC or Refugee Reception Centre (RRC) in Salakovac, transportation, and free legal aid. An average of 34 asylum seekers visited the UNHCR Information Centre on a daily basis with peaks of over 100 per day. It should be noted that a population composition shift has occurred, indicated by the increased percentage of women and children visiting the UNHCR Info Centre from 5 to over 50 percent between January and May.

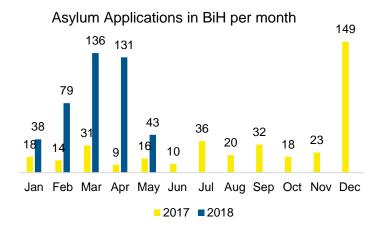
• UNHCR continues to provide its Information Centre in Sarajevo to the Sector for Asylum for the purposes of conducting asylum registration and refugee status determination interviews. In May, of the 43 asylum seeker registrations, conducted by the Ministry of Security (MoS), Sector for Asylum, that took place, 16 were registered in the UNHCR

Info Centre. Additionally, two Refugee Status Determination interviews took place in the Info Centre in May.

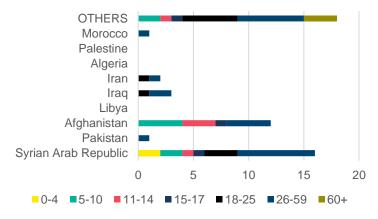
- In May, the UN strengthened its presence in Bihać. UNHCR opened full time presence in Bihać to strengthen capacity for protection monitoring, advocacy, and coordination vis-à-vis asylum seekers and refugees. IOM established a third mobile Migrant Protection and Assistance Team (including protection staff and interpreters) and opened an office in Bihać. Throughout the month of May, the new team supported Bihać authorities in refurbishing and equipping temporary accommodation facilities and assisting migrants and refugees in need of medical care, transportation, and other services.
- On 24 May, upon the signing of a protocol between the MoS and NGO MFS Emmaus, UNCHR extended its support to the MoS in ensuring particularly vulnerable asylum seekers, including UASC, have access to immediate referral for urgent and adequate accommodation and care.
- End of May UNICEF got the approval of the MHRR to establish, in partnership with World Vision, a Child-friendly Space and Mother-Baby Corners related activities in the RCC Salakovac. The CFS is expected to before mid-June. Agreements with other NGO partners, including Save the Children, to establish CFS and

Composition of visitors to the UNHCR Info Centre by month





Age and Country of Origin of female asylum seekers in BiH January-May2018

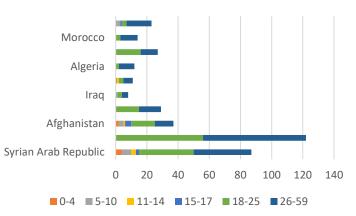


Mother-Baby Corners in Sarajevo and Bihac are underway.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Access to a fair and efficient asylum procedure must be assured. Once individual an expresses intention seek asylum they must then wait for the Sector for Asylum to invite them to registration interview. number of asylum registrations fell from 131 in April to 43 in May. This is despite increased arrivals in May and a high proportion expressing intention to seek asylum. Among other factors, access to the asylum procedure is impeded at various





stages by the limited availability of information, the need for asylum seekers to have a registered address (impossible for those sleeping rough), a lack of asylum registration staff in the Sector for Asylum, and a lack of interpretation. As a result, a growing number of those in need of international protection in BiH have no effective access to the asylum procedure. Of additional concern is the short two-week validity period of the attestation of intention to seek asylum, issued by the SFA, and the difficulty to register with the MoS, Sector for Asylum, within this timeframe: failure to do so may cause many to be considered to be in BiH irregularly.

- A number of refugees without the required documents have requested to be accommodated the RRC in Salakovac, however, their acceptance depends on them acquiring the attestation of intention to seek asylum and approval by the Sector for Asylum. As a consequence, a number of individuals have been refused access.
- In Sarajevo, following the vacation of the park in front of the City Hall, migrants and refugees are dispersed throughout the city, making it more difficult to identify and assist individuals in need.
- Identification and referral of and support to UASC continues to be challenging for the BiH authorities, especially the appointment of legal guardians to UASC authorized to make decisions in their best interest, as required by law. For example, in the RRC in Salakovac, there are several minors who have not yet been appointed a guardian from the Centre for Social Work; temporarily, a psychologist from BWHI has stepped in.
- The high mobility of many of the refugees and migrants in BiH, limits opportunities to identify and respond to vulnerabilities, especially cases of SGBV, abuse and exploitation.
- In Bihać and Velika Kladuša, sites that have been provided, such as the plot of land allocated for refugees and migrants to pitch tents, are not protection sensitive and are at best temporary solutions; an adequate protection sensitive facility in Una-Sana Canton needs to be found urgently.

- A number of individuals, despite having expressed intention to seek asylum, remain detained in the Immigration Centre (IC).
- Child-friendly Spaces should be established in Sarajevo, Bihać and Velika Kladuša to ensure a safe and protective environment for children, where they can play, learn and benefit from psychological support.
- There is an urgent need to provide specialized psychological support to refugee and migrant children and their families as well as UASC. Provision of appropriate treatments is often challenging due to the language barriers and the lack of resources to ensure adequate translation. Most of the families interviewed through a child-focused assessment reported that the frequency of visits by a psychologist was very low, which is insufficient for an effective trauma treatment.



NSTR.

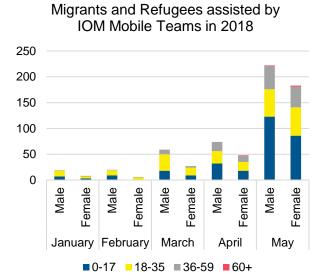
Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Families with school aged children in the RRC have inquired about language classes and education for their children: language courses would help asylum seekers feel more comfortable in day-to-day interactions and promote positive relations with the local community.
- Asylum seekers are entitled to primary and secondary education by law; however, given the remote location of the AC, it would be difficult for school aged children to attend a local school.
- Cooperation agreements are necessary with relevant Ministries of Education vis-à-vis the integration of refugee and migrant children into the regular education system in the new school year.



Achievements and Impact

Primary health care, including pregnancy care, is provided for asylum seekers at the AC (in a medical facility in the municipality of Trnovo) and in the IC for irregular migrants placed there. Upon the opening of the RRC in Salakovac, those relocated there were registered and examined by a doctor over the following days; regular visits of a doctor to the Centre to provide primary health care are yet to be established. Currently, since no agreement has been signed yet between MHRR and the local Health Care Centre, when needed, the Mostar IOM Mobile Team supports with transportation between the RRC and the local Health Care Centre and hospital, as well as by covering the costs of medical examinations and treatment: between 18 and 31 May, five medical cases were taken care of (two from Syria, two from Iran and one from



Afghanistan). Additionally, BHWI offers psychosocial support at the RRC.

- In Bihać, IOM arranged for the local Health Care Centre staff to regularly visit migrants and refugees seeking shelter in the former student dormitory in Borići.
- UNHCR and IOM make referrals and, in some cases, have covered the cost for urgent and lifesaving medical treatment for refugees and migrants in BiH who are located outside of the AC, RRC, and IC. For instance, the IOM doctor based in Trebinje continued assisting migrants and refugees referred by the Border Police and SFA: in May, the doctor provided medical assistance and referrals to 69 migrants and refugees (20 men, 16 women four pregnant, including a mother who had a miscarriage, 20 boys, and 13 girls). IOM Mobile Teams provided additional medical service in 32 cases.
- The UN provided psychosocial support on 1,427 occasions: IOM Mobile Teams provided psychosocial support on 219 occasions; UNHCR's partner, BHWI, provided psychosocial support on 1,208 occasions.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Though asylum seekers residing outside the AC do have a right to primary health care, in practice access is limited. For example, asylum seekers must travel to Trnovo Municipality and must be registered as an asylum seeker. Compounding this issue, the recent MIRA assessment shows that the majority of interviewed asylum seekers are not aware of their rights in terms of health care and medical assistance.
- In the RRC in Salakovac, the system of referral and payment for medical examinations by the nearest Health Care Centre is still not established due to a lack of coordination between the MHRR/MoS and the Cantonal authorities.
- Migrants outside of the IC do not have access to health care except in cases of emergencies and health care assistance is currently provided on an ad-hoc basis by humanitarian and voluntary actors. There is limited access to secondary or tertiary health care, even for those accommodated in the AC, RRC, or IC.

- Hospitals and medical centers in BiH lack clear instructions and protocols on how to treat refugees and migrants with no documentation or awaiting registration with the Sector for Asylum. While so far it has been reported that they have accepted most medical cases, the increasing demand for health services has led to some cases where individuals with no documents or outside the asylum or immigration systems have been refused treatment unless payments were guaranteed by an international organization.
- BHWI and IOM mobile teams share reports of migrants and refugees arriving from the Serbian and Montenegrin borders with rashes, injuries, poor hygiene conditions (especially babies and children), and other medical and mental health conditions, including signs of severe PTSD, severe medical issues, and disabilities. Relatedly, the number of families, children and older persons en route is growing, increasing the proportion of those in need of health care and medical treatment.
- In Bihać, the local medical centre reported they have almost exhausted their supplies and may not be able to continue providing assistance in the former student dormitory in Borići.
- In Velika Kladuša, the newly allocated land plot where migrants and refugees can pitch tents has bad hygiene and sanitation conditions, leading to skin infections, lice, etc.
- The high mobility of many of the refugees and migrants in BiH, hinders humanitarian actors' efforts to treat medical conditions and injuries.



- For asylum seekers accommodated in the AC, food is provided by the MoS in accordance with recommendations made by a nutritionist at the Sarajevo Federal Institute for Public Health. Food is also provided for irregular migrants placed in the Immigration Centre.
- In coordination with the UN, and since arrival of asylum seekers to the RRC, the local Red Cross has been providing three meals daily. BHWI initially provided ad hoc intervention with food.
- Local authorities in Bihać, upon the initiative of the Mayor, and in collaboration with the Red Cross and IOM, provide meals to refugees and migrants.
- The UN and its partners provide hot meals to a number of asylum seekers and migrants living outside of the AC, RRC, or IC: for example, in May, IOM Mobile Teams provided 58 individuals with meals. Further, vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants accommodated by the UN in hostels and hotels receive one hot meal per day.
- In Velika Kladuša, IOM supported local volunteers to prepare and distribute up to 600 meals per day.
- The UN is aware of a range of civil society actors and volunteer groups that regularly provide food to refugees and migrants in need in various locations throughout the

country. For example, food distributions take place on a regular basis at the train station in Sarajevo.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- With the increased number of people in need, in tandem with the extended duration of their stay, a number of actors offering food are running out of resources and there is a risk that these services will be discontinued. For example, the Una-Sana Red Cross reported that their resources are ending, and they will soon not be able to continue providing food to such high numbers of persons.
- Despite commendable efforts from CSOs and volunteers engaged in the field, provision of one meal per day is insufficient to meet the food and nutritional needs of refugees and migrantsm, especially those considered as vulnerable (infants and young children, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons). To overcome the limited resources and improve food safety and quality control, more systematic approaches should be examined, e.g. establishing collaboration with local food providers.



Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to support the MoS, Sector for Asylum, through the engagement of a full-time staff member dedicated to monitoring and improving the hygiene situation at the AC.
- IOM installed and is covering maintenance costs for 10 mobile toilets and two sanitary containers with showers, granting access to sanitation to up to 500 migrants and refugees hosted in the former student dormitory of Borići (Bihać). The site was also equipped with washing machines and dryers. IOM arranged that regular disinfection of building, toilets and showering containers will be managed by the local Health Care Centre. Due to increased number of migrants and refugees in Bihać, IOM will procure additional toilets and sanitary containers in the upcoming period.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Water and sanitation needs are growing in various locations. For example, UN presence in Velika Kladuša reports that the mobile toilets that have been installed on the plot of land where refugees and migrants can pitch tents are not emptied and cleaned frequently enough. As a result, it has been observed that they are no longer being used.



Achievements and Impact

 Following UNCT advocacy, the BiH Authorities opened the RRC in Salakovac to asylum seekers on 18 May and transferred a group of 269 asylum seekers who had been living informally in a park in Sarajevo. In the first days of operation of the Centre, UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF stepped in to cover some of the gaps due to a lack of resources by the MoS/MHRR and Cantonal institutions (room preparation, provision of bedding material, procurement of furniture, cleaning, security services, transportation to the local Health Care Centre, payment of medical examinations, toys for children, etc.). In particular, UNICEF procured and delivered 50 mattresses, 60 tables and 300 chairs, 1,300 bed sheets, 500 pillows, and various toys to the RRC for use by asylum seekers.

- The Red Cross and BHWI are present at the RRC on a daily basis and provide NFIs. For example, in coordination with the UN, the local Red Cross has distributed hygiene items and blankets to asylum seekers in the RRC.
- The AC, in Trnovo Municipality, continues to work at close to full capacity with available spaces fluctuating on a daily basis. On occasion, asylum seekers refuse to be accommodated there, among other factors, because of the lack of internet access and the remote location of the AC and lack of transportation options.
- IOM supported Bihać authorities to refurbish; connect to the electricity grid and water system; disinfect, clean and equip with garbage containers; and furnish with sleeping material the first floor of the former student dormitory of Borići which can shelter up to 100 people. Refurbishment of the second floor is on-going.
- In Velika Kladuša, IOM provided 10 tents and 100 sleeping bags to refugees and migrants.
- UNHCR and IOM continued provision of temporary accommodation for particularly vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants, as have civil society, volunteer groups, and individuals: in May IOM provided temporary accommodation in hostels and hotels for a total of 256 individuals through its Direct Assistance Fund; UNHCR, through its partner BHWI, provided 304 particularly vulnerable asylum seekers with temporary accommodation in hostels and hotels.
- In May, IOM Mobile Teams distributed NFIs to 64 individuals. UNHCR's partner, BHWI, distributed NFIs in 234 individuals.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- An increased number of refugees and migrants, including families with children, are sleeping in the streets, parks, and abandoned buildings, especially in Sarajevo and in western BiH. The limited capacity of the AC and RRC, together with the lack of temporary accommodation solutions in hotspots, remains a challenge. The accommodation capacity gap is likely to widen as more people arrive to the country and potentially face prolonged stays.
- In Velika Kladuša, the conditions on the allocated plot of land where migrants and refugees can pitch tents are in adequate: there are no staff in charge of management nor security personnel, hygiene conditions are poor, and access to running water is still lacking. Furthermore, many persons still seek shelter abandoned buildings in the city.
- The newly opened RRC in Salakovac is scaling-up and urgent needs include interpreters, transportation, waste management and some supplies such as baby food and detergents. Further, the organization of rooms to separate families and children from adult males is still not complete.

- As of the end of May, only 102 of the 269 migrants and refugees relocated from the park in Sarajevo to the RRC were still there and the Centre was still not receiving new referrals; this is planned for the first week of June. Most either returned to Sarajevo or moved on. There have been reports of smugglers and private cars collecting individuals from in front of the RRC.
- More options are needed for the safe accommodation for persons with specific needs including LGBTI, UASC, single women, and families with children.
- Transportation between Sarajevo and the AC is limited and inhibits the freedom of movement of asylum seekers residing there; this in turn can have a negative influence on the willingness of asylum seekers to be accommodated there.
- There is a need to develop child safeguarding policies and provide related training to staff in the AC and RRC.



IOM continued to offer AVRR counseling to migrants. In May, IOM assisted six people to return to their countries of origin.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

• IOM continues to work on establishment of faster and simpler procedures of obtaining travel documents for those migrants expressing the wish to return to their home countries by raising awareness on AVRR among consular representatives of main countries of origin.



Achievements and Impact

■ IOM Mobile Teams and BHWI continue to provide transportation for migrants and refugees in vulnerable situations (families, minors, pregnant women, individuals with medical conditions, etc.) to and from the SFA, health care facilities, and the AC, and RRC, based on identified needs and in coordination with the SFA, the Border Police, the AC, RRC, and UNHCR.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Lack of transportation still hampers migrants and asylum seekers' capacity to access services and get medical care, register for asylum, etc.



• In May 2018 alone, more than 2,000 media articles and features on the migrant and refugee situation in BiH were released, 10 times more than in the previous month. Of these, more than 120 of articles referred to UN agencies or carried the messages and positions of the UN Country Team in BiH.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

An increase in negative reporting in the media on the migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the BiH was recorded in May. As migrants and asylum seekers became more visible in parks and in the streets, much media reporting has been uninformed and xenophobic and falls short of the professional and ethical standards of journalism which oblige journalists and editors to objectively, comprehensively, uniformly, and humanely report on migrants and asylum seekers.

Working in partnership

- The United Nations Country Team is working together to jointly assess and respond to identified and emerging needs.
- Since the opening of the RRC to asylum seekers, UNHCR, IOM, and UNHCR's implementing partners, Vaša Prava BiH and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative, maintain a daily presence there, assisting the staff with various humanitarian activities and monitoring the situation. UNICEF have also been engaged at the RRC in a number of areas.
- In May, UNICEF, Save the Children, IFS-Emmaus, World Vision, SOS Kinderdorf, with support of IOM, UNHCR and the UNRCO conducted a series of field visits including primary data collection for a follow-up assessment to the MIRA, including primary data collection in Bihać, Velika Kladuša, Sarajevo, and the RRC in Salakovac. The follow-up focuses on refugee and migrant children, including UASC and aims to assess the scale of needs and health, nutrition, and protection needs as well as the priorities for the required response.
- A total of 3453 accompanied children and/or their caregivers and 29 UASC were interviewed. The assessment will be finalized on 8th of June and identify needs and protection concerns that should be addressed.
- On 23 and 24 May, UNHCR and IOM together participated in the 4th Annual Conference on the State of Human Rights and Freedoms in BiH. The Joint Committee for Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to BiH, organized the conference. The respect of the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees was one of the main topics discussed and emphasis was placed on respecting domestic and international standards of human rights protection.

- In the light of the continuous increases of refugee/migrant arrivals to BiH and a wide range of response needs emerging, the UNCT, in collaboration with the MoS and MHRR, hosted an information-sharing session with the representatives of international community on 25 May. The key aim was to jointly reflect on the current situation and the priority needs identified in the Emergency Measures Action Plan as well as the MIRA findings and recommendations. The meeting gathered a large number of embassies and international actors and opened opportunities for a coordinated information-exchange on the situation developments and identified needs.
- In May, the UNCT published and widely disseminated the findings of the Multi-sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) on the refugee and migrant situation in BiH. UNHCR prepares these monthly updates on behalf of the UNCT in BiH. The updates are published on the UN BiH web page.

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LINKS

UNHCR Data Portal: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean

IOM: http://migration.iom.int/europe/

Media guidelines: https://bih.iom.int/pbn/reporting-migration-and-refugees-brochure

Asylum Information Brochure: https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/information_for_as_in_bih

MIRA Report:

 $http://ba.one.un.org/content/dam/unct/bih/PDFs/MIRAreport/UNCT_BiH_MIRA_Full\%20 report_May 2018.pdf: \\$