

# Aegean Islands

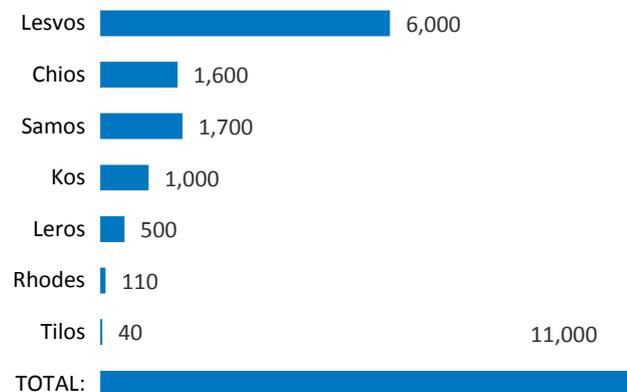
**Women and children were at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence** amid poor security in the reception centers. UNHCR urged action with specific measures.

**Overcrowding eased on Lesbos and Chios** with lower arrivals and continued transfers, but in Vathy reception center on **Samos crowded and unhygienic conditions** further deteriorated.

UNHCR supported the Greek Government to **transfer 847 vulnerable asylum-seekers and 243 unaccompanied children** to improved mainland accommodation.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Host Islands

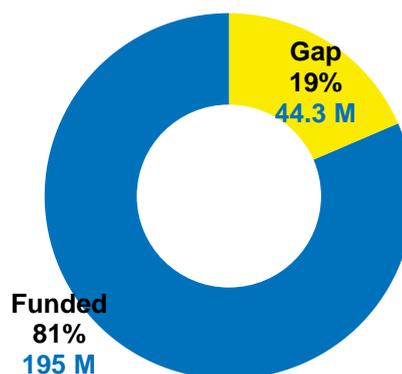


\* UNHCR Greece estimate as of 28 February 2018 of those who remained on the Aegean islands since the 2015-2016 mass flow.

## FUNDING (AS OF 7 MARCH 2018)

# USD 239.3 M

requested for the Greece operation



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

57 National Staff  
7 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens  
1 Sub Office on Lesbos  
3 Field Offices on Chios, Samos, Kos  
2 Field Units on Leros and Rhodes



A girl at Vathy reception centre on the island of Samos, Greece.

# Working with Partners

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who coordinates the refugee response. The Office works with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, regional and state institutions, community-based organisations, refugees, and host communities through sectoral working groups on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#), [Samos](#), [Kos](#) and [Leros](#).

## Main Activities

### Protection

- UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, asylum procedures and offers legal counselling and representation to asylum-seekers directly and through partners. UNHCR identifies and refers people with specific needs to responsible authorities and service providers for targeted assistance.
- Sea arrivals continued mainly to [Lesvos](#) and [Samos](#), but decreased this month to 1,250 people. The majority came from Syria and Iraq, and 60% were women and children.

### Sexual and Gender Based Violence

- UNHCR works to identify people at risk and SGBV survivors, provides legal information and refers them to appropriate services where they can receive specialized support.
- Sexual harassment and violence in the reception centres, including against men, continued to be a major risk, particularly in Moria on [Lesvos](#) and Vathy on [Samos](#).
- UNHCR – with NGO A21 and the Hellenic Police – organized a two-day training addressed to over 100 participants from the authorities and humanitarian organizations on identification of victims of trafficking and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

### Child Protection

- UNHCR supports the identification of children at risk and assists in building the expertise of national and local actors. UNHCR coordinates with humanitarian actors and stakeholders to enhance the protection of children through legal aid, psychosocial support and case management.
- Living conditions for unaccompanied children remained alarming, particularly on [Samos](#). This month, UNHCR supported the authorities in transferring 243 unaccompanied children from the reception centres to temporary facilities on the mainland until their referral to appropriate shelters.

### Education

- UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available as access to education, especially for children over 15 years old is limited. UNHCR through partners runs recreational spaces to

ensure that the development and well-being of refugee children and youth is supported in a conducive learning environment.

- In collaboration with the University of Aegean on [Lesvos](#), UNHCR facilitates classes in 12 European languages for adult and child asylum-seekers through the European Commission's online learning programme.

### Health

- UNHCR offers primary health services to the residents of Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).
- Vulnerability assessment – which is an integral aspect of the asylum process – and the provision of medical services continued to be limited due to the low number of national service staff under the Ministry of Health in the reception centres and hospitals on the islands; in particular, doctors and cultural mediators.

### Food Security

- UNHCR provides food for the specific needs of the population in Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).

### Shelter, Water and Sanitation

- Despite continuous efforts to transfer asylum-seekers authorised to continue their asylum applications in the mainland, access to warm and safe shelter with adequate sanitation facilities, water and electricity continued to be limited for thousands of people on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#) and [Samos](#).
- Hygiene and sanitation improved at the Moria Reception and Identification Centre on [Lesvos](#) with the deployment of additional staff and the mobilization of the refugee community. However, the site remained overcrowded with some 3,800 people staying in the reception centre, the adjacent Olive Grove and a nearby land field.
- Conditions continued to deteriorate for some 1,400 people in the Vathy RIC on [Samos](#). Some 700 people, including vulnerable, women and children, live in tents or makeshift shelters exposed to cold and unsafe situations.
- On [Chios](#), UNHCR concluded its technical intervention for the improvement of accommodation and sanitation in the expanded area. The number of people hosted in makeshift shelter significantly reduced this month with 60 remaining in tents.
- While quality reception conditions prevail on [Leros](#), the centre on Kos is operating at capacity as a result of recent arrivals. On [Rhodes](#), more than a dozen people, including children continued to stay in a derelict building.

### Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities, convenes regular community discussions on the islands. These platforms serve as a channel of communication amongst asylum-seekers, humanitarian actors and authorities where issues such as hygiene and childcare are discussed.
- UNHCR provides leaflets in different languages about the asylum procedures and access to key services.
- Some 80 lexicons in 6 languages and five children's books were donated to the lending library of [Samos](#) volunteers' educational centre.

### Support to local community

- UNHCR organizes events and implements projects that bring closer the refugee and local population and help build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.
- As part of efforts to increase livelihood opportunities for asylum-seekers and refugees, UNHCR on [Leros](#) donated sewing machines to the PIKPA accommodation facility managed by RIS.

### Accommodation and Cash assistance

- Cash assistance and accommodation help provide people with a sense of normalcy and contribute directly to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods, and the renting of apartments.
- In February, 1,140 people were accommodated by UNHCR in apartments on the islands and an additional 400 in hotels on [Lesvos](#) and [Chios](#) under a temporary emergency scheme for the winter.
- UNHCR works with the Government, local authorities and NGOs to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees through the ECHO-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation ([ESTIA](#)).

### Logistics

- In February, UNHCR assisted the transfer of 847 asylum-seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and Government-run sites on the mainland. Since June 2016, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of 24,000 such transfers which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands.
- UNHCR offers local transportation from remote sites to key facilities and the Regional Asylum Offices on the islands in order to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the asylum procedure and the necessary services.

### Partners

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: [International Rescue Committee](#), [Mercy Corps](#), [Doctors of the World](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Metadrasi](#), [Arsis](#), [Praksis](#) and [Iliaktida](#).

## Donors

### Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds

Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Private Donors Spain (13 M) | Italy (11 M)

### Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds

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**Thanks to the donors for the Greece Operation**

European Union (195 M)

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**LINKS**

[Mediterranean Situation - UNHCR Greece - Twitter - Facebook - 'Face Forward... into my Home' Exhibition](#)