



### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) OPERATIONAL UPDATE REFUGEE/MIGRANT SITUATION

March 2018

### HIGHLIGHTS

- On 30 March 2018, UNHCR hosted a multi-stakeholder coordination meeting. State-level authorities (Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA), Ministry of Security (MoS), Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR)), United Nations Country Team (UNCT) members, the National Red Cross, and various local and international NGOs (Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI), Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, MFS-Emmaus, HELP, Oxfam, Refugee Aid Serbia, Vaša Prava, and World Vision International) attended.
- On 27-28 March 2018, UNHCR launched a Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) in the wider Sarajevo area. The MIRA was initiated by the UNCT Resident Coordinator and participation was open to interested parties. It will be continued in further locations and a final report and recommendations issued.



Refugees resting in Velika Kladuša. UNHCR/D.Klasnic

### KEY FIGURES FOR 2018

**1,138** (1 Jan – 31 March)

detected arrivals to BiH

**21** (0 girls, 21 boys)

unaccompanied minors identified

**624**

people assisted with transport, food, NFI and psychosocial counselling

**253** (32 females, 221 males)

Asylum applications

**521**

people assisted at the UNHCR Information Center

**640**

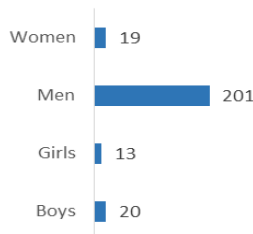
people provided with legal counselling

### PRIORITIES

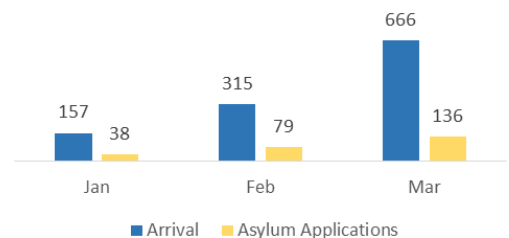
- Continue supporting BiH authorities at all levels respond to existing and emerging needs.
- Continue with the MIRA in additional locations and issue final report.
- Improve referral mechanism for accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Improve referral mechanism for UASC to ensure guardianship.
- Urgently open additional accommodation spaces for asylum seekers.
- Establish more systematic support for refugees and migrants residing in areas outside of Sarajevo.

### Population of concern: 666 arrivals in the month of March

Asylum Seekers Age-Gender Breakdown Jan-Mar 2018



Refugee and Migrant Arrival to BiH and Number of Asylum Applications\* in 2018



\*Asylum applications can only be submitted during a scheduled appointment with the Sector for Asylum. In order to obtain this appointment, a person must either be residing in the Asylum Centre, or have a valid attestation of "intention to seek asylum" and a "white card" proving registered residence, both issued by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs. See needs/gaps under Protection Achievements below.

# UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

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## Operational Context

The number of new arrivals has more or less doubled each month in 2018 and the overall number of refugees and migrants in need of assistance at locations throughout the country continues to increase. Most cross the border in an irregular manner (i.e. at non-official border crossing points), with most arrivals coming from Montenegro and Serbia. Currently, the majority of refugees and migrants in the country reside in Sarajevo or its vicinity. At the same time, there is an ongoing accumulation of refugees and migrants at potential exit points along the Croatian border. This accumulation is particularly visible in Velika Kladaša and Bihać; based on a recent fact-finding and stakeholder-mapping mission, UNHCR estimates the number of asylum seekers and refugees in this area to be between 250 and 300. UNHCR and partners continue to monitor the situation.

UNHCR supports MoS and MHRR, with respect, inter alia, to their role in accommodating asylum seekers and refugees by contributing to the operational costs of running the Asylum Centre in Trnovo municipality (managed by MoS) and the Refugee Reception Centre in Salakovac, near Mostar (managed by MHRR). The Asylum Centre, with a 154 person capacity, has been at capacity or close to capacity throughout March; it is comprised of three buildings, one of which is reserved exclusively for families and single women and children, meaning de facto capacity is at times reduced by up to a third. The Refugee Reception Centre, is not currently being used to accommodate asylum seekers; it was recently refurbished with the support of UNHCR and could be used to accommodate up to 120 additional asylum seekers. Accommodation is also currently provided by a number of civil society actors and volunteer groups, helping to meet rapidly growing demand. UNHCR, in partnership with Vaša Prava and BHWI, along with their networks of offices throughout the country, also provides a range of assistance, such as free legal aid and psychosocial counselling, to asylum seekers and refugees in BiH.

IOM, the UN Migration Agency, through its Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism, also supports the Government of BiH to address urgent accommodation and humanitarian needs. IOM maintains Mobile Teams which offer assistance to those in need in various locations across the country and make referrals to Vaša Prava and UNHCR. An IOM-supported doctor, based in Trebinje, provides medical assistance and makes referrals for additional medical services where relevant.

BiH has a [Migration Coordination Body](#) led by the Ministry of Security. This body has the authority to make recommendations to the Council of Ministers.

## Achievements

### Protection

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#### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR strengthened the capacity of the Sector for Asylum, Vaša Prava, and BHWI with additional staff, including lawyers, social workers, and interpreters.
- There have been visible results in terms of improved access to the asylum procedure: the Sector for Asylum has started to conduct asylum registration and refugee status determination interviews in the UNHCR Info Centre in Sarajevo, in addition to in the Asylum Centre in Trnovo. As a result, processing times have been shortened and 136 individuals were registered in March, a 72% increase compared to February.
- The UNHCR Info Centre has continued to be of major importance to asylum seekers and refugees in Sarajevo for coordinating the provision of accommodation, transport, free legal aid and other types of assistance - an average of 29 asylum seekers and refugees were assisted per work day with peaks of up to 65 per day.
- In March, UNHCR partnerships with Vaša Prava and BHWI ensured basic protection, including legal assistance for 456 individuals, psychosocial support for 215 individuals, and access to the asylum procedure for 136 persons in need of international protection.
- In March, IOM Mobile Teams assisted 86 people (41 men, 18 women, 18 boys, 9 girls) with transportation and secondary screening of vulnerabilities and addressed identified needs. IOM continued to refer identified asylum

seekers to UNHCR, Vaša Prava, and BHWI, as relevant. Sixteen additional people were assisted with accommodation or urgent medical assistance through the IOM Emergency Direct Assistance Fund in March. During this period, IOM continued to support the Red Cross of the City of Trebinje to work with the Border Police to address the urgent basic needs of migrants arriving at the border. IOM mobile teams continue to identify and assist those in need of medical assistance as a result of harsh weather conditions, prolonged travel duration, and the effects of a prolonged lack of proper accommodation and regular meals.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Many asylum seekers face obstacles accessing the asylum procedure. Asylum seekers who are not accommodated in the Asylum Center must register an address with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, before the expiry of their attestation (14 days) in order to obtain an appointment to submit their application with the Sector for Asylum. Many people have been unable to register their address on time, and remain in BiH irregularly, with expired attestations and without access to the asylum procedure. UNHCR and Vaša Prava have been working with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs to find ways to reduce requirements for registration of address (obligations on the part of the property owner), and by the end of March, the SFA changed its procedure, and it should now be easier for new arrivals. The current priority is ensuring that all persons who fell out of status while the asylum centre was full, are given the possibility to regularize their legal status in BiH and access the asylum procedure.
- Currently, organized support exists primarily in Sarajevo, provided by NGOs, the UN, and civil society. However, outside Sarajevo, response and assistance is more ad hoc. A systematic approach for providing protection needs to be established in these areas.
- Identification and referral of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) remains a key challenge for BiH authorities. UASC are required by law to have legal guardians appointed who are then authorized to make decisions in their best interest. Proper identification, referral and communication barriers (lack of on available interpreters) can make this challenging in practice. UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF began work with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs in 2017 to improve referral guidelines for vulnerable groups, in particular for unaccompanied and separated children. The current increase in arrivals of vulnerable refugees and migrants highlights the need for these referral guidelines to be urgently finalized and adopted.

## Education

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### Achievements and Impact

- Language courses and other educational activities are organized for adults and children residing in the Asylum Centre. Language courses help asylum seekers feel more comfortable in day-to-day interactions and promote positive relations with the local community.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Families with school aged children have never stayed in the Asylum Centre for more than a few weeks. Given the remote location, it would be difficult for school aged children to attend a local school.

## Health

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### Achievements and Impact

- For individuals accommodated in the Asylum Centre, primary health care is provided by MoS. For persons outside the Asylum Centre, access to health care is more difficult to access. Both UNHCR and IOM are involved in referral, and in some circumstances, have covered the cost for urgent and lifesaving medical treatment for refugees and migrants in BiH.
- The IOM-supported doctor based on Trebinje assisted 15 adults with medical care and referrals for further medical services (cases are referred by the border police and Service for Foreigners' Affairs in Trebinje). The doctor also acted as a medical escort for one case that required transportation from the hospital in Trebinje to the NGO IFS-EMMAUS for specialized accommodation.

## Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is no established systematic provision of secondary and tertiary healthcare, even in the Asylum Centre.
- For persons arriving across the mountains from Montenegro in particular to the Trebinje/Bileca area, the journey in harsh winter conditions poses serious health risk. Support to address urgent medical needs upon arrival is needed. As the seasons progress, dehydration may become an issue.



## Food Security and Nutrition

### Achievements and Impact

- For individuals accommodated in the Asylum Centre, food is provided by the Ministry of Security in accordance with recommendations made by a nutritionist at the Sarajevo Federal Institute for Public Health. UNHCR, through its partner BHWI, provides hot meals to a number of asylum seekers and refugees living outside of the Asylum Centre. Further, a range of civil society actors and volunteer groups regularly provide food to refugees and migrants in need.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- If the number of vulnerable refugees and migrants outside of official reception facilities increases, a more organized approach would be required. This is particularly true outside of Sarajevo in locations such as Velika Kladuša and Bihać where the provision of food is currently dependent on the kindness of local communities. UNHCR is working actively to find ways to improve this and find a more sustainable framework.



## Water and Sanitation

### Achievements and Impact

- Nothing Significant to Report (“NSTR”).

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR.



## Shelter and NFIs

### Achievements and Impact

- The asylum centre in Trnovo municipality accommodated around 120 asylum seekers per day throughout March. The lower than capacity average reflects a level of transience in the population accommodated in the Asylum Centre as well as the fact that one of three buildings on site is reserved exclusively for families and single women and children, at times de facto reducing the maximum capacity of the centre.
- UNHCR and IOM have assisted particularly vulnerable refugees and migrants with temporary accommodation in other locations, as have civil society, volunteer groups, and individuals. For example, UNHCR’s partner BHWI, assisted with 2,005 overnight stays in hostels in March. However, this can be seen only as a temporary solution.
- The MoS has plans to expand the capacity of the Asylum Centre by approximately 60 spaces.
- In order to respond to the current accommodation gap for vulnerable individuals, UNHCR and MoS are in the process of formalizing an agreement with MFS-EMMAUS, in accordance with relevant standards. The agreement is likely to be in place by the end of May.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The limited capacity of the Asylum Centre means alternative accommodation needs to be found for asylum seekers and refugees. This gap is likely to widen as more arrive to the country and potentially face prolonged stays. It should be noted that additional capacity is available yet not being used in the Salakovac Refugee Reception Centre – the utilization of this facility for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees is a priority.
- Admission to the Asylum Centre is based upon referrals from the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs. As the Sector for Asylum holds regular Monday to Friday working hours, admissions can be delayed.

- Currently asylum seekers who depart the Asylum Centre and BiH and are later readmitted from Croatia are unable to go back to the Asylum Centre for accommodation and are left without stable alternatives.
- More options are needed for safe accommodation for persons with specific needs (PWSN) including, inter-alia: LGBTI, UASC, single women and families with children.



## Camp Coordination and Camp Management

### Achievements and Impact

- NSTR.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR.



## Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

### Achievements and Impact

- NSTR.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR.



## Durable Solutions

### Achievements and Impact

- IOM offers counselling on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) to migrants. In March, IOM supported the return and reintegration in the country of origin of 15 migrants. Their countries of origin were Iran, Turkey, Moldova, Pakistan, Morocco and Azerbaijan. Since the beginning of the year IOM have supported the return and reintegration of 30 migrants, of which 1 was a child and 3 were infants.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The main need for migrants who wish to return home is easier provision of their missing travel documents. IOM works on establishment of faster and simpler procedures of obtaining travel documents for those migrants by raising awareness on AVRR among consular representatives of main countries of origin.

## Working in partnership

- The United Nations Country Team is working together to jointly assess, and respond to emerging needs. The response is being led by UNHCR in close cooperation with IOM and UNICEF.

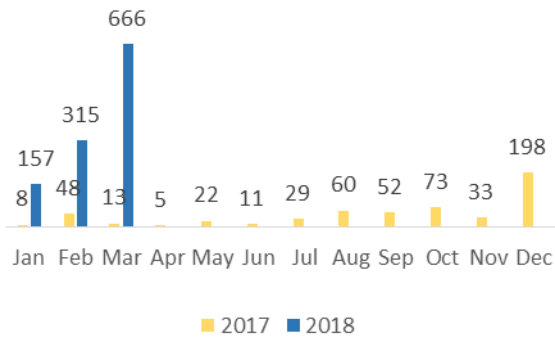
**Contact:** Dorijan Klasnic, Associate Information Management / Public Information Officer, [klasnic@unhcr.org](mailto:klasnic@unhcr.org), Mobile: 061 479 064

#### Useful Links:

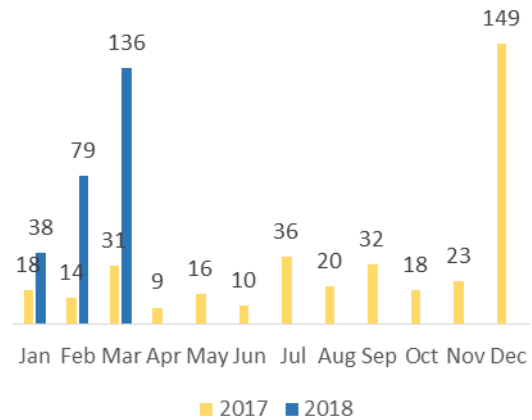
- UNHCR Data Portal please see: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- IOM please see: <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>
- Media guidelines (ENG): [https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/reporting\\_on\\_migration\\_and\\_refugees](https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/reporting_on_migration_and_refugees)
- Media guidelines (B/C/S): [https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/reporting\\_on\\_migration\\_and\\_refugees\\_d8e9722d9e5cdd](https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/reporting_on_migration_and_refugees_d8e9722d9e5cdd)
- Asylum Information Brochure: [https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/information\\_for\\_as\\_in\\_bih](https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/information_for_as_in_bih)

 Statistical Annex

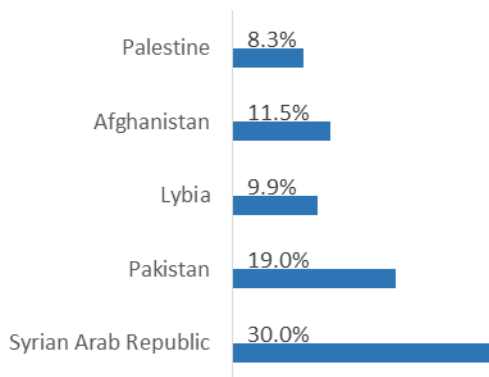
Arrivals - Refugee and Migrant to BiH per month



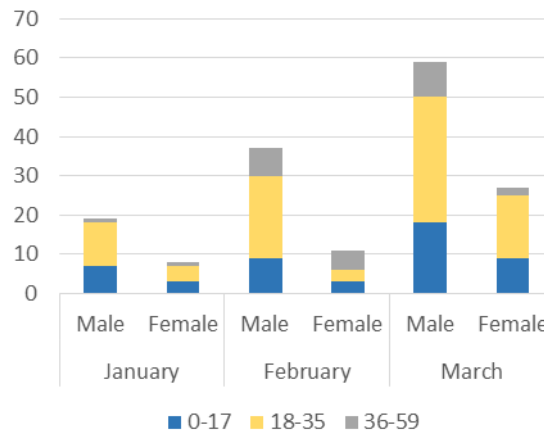
Asylum Applications in BiH per month



Asylum Application - Country of Origin



Number of Migrants and Refugees assisted by IOM Mobile Teams in 2018



Number of Asylum Seekers and Refugees provided with assistance by UNHCR and partners in 2018

