



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

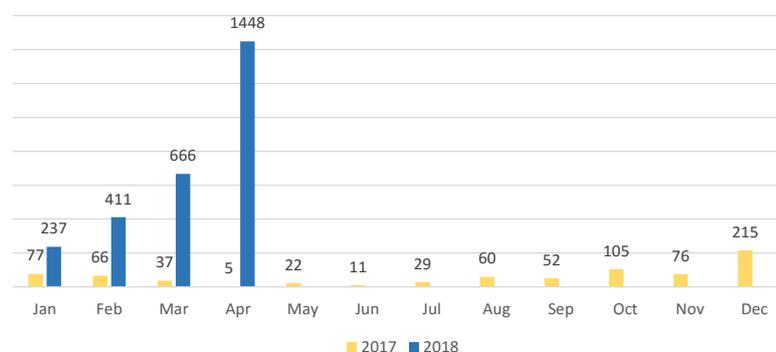
UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) OPERATIONAL UPDATE REFUGEE/MIGRANT SITUATION

End of April 2018

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 18 April, the BiH Council of Ministers (BiH CoM) tasked the Coordination Body for Migration Issues in BiH to act in full capacity, also involving the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH, and undertake immediate actions in enhancing border controls, provision of assistance and accommodation for refugees and migrants in a humane and dignified manner.
- With support of Red Cross and IOM, local authorities in Bihac initiated provision of humanitarian assistance and refurbishing of a former student dormitory as organized accommodation and basic services provision point in the area.
- UN agencies and partners¹ conducted a series of field visits including primary data collection for the pilot Multi-sector/cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) exercise aimed to inform identification of strategic humanitarian priorities for all response actors. In addition, the third iteration of a gathering of stakeholders, inviting State-level authorities, UNCT Members, civil society, and volunteers in order to exchange information was hosted by the UN. Preliminary MIRA recommendations were discussed in the interest of joint validation.
- Population of concern: 1.448 arrivals in the month of April**

Arrivals - Refugee and Migrant to BiH per month



¹ Initiated by the UN Resident Coordinator in BiH, the was piloted in March and April of 2018 involving UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, UNDSS, UNFPA, OSCE, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH (as observers), Refugee Aid Serbia, Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières, Hilfswerk Austria International, Catholic Relief Services, Vaša Prava BiH, Caritas, and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women’s Initiative.

KEY FIGURES FOR 2018

2.762 (1 Jan – 30 April)
detected arrivals

53 (2 girls, 51 boys)
unaccompanied minors identified

UN agencies assisted
1.392
people with transport, food, NFIs
and psychosocial counselling

384 (46 f, 338 m)
Asylum applications

1.151 (109 f, 1.042 m)
people assisted at the UNHCR
Information Center

UN agencies provided
1.104
people with legal counselling

PRIORITIES

- Continue advocating with BiH authorities to urgently open accommodation facilities.
- Continue supporting BiH authorities at all levels respond to existing and emerging needs.
- Promote the findings and recommendations of the MIRA with government and other stakeholders.
- Improve referral mechanism for asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants.
- Systematize provision of basic assistance services and address emerging health issues.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

The number of refugees and migrants in need of assistance at locations throughout BiH continues to increase rapidly. New arrivals have increased from 237 in the month of January to 1.448 in April. The majority of refugees and migrants cross the border in an irregular manner (i.e. at non-official border crossing points), from both Montenegro and Serbia. Currently, most of the refugees and migrants in the country reside in Sarajevo or its vicinity, with an ongoing accumulation in Bihać and Velika Kladuša municipalities due to increasing attempts to enter Croatia.

Despite intervention by UNHCR, IOM and other non-state actors, many asylum seekers and refugees are sleeping on the streets and parks in Sarajevo, Bihać and Velika Kladuša without adequate shelter, food or medical care. There is increasing concern among local communities. UNCT firmly advocates for a state- managed response, supported by national and international stakeholders.



Syrian family interviewed by UN and partners during MIRA in Velika Kladuša PHOTO:UNHCR/D.Klasnic

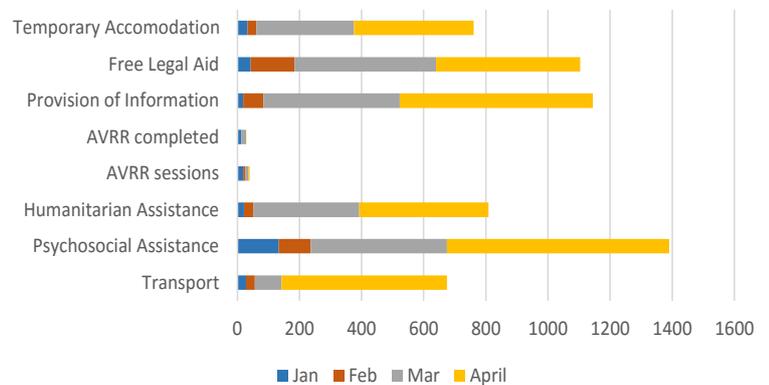
Achievements

Protection

Achievements and Impact

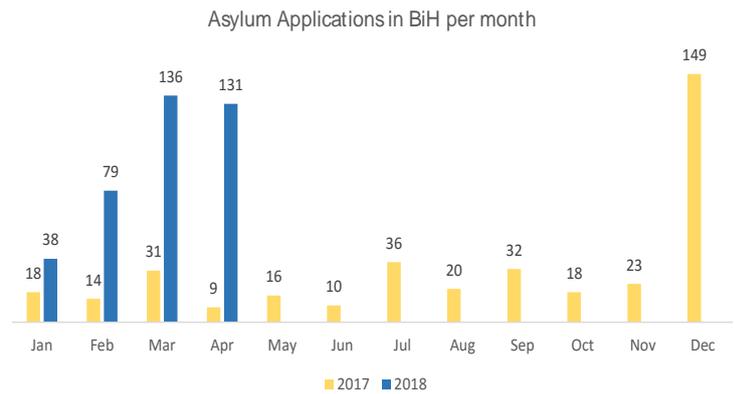
- In April, UNHCR partnerships with VP and BHWI ensured basic protection, including legal assistance for 464 individuals, psychosocial support on 1.031 occasions, and access to the asylum procedure for 131 persons in need of international protection.
- In April, 122 (74 male and 48 female, of which 50 minors) refugees and migrants in vulnerable situation have been assisted by IOM mobile teams with temporary accommodation, transport, medical assistance, NFIs, food, psychosocial support and interpretation services. IOM has also assisted 1 unaccompanied child, who has been accommodated at IFS-EMMAUS safe house.
- The UNHCR Information Centre has continued to coordinate accommodation in the Asylum Centre, ensuring provision of temporary accommodation to particularly vulnerable asylum seekers unable to be accommodated in the Asylum Centre, transportation, free legal aid, and other types of assistance. An average of 38 asylum seekers visited the Information Centre on a daily basis with peaks of up to 80 per day.
- The provision of support by UNHCR's Information Centre in Sarajevo to the Sector for Asylum for the purposes of conducting asylum registration and refugee status determination interviews continued to offer improved access to the asylum procedure: 136 individuals were registered in March and a 131 in April, a 70 percent average increase compared to the time before this service being provided.

Number of Refugees and Migrants and type of assistance provided by UNHCR and IOM, January-April 2018



Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Many asylum seekers continue to face obstacles accessing the asylum system, namely reaching the MoS, Sector for Asylum registration mechanisms within the timeframe envisaged by the Attestation of the Intention to seek asylum issued by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (up-to 14 days). Failure to comply may lead into irregularity of stay in the country.
- The number of interviews for registration of asylum seekers conducted to date is insufficient and is limited by a shortage of staff trained for this purpose within the Sector for Asylum. To that avail, in April UNHCR strengthened the MoS, Sector for Asylum's capacities by supporting the engagement of four more experts and continued its advocacy efforts for increased engagement of trained staff to respond to the current needs.
- Identification, referral of and support to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) continues to be challenging for BiH authorities, especially the appointment of legal guardians authorized to make decisions in UASC's best interest, as required by law.
- Organized support to refugees and migrants exists primarily in Sarajevo, provided by NGOs, the UN, and civil society. However, except in Sarajevo and at an initial phase in Bihać, assistance is provided on an ad-hoc basis and lacks a systematic approach in screening for vulnerabilities and addressing protection needs.
- The reduced period of permanence in a fixed location hampers the possibility to identify vulnerabilities, especially cases of SGBV, abuse and exploitation, as inquiries may cause re-traumatization that cannot be treated or prevented due to premature departure of interested individuals.
- A number of individuals having expressed intention to seek asylum remain detained in the Immigration Centre.



Education

Achievements and Impact

- Language courses and other educational activities are envisaged 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

- To-date, families with school-age children haven't been staying in the Asylum Centre for more than a few weeks. However, given the remote location of the Asylum Centre, it would be difficult for school aged children to attend a local school.

Health

Achievements and Impact

- Primary health care, including pregnancy care, is provided for asylum seekers at the Asylum Centre in Delijaš (in a medical facility in the municipality of Trnovo) and in the Immigration Centre in East Sarajevo for irregular migrants placed there.
- Both 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. For instance, the IOM-supported doctor based on Trebinje assisted 17 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. IOM additionally supported

15 cases with primary and secondary health care (9 male and 6 female) and provided psychosocial support to 122 individuals.

- A team from the Healthcare Centre in Bihać examined all refugees and migrants and took care of their injuries. Moving forward, and in collaboration with the local authorities and Red Cross, an emergency vehicle will visit the recently opened shelter space for refugees and migrants in the former student dormitory in Borići on a daily basis in order to provide medical assistance.
- IOM is in the process of identifying additional capacity to provide psychosocial support in Una-Sana Canton. In Velika Kladuša and Bihać, IOM agreed to procure additionally needed medication, in coordination with Médecins Sans Frontières.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Though asylum seekers residing outside the Asylum Centre do have a right to primary health care, in practice access is limited. For example, asylum seekers must go to Trnovo Municipality and must already 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.
- Migrants outside of the Immigration Centre 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 in the Asylum and Immigration Centers. A systematic approach for screening of medical needs and providing medical treatment and care should be established.
- Hospitals and medical centers lack clear instructions and protocols to treat refugees and migrants with no documentation or awaiting to register with the Asylum Sector. While so far they have accepted most medical instances, the increased demand for health services led to some cases where individuals with no documents or outside the asylum/immigration system have been refused treatment, unless payments were guaranteed by an international organization.
- In Bihać, the local medical center has established two mobile teams to examine refugees and migrants who reside at its territory. This model is advocated for to be replicated in other hotspots.
- The reduced period of permanence of refugees and migrants in a same location hinders humanitarian actors' efforts to treat medical conditions and injuries. This is aggravated by refugees and migrants' perception to be almost arrived to their final destination, pushing them to underestimate or disregard medical and mental health issues.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- For asylum seekers 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. Food is also provided for irregular migrants placed in the Immigration Centre.
- Local authorities in Bihać, upon the initiative of the Mayor, in collaboration with the Red Cross and IOM, have started to provide meals to refugees and migrants. The first meals were provided on 26 April. Relatedly, the Red Crescent UAE delivered a large amount of food packages to the Red Cross of Una-Sana Canton upon the initiative of the Secretary General of the Red Cross of the FBiH.
- UNHCR, through its partner BHWI, provides hot meals to a number of asylum seekers living outside of the Asylum Centre. In April, BHWI provided 373 meals.
- 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, including a local restaurant in Velika Kladuša who provides around 200 hot meals a day.
- In April, 122 individuals have been provided with food by IOM mobile teams. Additionally, IOM's partner, the Red Cross, is offering hot meals and food to migrants and refugees in Trebinje and Bihać.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Provision of food outside the Asylum and Immigration Centres is exclusively secured by volunteers, NGOs and international organizations.

- With the increase of the number of people in need, in some location, volunteers and NGOs offering food are running out of resources.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- In Bihać, IOM installed three mobile toilets and is procuring additional two sanitary containers (with toilet and shower), washing machines and driers for a temporary accommodation facility managed by the City of Bihać in the former student dormitory of Borići. In Velika Kladuša and Bihać, IOM agreed to procure products for disinfection, insect and rodent control to the local medical centers.
- UNHCR assisted in April the MoS, Sector for Asylum to engage a full-time staff member dedicated to monitoring and improving hygiene situation the the Asylum Centre.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Nothing Significant To Report (NSTR).



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- The Asylum Centre in Trnovo municipality continues to work at next-to-full capacity but it has been noted that on occasions of available space, asylum seekers from Sarajevo refused to be accommodated, among other reasons, because of the remoteness of the Centre, the lack of transportation options and lack of access to the Internet.
- UNHCR and IOM increased provision of temporary accommodation for particularly vulnerable refugees and migrants with temporary accommodation in other locations, as have civil society, volunteer groups, and individuals. In April, IOM accommodated an average of 50 persons per day in hostels and hotels. In total, in the month of April, IOM supported accommodation for an additional 122 persons in hotels and hostels while UNHCR, during the period, assisted 180 asylum seekers in hostels.
- In order to respond to the current accommodation gap for extremely vulnerable individuals, UNHCR and the 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.
- The MoS has plans to expand the capacity of the Asylum Centre by approximately 60 spaces with support from IOM.
- Local authorities in Bihać, in collaboration with the Red Cross, and supported by IOM, are in the process of cleaning and renovating a former student dormitory in Borići for the purposes of providing shelter to refugees and migrants. The space has been reconnected to the electricity grid and works on the sewage system are underway. IOM will also purchase mattresses and sleeping bags and procure material for the renovation of flooring and windows.
- Through the Red Cross and in collaboration with the border police, IOM is providing NFIs to vulnerable migrants in need.

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 at accumulation points in Western BiH. Furthermore, the capacity of the Asylum Centre remains a challenge, together with the lack of temporary accommodation solutions in hotspots.
- The accommodation capacity gap is likely to widen as more people 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.
- Asylum seekers who depart the Asylum Centre and BiH and are later readmitted from Croatia continue to be 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 including LGBTI, UASC, single women and families with children.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management & Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- Nothing Significant To Report (NSTR).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Nothing Significant To Report (NSTR).

Durable Solutions

Achievements and Impact

- IOM continued to offer AVRR counseling to migrants. In April, IOM assisted eight persons (6 men, 2 women, 1 minor) 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.

Public Information

Achievements and Impact

- Throughout the reporting period, the media were instrumental in providing information about the surge in new arrivals, also highlighting problems related to the lack of adequate accommodation capacities. In April alone, more than 200 media features and articles on the situation in BiH were released that referred to UN agencies or carried the messages and positions of the UN Country Team in BiH. Overall, the press remained positive or neutral towards refugees and migrants, with occasional negative narratives mostly centered on the numbers and the broader challenge. To dispel misinformation and counter incorrect and potentially xenophobic narratives, UNHCR and IOM developed a set of [Guidelines for Reporting on Migration and Refugees](#) in February 2018.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Despite high distribution of the Guidelines for Reporting on Migration and Refugees and ongoing advocacy efforts, the local press has so far predominantly used the incorrect terminology and, in most cases, failed to provide proper information on the key aspects of the asylum procedure in BiH.

Working in partnership

- The United Nations Country Team is working together to jointly assess and respond to emerging needs.

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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://bih.iom.int/pbn/reporting-migration-and-refugees-brochure>
- Asylum Information Brochure: https://issuu.com/unhcrsee/docs/information_for_as_in_bih