

MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: SITUATION UPDATE

March 2023

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

KEY FIGURES

1,960

irregular arrivals recorded during the reporting month

5,201

total arrivals in 2023

1,325

persons accommodated in official reception facilities (as of 2 April 2023)

4%

children in families

7%

unaccompanied children

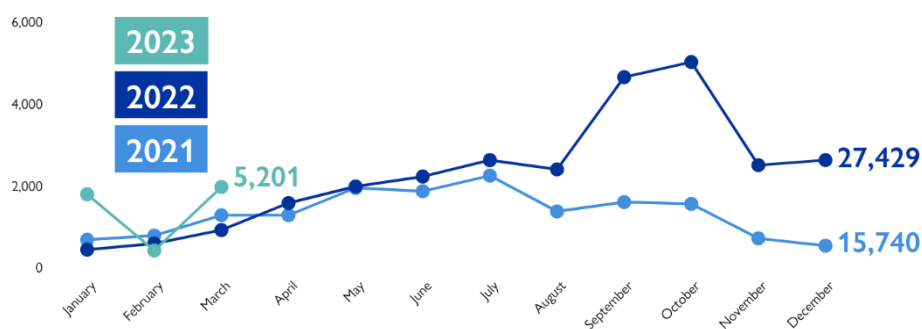
3%

single adult females

137

persons estimated to stay outside of reception centres (as of 15 March 2023)

In March 2023¹, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) recorded 1,960 irregular arrivals, an increase by one third compared to the previous month (1,460) and almost doubled compared to March 2022 (1,010). The majority of new arrivals declared to be from Afghanistan (39%), Morocco (16%) and Cuba (8%). Among those, 91 per cent (1,781) were issued an “Attestation of Expressed Interest in Asylum” (AISA). Since the start of the mixed movements in 2018, 117,783 arrivals have been recorded by BiH authorities.



As of the last day of the reporting period, 1,325 migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are accommodated in Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) and other private and NGO-led shelters in BiH. This represents an increase of 65 per cent compared to the last day of the previous reporting period. The map below depicts the distribution of beneficiaries in BiH as of 2 April 2023.



¹ Reporting period: from 6 March to 2 April 2023

Data is based on the statistics on arrivals and AISA shared on a weekly basis by the Ministry of Security (MoS).

CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA THIS MONTH:

- **The number of new registrations in TRCs increased by 25 per cent compared to the previous month.** In March, 3,075 new registrations were recorded in all TRCs.
- **Afghans continue to arrive in large numbers in BiH.** In 2022, they constituted the top nationality of arrivals in the Western Balkan region, making up over one-fourth (28%) of all arrivals. In the first three months of 2023, they are the top nationality of arrivals in BiH with over 2,300 registrations, constituting nearly half (46%) of all arrivals. The main provinces of origin in Afghanistan were Kabul, Takhar, Nimroz, Kapisa, Farah, Panjsher, Nagarhar, and Ghazni.
- A **high increase in the number of readmissions from Croatia to BiH** was noted in the second half of the month, with persons accommodated in TRCs Lipa and Borići. Interviews with persons readmitted were conducted by interagency partner organizations to assess vulnerabilities and possible international protection needs.
- In March 2023, **15 persons registered their asylum claims with the Ministry of Security (MoS)** – Sector for Asylum (nine cases), four Refugee Status Determination interviews were conducted (involving 4 persons), one person was granted refugee status, three persons were granted subsidiary protection (three cases), two persons had their claims rejected (one case) and 10 persons had their claims suspended (seven cases). These decisions are not necessarily final and binding. As of 31 March, 69 asylum-seekers (54 cases) await processing and decision in BiH.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION:

- The **Interagency Coordination Meeting** discussions focused specifically on the short length of stay in TRCs, and participants identified several actionable steps to adapt the service provided by different partners. Concrete actions have been taken such as the adaptation of the distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs) kits and dignity kits. In addition, all partners presented their daily and monthly activity plans, ensuring that activities do not overlap and that effective coordination mechanisms are in place to respond to the high number of new registrations.
- During the **Interagency Protection Coordination meetings**, discussions focused on challenges related to the accommodation of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Tuzla Canton especially on the days of weekend and after working hours of the Service of Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) center and the center for Social Welfare. All stakeholders involved in the response agreed on the next steps to be taken in order to ensure the best possible solution.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- [IOM – DTM Report – Bosnia and Herzegovina March 2023](#)
- [UNHCR - BiH Operational update – March 2023](#)
- [UNFPA - Monthly Operational Update – January-February 2023](#)
- [UNICEF - Podrška i prijatelj kojem se djeca mogu povjeriti](#)
- [SCI - Social Workers, Guardians of Children's Rights](#)
- [DRC - Border Monitoring Factsheet | DRC Danish Refugee Council](#)



The Mixed Migration Response in Bosnia and Herzegovina is organized jointly by international, national and local partners, in close coordination with relevant authorities.

IOM

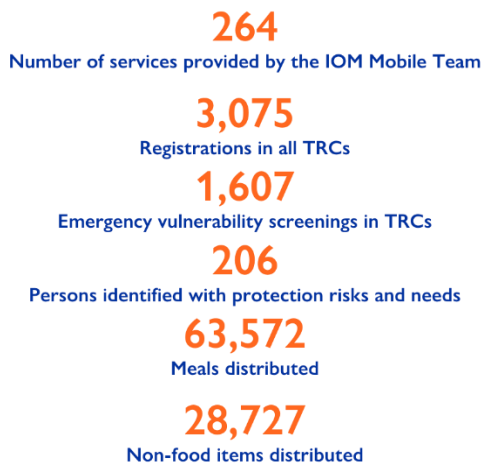


On 8 March, International Women's Day was celebrated in all TRCs. Migrant women currently accommodated in TRC Ušivak celebrated International Women's Day together with women from the local community. Both migrant and host communities had the opportunity to try various culinary specialties from BiH prepared by women from local organizations, Ars Populi and Renesansa. IOM, with the support of the European Union and the SFA, together with partner organizations, prepared gifts for individuals residing at TRCs and organized a No Nation Fashion performance.

In all TRCs special food arrangements were made to ensure that beneficiaries who fast during Ramadan have access to nutritious meals for breakfast (Sehur) and dinner (Iftar). In TRC Lipa, IOM organized a meeting with representatives of the Interreligious Council from Bihać, including representatives of the Catholic Church in BiH, the Orthodox Church in BiH and the Islamic Community in BiH. The Council welcomed the idea to participate in celebrations and mark the upcoming religious holidays in the spirit of goodwill and mutual respect.

Within the framework of the transition to the state-owned management of TRCs, an IOM IT specialist provided a two-day training to the BiH SFA staff on the Smart Camp Application. The knowledge gained during the training will support the SFA to record, track and manage all forms of assistance currently provided in the TRCs, from registration to access to services (e.g., meals, NFIs, WASH, medical consultations, transportation, etc.)

In April 2022, with the support of IOM, an important step in the transition towards a state-owned migration response was made when the responsibility for safety and security in TRCs was transferred to the the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of BiH. In March 2023, the European Union donated ten specialized off-road vehicles to the DCPB. The vehicles will be used for carrying out monitoring activities and supporting joint operational actions, as part of an effective response to the migration situation.



UNHCR



Launch event and presentation of the UNHCR BiH Participatory Assessment 2022 in Sarajevo @UNHCR 2023

On 22 March, UNHCR BiH presented its **Participatory Assessment 2022 Report** through a launch event organized in Sarajevo. The event was attended by BiH authorities, international organizations, civil society organizations, the media as well as asylum-seekers and refugees. Last year, UNHCR BiH organized focus group discussions with 129 beneficiaries to identify their main concerns around protection and integration in the country. Based on their feedback, the report highlights challenges with regards to asylum and integration in BiH, and provides with a number of recommendations. A regular part of UNHCR's programming, the Participatory Assessment exercise is an opportunity for UNHCR and others to assess the existing programmes in the country and adjust future initiatives in line with refugees' feedback, ensuring they receive the support necessary for a safe and dignified life.

Some 50 information sessions on the asylum procedure were organized in Tuzla as well as in TRCs, including joint sessions with IOM. Majority of participants were from Afghanistan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Iran. Questions were raised regarding the duration of the procedure and the rights and obligations in case of a positive decision.

UNHCR's partner the **Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI)** organized several events to enhance **social cohesion** and promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. On International Women's Day, women in need of international protection from Ukraine, Iraq, Türkiye, Sri Lanka and Iran gathered for a workshop aimed to foster local integration by bringing together refugees and local women. The event promoted a part of BiH's cultural heritage through the performance of folk music. A celebration also took place in TRC Ušivak to celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Lastly, 35 persons in need of international protection from Türkiye, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Burundi, Iraq and Russia gathered for iftar to break the fast together during the month of Ramadan.

More than **300** persons provided with information related to asylum in BiH

Some **80** persons assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH

3
People awaiting registration of their asylum claim with the assistance of UNHCR / Vaša Prava BiH

More than **300** persons assisted with psychosocial support

10
Social, recreational and occupational therapy sessions organized



UNICEF



Mathematics course for children at Elementary school in Sarajevo Canton
@UNICEF 2023

372

Children on the move benefitting from 24/7 protection and care

127

UASC benefitting from the appointment and support of a legal guardian

93

Refugee and migrant children benefitting from structured non-formal education, language courses and vocational training

25

Refugee and migrant children supported with integration into the formal education system

41

Refugee and migrant children benefitting from Mother-baby corner activities

UNICEF/WV educational teams supported UASC from TRC Ušivak attending vocational training for hairdressers. During the reporting period, 6 UASC accommodated in TRC Ušivak were included in English, German and Sports classes and vocational trainings in the Secondary school centre Hadzići. In Međugorje UNICEF continues to support Ukrainian refugee children in accessing education opportunities in one primary school through Ukrainian distance learning platforms, reaching 21 children (12 girls). In TRC's Ušivak and Borići 93 different children (30 girls) accessed non-formal education, including catch-up classes, local and foreign language learning using the Akelius Digital Language course. UNICEF provided 37 backpacks and school supplies, including individual learning materials for children.

Workshops and activities at mother-baby corners focused on proper and healthy diet of children older than 24 months, counseling for parents and support for breastfeeding and pregnant women. During the reporting period, 41 children (18 girls) and 10 parents (mothers) were reached with IYCF services, also including 11 pregnant and 5 lactating mothers.

UNICEF/WV child protection team in TRC provided access to psychosocial support, legal counseling, and support of legal guardian for children. 95 children (50 girls and 45 boys) benefited from Child Friendly Space activities and 40 unaccompanied children were provided with mental health and psychosocial support. In March, UNICEF provided winter NFI for 142 children.

UNICEF organized meetings with SFA Bihac and Center for Social Welfare (CSW) Bihać on 6th April to discuss the readmission procedure and compliance with the Readmission Agreement between Croatian and BiH.

UNFPA



Sexual and Reproductive Health session with beneficiaries in TRC Lipa @UNFPA 2023

513

Number of comprehensive GBV/PSS services provided to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

454

Number of SRH services provided to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

728

Number of empowerment services provided to male migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in line with "Boys and young men on the Move" methodology

296

Number of empowerment services provided to female migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

65

Number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers educated on GBV

UNFPA identified and assisted GBV survivors who reported experiencing different forms of violence, including: physical violence, economical violence and emotional abuse. UNFPA made efforts through GBV Case management to continue identifying survivors' needs and risks, to provide accurate information on existing services, as well as, to coordinate delivery of assistance and follow up of progress.

Also, due to identified state of PTSD, emotional shock, and state of anxiety, the UNFPA MHPSS expert supported women during 20 crisis-situation interventions. The local health care center expressed their willingness to provide SRH support even at the ad hoc moments. UNFPA is undertaking GBV risk assessment to identify the GBV risks and protective factors, as well as possible gaps in the availability and access to supportive services during affected persons' stay in facilities where they await readmission.

During implementation of regular PSS sessions, UNFPA MHPSS experts identified an increasing number of cases within the neuro-psychiatric spectrum, which resulted in an increase in the number of crisis interventions. Accordingly, UNFPA made referrals for examinations by a neuropsychiatrist, while assisting with taking pharmacotherapy and observing its effects.

UNFPA organized the Women and Girls Committee meeting with women representatives who used this platform to voice main challenges related to collective accommodation and provided suggestions and feedback on existing activities and services. UNFPA teams marked International Women's Day independently within the UNFPA centers and participated in joint events within the TRCs. An effort was made to empower women by demonstrating the privileged status each of them deserves due to their uniqueness and individuality.

DRC



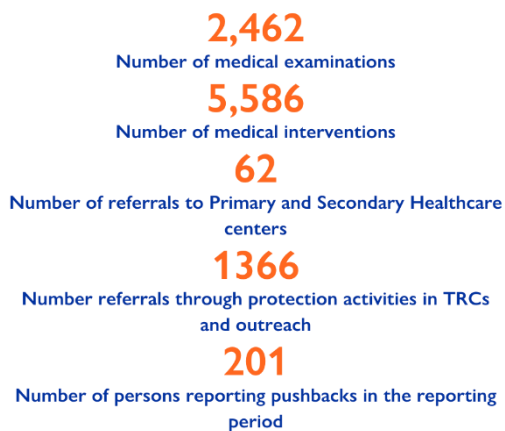
Provision of medical support in the medical unit TRC Blažuj @DRC 2023

Since the beginning of 2023, occupation rates of medical units are always above 70%. DRC medical staff on average spend a quarter of the working day attending to the different needs of the beneficiaries. DRC ensured that all patients have daily treatment, nursing care and medical aids (wheelchairs, crutches, catheters, etc.).

In TRC Blažuj, almost all accommodated patients during March were with limited mobility due to severe injuries of lower extremities. Moreover, in collaboration with partner organizations MdM, much needed **psychosocial support is provided continually**, especially for patients suffering from newly developed disability.

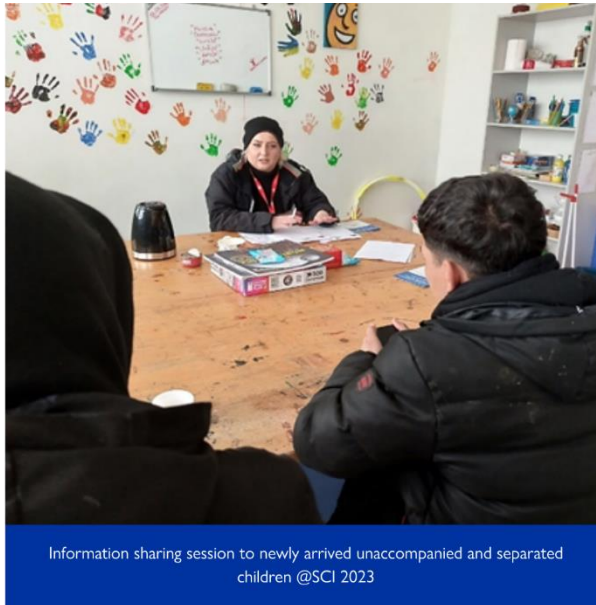
In addition, DRC Protection staff referred 1366 beneficiaries to services including health, mental health among others inside and outside TRCs. In order to facilitate adequate service provision, DRC Cultural Mediators and bilingual DRC Protection staff provided cultural mediation services.

DRC co-partner: Médecins du Monde (MDM)



- **General symptomatology for the month of March:** psychoactive substance abuse as a mechanism to cope with high levels of stress, feeling nervous, restless, or tense and sleeping problems.
- **Increased numbers of new arrivals related to readmission,** and as a result new referrals towards MDM services increased. Mental health issues include confusion, frustration, helplessness, anxiety symptoms and stress reactions related to uncertainty about the future. In March 2023, MdM assisted 232 new direct beneficiaries (12 female and 220 male) and a total of 194 individual psychological counselling sessions were conducted. In addition, 328 participants took part in group (empowerment and psychoeducational) sessions.
- Cases with need of psychiatric care remain high with a total of **83 psychiatric care consultations conducted** for 65 individuals and 44 beneficiaries included in the Harm Reduction Programme.

SCI



The Cantonal Center for Social Welfare Sarajevo and SC jointly celebrated **Social Work Month – March 2023**, and the invaluable dedication and empathy of social workers who provide services to refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking children, as well as all other children at risk.

In March, **representatives of ECHO and SC Italy visited several outreach locations and TRC Blazuj**, to better understand the needs of children and the work of child protection outreach teams. The crucial role of outreach services in the context of increased and relatively fast movement was emphasized, as the first step in ensuring visibility, protection, and access to services for the most vulnerable.

Recognizing the presence of UASC out of official system of support designed for children, **SC continues to provide services in the Blažuj TRC and out of reception centers in the Tuzla Canton, the Sarajevo Canton and the Una-Sana Canton**. Specialized child protection teams provide information on available services, children's rights and obligations; ensure referrals to services; and provide initial psychosocial support for children until relocation to the Ušivak TRC. SC's cultural mediators play an important role in child protection activities and provide support to other partner organizations when needed.

28 children accommodated in Borići TRC were enrolled in the preparatory school program organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Una-Sana Canton and SC in March. The preparatory programme is based on the HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts) methodology, and includes teaching of Bosnian language, mathematics, geography, as well as various PSS and creative workshops to prepare children for the inclusion in regular classes and integration with local community. The limited time the children stay in Borici jeopardizes their enrollment into regular classes and their learning outcomes. As part of after school activities, homework support and sport

57

Potential unaccompanied and separated children benefit from child protection services outside of the reception centres

8

unaccompanied children supported with legal guardian and accommodation in TRCs

18

unaccompanied children supported with emergency NFI in Outreach locations

115

potential unaccompanied children supported in Blažuj reception centre and accommodation to Ušivak reception centre

28

children enrolled in a preparatory school program organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Una-Sana Canton and Save the Children



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH IN PICTURES



Donation of 10 off-road vehicles, to the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies (DCPB) @IOM 2023



Joint IOM – UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH info session in TRC Borčić @UNHCR's partner Vaša prava BiH 2023



Child-Friendly School spring activities @UNICEF 2023



International Women's Day celebration in TRC Ušivak @UNFPA 2023



MdM participation in the round table 'Migration and mental health', organized by IOM @DRC partner MdM 2023



Assistance to unaccompanied and separated children in Tuzla Canton @SCI 2023



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