

# MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: SITUATION UPDATE

## May 2023

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

#### KEY FIGURES

**2,893**

irregular arrivals recorded during the reporting month

**10,159**

total arrivals in 2023

**1,136**

persons accommodated in official reception facilities (as of 30 April 2023)

**4%**

children in families

**5%**

unaccompanied children

**1%**

single adult females

**235**

persons estimated to stay outside of reception centres (as of 8 June 2023)

In May 2023<sup>1</sup>, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) recorded 2,893 irregular arrivals, an increase by 40 per cent compared to the previous month (2,065). The majority of new arrivals declared to be from Afghanistan (39%), Morocco (17%) and Bangladesh (11%). Among those, 95 per cent (2,741) were issued an “Attestation of Expressed Interest in Asylum” (AISA). In the first five months of 2023, authorities have registered 10,159 irregular arrivals in BiH, an increase of 72 per cent compared to the same five months in 2022.



As of the last day of the reporting period, 1,136 migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are accommodated in Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) and other private and NGO-led shelters in BiH. This represents a decrease of four per cent compared to the last day of the previous reporting period. The map below depicts the distribution of beneficiaries in BiH as of 4 June 2023.



<sup>1</sup> Reporting period: from 1 May to 4 June 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:

- **Migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees continue arriving in large numbers.** In May, a total of 3,989 cumulative daily arrivals were recorded and the average length of stay in TRCs was 8 days. This high turnover is putting pressure on operational capacities, assistance and stocks of food and non-food items (NFIs), with more than 40,000 meals and 28,000 NFIs distributed during the month.
- **Afghans continue to arrive in large numbers in BiH.** According to the MoS, they are the top nationality of arrivals in BiH, making up 39 per cent of all arrivals in May. **Moroccan nationals are increasingly arriving in BiH** and represent the second top nationality of arrivals in May (17 per cent). Since the **Serbian government suspended its visa-free agreement with Cuba mid-April**, irregular arrivals from this country decreased (67 per cent from April to May 2023) while not fully stopping. In May, nationals from Bangladesh represented the third top nationality of arrivals (increase of 8 per cent compared to April).
- **As of June 4, a total of 59 unaccompanied minors were present in TRCs in BiH.** At all stages of the migration and refugee journey, children on the move are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation, trafficking and detention. This vulnerability is moreover intensified for unaccompanied or separated children; these children's needs are addressed with strengthened care and specific solutions.
- In May 2023, **11 persons registered their asylum claims with the Ministry of Security (MoS)** – Sector for Asylum (seven cases), seven Refugee Status Determination interviews were conducted, one person was granted recognized refugee status, three persons were granted subsidiary protection and one person had their claim rejected. Two applications were otherwise closed (two cases involving two persons). These decisions are not necessarily final and binding. As of 31 May, 75 asylum-seekers (56 cases) await processing and final decision in BiH.

### INTERAGENCY COORDINATION:

- During the **Interagency Coordination meeting**, the discussions focused on beneficiaries' short period of stay in TRCs and difficult weather conditions. The high turnover experienced in TRCs over the last few months requires new approaches to promote community-based participation and feedback mechanisms. One of the adaptation measures agreed among partners is the adjustment of the complaint and feedback mechanisms to swiftly choose beneficiary representatives and enable them to participate in the discussions despite their short stay in the TRC.
- The **Interagency Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force**, focused efforts in the previous period on the creation of an interagency CBCM (Community-based Complaint Mechanism), including drafting of a Standard Operating Procedure which would be piloted in reception centers.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- [IOM – DTM Report – Bosnia and Herzegovina - June 2023](#)
- [UNHCR - BiH Operational update – May 2023](#)
- [UNFPA - Monthly Operational Update – March 2023](#)
- [UNICEF - Podrška i prijatelj kojem se djeca mogu povjeriti](#)
- SCI - [Campaign "Click Responsibly"](#)
- [DRC - Border Monitoring Factsheet](#)



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

## IOM



Creative activities organized in TRC Ušivak on the occasion of the Europe Day @IOM 2023

**764**

Number of services provided by the IOM Mobile Team

**3,989**

Number of cumulative daily arrivals in all TRCs

**2,663**

Number of emergency vulnerability screenings in TRCs

**397**

Number of persons identified with protection risks and needs

**42,049**

Number of meals distributed

**28,623**

Number of non-food items distributed

May was characterized by heavy precipitation in the country, especially in USC, resulting in serious flooding, with some areas critically affected and some roads closure. During this period, **IOM's mobile teams in USC provided migrants outside centres with information** regarding risks of floods, as well as information related to accessible accommodation in the TRCs. IOM's mobile teams also visited several flood-affected areas near and in the city of Bihać, to assess displacement and needs through interview with representatives of local communities and citizens. In addition, **IOM's Protection and MHPSS team organized focus groups with migrants** to raise awareness about flood risks in the country, sharing the instructions provided by the Federal Hydrometeorological Institute of BiH.

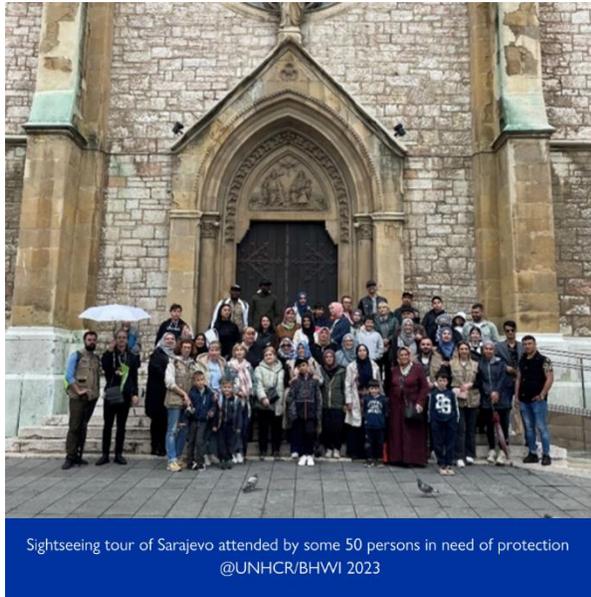
From 24-26 May in Trebinje, **IOM participated in a meeting** with BiH representatives of the MoS, the Service of Foreigners' Affairs, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Delegation of the European Union in BiH **on the transition plan for a State-led migration response**. IOM and the European Union continue to ensure technical support, tools, and resources to strengthen State ownership of the migration response.

IOM, in cooperation with UNICEF, organized a study visit for BiH social protection and migration management institutions representatives to Italy. The visit aim was to strengthen the capacity of BiH institutions which are directly involved in the **protection of unaccompanied or separated children (UASCs)**. The exchange of experiences with relevant institutions in Italy enabled officials from BiH to become familiar with good practices in terms of legislation, accommodation capacity management, protection measures and integration practices when it comes to UASCs.

On Europe Day, IOM organized creative workshops with **educational components for children** residing in TRCs. Through drawing and coloring, the participating children were encouraged to think creatively and learn.



## UNHCR



Some **400**  
persons provided with information related to asylum in BiH

Some **40**  
persons assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH

**10**  
People awaiting registration of their asylum claim with the  
assistance of UNHCR / Vaša Prava BiH

More than **600**  
persons assisted with psychosocial support

**59**  
Social, recreational and occupational therapy sessions  
organized

UNHCR welcomes the efforts of the BiH MoS to initiate the process of amending the Law on Asylum, dating from 2016. On 30 May, the MoS organized a preparatory roundtable with support from UNHCR and its legal partner Vaša prava BiH. Advocacy points were shared and the MoS presented their plans to consider introduction of travel documents and family reunification for persons granted subsidiary protection, as well as facilitating access to labour market for asylum-seekers. UNHCR warmly commends these efforts, that would contribute to the realization of BiH's 2019 pledges given at the first Global Refugee Forum.

Some 35 information sessions on asylum in BiH were organized in Tuzla as well as in the four TRCs, including joint sessions with IOM. Majority of participants were from Afghanistan, Morocco, and Bangladesh, among which many could be in need of international protection.

There were 26 newly enrolled students to the local language course this month, with support from UNHCR's partner the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI). A person under subsidiary protection, who is residing far from the classes' location, received a laptop to be able to attend the course online.

UNHCR, together with the BiH MoS, initiated a series of trainings for the Border Police, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs and Centres for Social Welfare to improve access to asylum for persons in need of international protection. In May, trainings were held in Sarajevo and Višegrad, while additional sessions will take place in other locations this year.

To strengthen social cohesion between the refugees and host communities in BiH, a sightseeing tour of Sarajevo was organized. More than 50 persons in need of protection from Türkiye, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Ecuador, Burundi and Iran participated, together with BHWI cultural mediators.

## UNICEF



In partnership with local NGO Fenix in TRC Borići and World Vision in TRC Ušivak, **workshops at mother-baby corners focused on proper and healthy diet of children older than 24 months** and during the month of May 51 children (22 girls), 75 parents out of which 9 pregnant women were reached with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) services.

In partnership with WV, **unaccompanied children from TRC Borići attended vocational training programmes** for IT technicians and electricians in the Technical secondary school Bihać. The vocational training programme is being partly funded by the cantonal authorities and UNICEF is supporting this programme by ensuring cultural mediators and individual learning materials for children.

**UNICEF/WV supported children in TRC Borići with distribution of backpacks and school supplies.** In partnership with World Vision, UNICEF has deployed teachers, assistants, and cultural mediators within TRC's Borići and Ušivak in Una-Sana and Sarajevo Canton who are providing support in learning, integration in local schools and catch-up classes for children.

**601**

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

**151**

UASC benefitting from the appointment and support of a legal guardian

**183**

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

**61**

Refugee and migrant children benefitting from Mother-baby corner activities

**UNICEF supported 21 Ukrainian refugee children (10 girls) in Međugorje**, municipality of Čitluk, with access to non-formal learning (local and English language learning, outdoor activities, arts, and crafts). Children were provided with a learning space in primary school Bijakovići where they can follow the Ukrainian curricula and have access to an environment conducive to learning.

**UNICEF continued to coordinate child protection response with other key actors** ensuring that the key topics are discussed through Child Protection Working Groups at the cantonal (Una-Sana Canton and Sarajevo Canton) level.

As a result of technical meetings with key actors organized by UNICEF through the work of the USC CPWG, **the MHPSS referral mechanism in TRC Borići was updated** related to the referral of children with disabilities to available services.



## UNFPA



The trend of single women traveling alone or in groups with other women is still present, posing a risk for various forms of violence. Psychological-emotional violence and female genital mutilation along with several cases of sexual violence were registered during the movement as well as in the country of origin of women and girls, while severe physical abuse and threats from the regime, kidnapping with extortion of money as well as forced marriage in the early juvenile period dominated among men. **Support was provided through available continuous UNFPA services for those identified and further monitored, including the sensitive LGBTIQ category**, in case of which in cooperation with SFA/IOM, a contribution was made in the segments of their registration and adequate accommodation in accordance with risk assessment. GBV empowerment through education was provided by raising awareness of gender equality against perceived cultural-traditional teachings, also emphasizing the need for reporting domestic violence and support seeking with the ultimate goal of personal empowerment and promotion of inclusive society.



MHPSS sessions followed the trends of the state and problems of women and girls and were directed at improving family relations through setting boundaries and remediating the symptoms of experienced violence. Teen's Club group activity for adolescent girls was held with the aim of providing education as well as support tailored for that target population, considering the risks and adequate responses during their further movement. Individual PSS sessions for male GBV/Protection cases were used to minimize traumatic experiences and lead to further healing and readiness for active participation in various aspects of social functioning, while group sessions aimed at learning patterns of fighting against cognitive distortions and automatic thoughts that lead to permanent subordinate status.

During the **UNFPA Menstrual Health Day event** held in Sarajevo, a perspective on the importance of SRH services provided in the UNFPA Women and Girl Centers was presented by a woman housed in TRC Usivak to the local community, emphasizing the challenges of the menstrual cycle during movement. UNFPA continues to provide SRH services and, in cooperation with local health centers timely and comprehensive examinations.



## DRC



Mental health and wellbeing through outdoor activities  
@DRC partner MdM 2023

**1,999**

Number of medical examinations

**7,577**

Number of medical interventions

**70**

Number of referrals to Primary and Secondary Healthcare centers

**3559**

Number referrals through protection activities in TRCs and outreach

**303**

Number of persons reporting pushbacks in the reporting period

The second regional conference on Health and Mixed Migration titled "Response to Public Health Challenges of Mixed Migration," took place in Sarajevo on May 11th, organized by the Danish Refugee Council with the support of Government of Switzerland. The main conclusions drawn from the conference emphasize the necessity of regional cooperation to ensure adequate healthcare for PoCs, including a joint comprehensive approach, information sharing, and coordination among the countries in the region. Participants also highlighted the need to enhance the capacity of public health systems through improved training, digitalization of documentation, and better monitoring of PoCs' health. Preventive measures and early diagnosis of communicable diseases were stressed as vital, with an emphasis on raising awareness about hygiene, immunization, and timely testing. An integrated approach involving healthcare institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities was deemed essential to provide comprehensive healthcare services to PoCs, requiring collaboration and coordination across different sectors. In summary, regional cooperation, capacity enhancement, digitalization, communicable disease prevention, an integrated approach to healthcare, as well as accurate health data collection are all crucial for ensuring adequate healthcare and improving the overall health of people on the move in the region.

### DRC co-partner: Médecins du Monde (MDM)

- **General symptomatology** for the month of May: Beneficiaries complain mostly of sleeping problems, anxiety-depressive symptoms, and nightmares in individual sessions with the psychologist.
- **Trends are still increasing in the area of needed specialized care**, where beneficiaries seek psychological and psychiatric care on a daily basis in both cantons. Increasing needs for psychological and psychiatric services daily in both cantons.
- **Record number of referrals to a psychiatrist** occurred in the previous period due to a significant increase in the number of people with mental health difficulties and mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance abuse.

## Save the Children



Child protection information sharing in TRC Blažuj  
@SCI 2023

In May, Save the Children (SC) identified and supported **63 potential UASC outside of reception centers in Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Una-Sana Canton**. Predominantly identified in transit towards the northwest border of Bosnia and Herzegovina, none of the UASC were found in squats and only a handful resided in private accommodations. Specialized child protection teams, in collaboration with pertinent state institutions, persist in delivering vital child protection information, facilitating referrals and escorts to services, and extending initial psychosocial support to children. Integral to child protection initiatives, SC's cultural mediators provide invaluable support to other partner organizations as required.

Over the same period, **SC successfully referred 121 potential UASC from the Blažuj TRC to be accommodated at the Ušivak TRC**. Most newcomers arriving in Sarajevo were largely bound for the Blažuj TRC, where SC team identified them upon arrival. Notably, the Blažuj TRC recorded approximately double the number of newly identified children compared to the total number outside reception centers across all three cantons. Working in conjunction with the Cantonal Center for Social Welfare Sarajevo and the Center for Social Welfare Iliđza, SC ensured these children were given comprehensive protection information, critical psychosocial support, and safe escort to the Ušivak TRC.

To amplify educational prospects, **SC enrolled 37 children housed in the Borići TRC into a preparatory school program**. This initiative, a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Una-Sana Canton and SC, employs the SC's HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts) methodology. The curriculum includes Bosnian language, mathematics, and geography lessons, as well as varied PSS and creative workshops designed to prepare children for integration into regular classes and the local community. However, the limited stay of children in Borići hinders their regular class enrollment and consequent learning outcomes.

**63**

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

**121**

Potential unaccompanied children referred and escorted to TRC Ušivak

**37**

Children accommodated in Borići TRC enrolled in the local schools preparatory programme

**132**

Referrals Outreach teams sent to different stakeholders

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH IN PICTURES



Assistance to new arrivals in TRC Blažuj  
@IOM 2023



Joint IOM – UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH info session for unaccompanied and separated children @UNHCR's partner Vaša prava 2023



Mother and child activity organized in the Mother and Baby unit in TRC Ušivak @UNICEF 2023



Woman from TRC Ušivak speech on Menstrual Health Day event in Sarajevo @UNFPA 2023



"Response to Public Health Challenges of Mixed Migration" conference @DRC 2023



Mathematics class for children on the move in Elementary School "Harmani I" @SCI 2023



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