

MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: SITUATION UPDATE

October 2023

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

KEY FIGURES

3,487

irregular arrivals recorded during the reporting month

28,661

total arrivals in 2023

1,621

persons accommodated in official reception facilities (as of 1 October 2023)

6%

children in families

6%

unaccompanied children

2%

single adult females

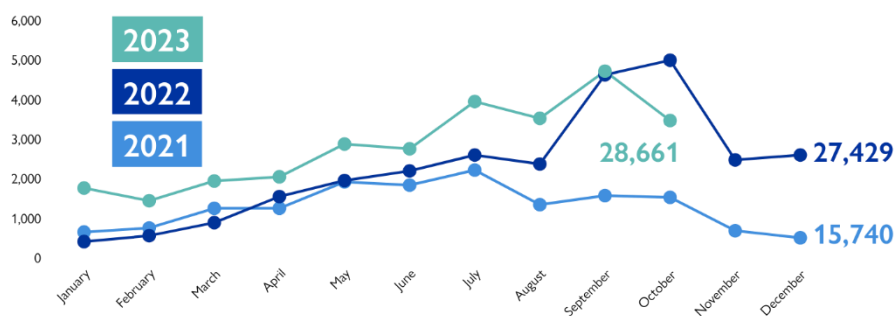
Main nationalities

44% Afghanistan

19% Morocco

6% Pakistan

In October 2023¹, authorities recorded 3,487 irregular arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a decrease by a quarter compared to the previous month (4,734). The majority of new arrivals declared to originate from Afghanistan (44%), Morocco (19%) and Pakistan (6%). Among those, 91 per cent (3,172) were issued an “Attestation on Intention to Seek Asylum” (AISA). So far in 2023, BiH authorities have registered 28,661 irregular arrivals in BiH, which is 28 per cent more compared to the same period in 2022.



As of the last day of the reporting period, 1,621 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 40 per cent compared to the last day of the previous reporting period. The map below depicts the distribution of beneficiaries in BiH as of 5 November 2023.



¹ Reporting period: from 2 October to 5 November 2023

Data is based on the statistics on arrivals and AISA shared on a weekly basis by the Ministry of Security (MoS). All data provided in this report is based on information available to date.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA THIS MONTH:

- In October, **3,684 new registrations were recorded in all TRCs, representing a 52 per cent decrease compared to the previous month (7,707)**. Similarly, half as many migrants and refugees were observed in active transit locations compared to last month.
- According to the monthly route observation exercise conducted in transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations across BiH, **reverse movements back towards Serbia were observed**. Sixty-four per cent of respondents met indicated they had unsuccessfully tried to cross the border to Croatia from BiH, double that compared to the previous month. Some stated they were therefore travelling back to Serbia.
- According to **focus groups interviews conducted in TRCs**, Iranian nationals had significant protection concerns relating to experiences in the country of origin as well as along their journeys. They spoke of the repression against the well-documented social unrest in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2022 impacting all aspects of daily life and creating increasingly difficult living conditions for ordinary citizens. In the TRCs, Iranian nationals form a rather heterogeneous group, with significant percentage of children (10%), women (25%) and families (25%) transiting through BiH in 2023.
- In October 2023, **14 persons (12 cases) registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security**, and eight Refugee Status Determination interviews were conducted (five cases). During the month, decisions were taken for **18 persons who were granted subsidiary protection** (seven cases), for one person who had his claim rejected and one application was “otherwise closed”. As of 31 October, 108 asylum-seekers (70 cases) were awaiting processing and final decision in BiH.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION:

- During **Interagency Coordination** meetings, the discussions focused on preparing accommodations and services in TRCs for the winter season. Concrete actions have been taken such as the launch of new infrastructure maintenance procedures and the installation of new or additional heating systems in all TRCs. For example, in TRC Lipa, partners coordinated the distribution of more than 200 heaters in the accommodation units and the delivery of 20 tons of pellets for heating the dining room and the kitchen.
- The **Interagency Protection Coordination** meetings’ discussions focused on the launch of new information sharing tools in reception centres, including audio announcements, QR codes, leaflets, placards, new info boards and info screens. These tools provide essential information to beneficiaries about the services and protection assistance available in the centers. In addition, on a weekly basis, partner organizations coordinate and hold information meetings, to present the services available and receive feedback from people assisted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- [IOM – Migrant Mobility Situation Report in Bosnia and Herzegovina - October 2023](#)
- [UNHCR - BiH Operational update – October 2023](#)
- [UNFPA - Monthly Operational Update – July-August and September 2023](#)
- [UNICEF - Podrška i prijatelji kojem se djeca mogu povjeriti](#)
- [SCI – Children’s week](#)
- [DRC - Border Monitoring Factsheet](#)



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IOM



Mine Risk Education session organized by IOM in TRC Blažuj @IOM 2023

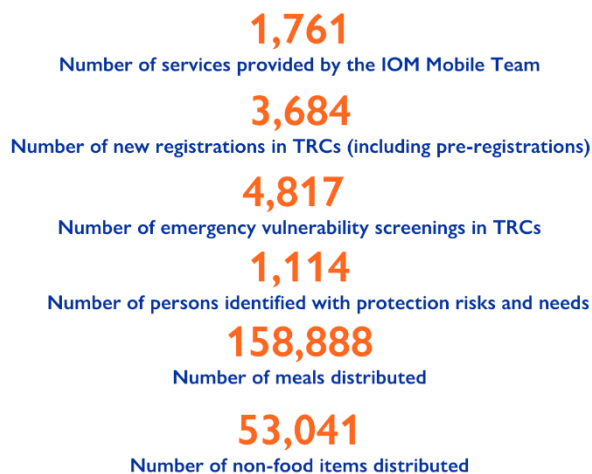
In TRC Lipa, IOM and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) discussed the reorganization of assistance in the context of the increased number of people on the move in Una Sana Canton. Following a request by the SFA, the number of Red Cross staff in charge of food preparation and delivery was increased, and another distribution line was established to accelerate the distribution of meals. Over 700 beneficiaries are currently accommodated in the center.

To mark World Mental Health Day, IOM organized two focus group discussions in TRC Ušivak and TRC Blažuj. In total, 25 participants joined to discuss the importance of mental health support and learn about psychosocial services available in the centres. IOM also organized the screening of a movie chosen by persons from Afghanistan, adding a sense of cultural connection and enjoyment to the event in TRC Ušivak.

In TRC Blažuj, IOM teamed up with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and volunteers among residents to paint new murals in the social hub area, while in TRC Lipa, hand-made products created in the No Nation Fashion (NNF) Creative Zone were presented by migrants and refugees during the festival "Fall on Gelenders/Jesen na Gelenderima" organized by the Cultural Centre of Bihać.

In TRC Ušivak, IOM improved the centre's infrastructure and renovated the road inside the centre connecting the main points where services are concentrated. The road sustained severe damage during the floods in July 2023.

In October, in Banja Luka, IOM presented the achievements of the project "Response to mixed migration flows in the Western Balkans" funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. Through the project, effective collaboration was established with authorities in Republika Srpska to support host communities to address the challenges related to mixed migration and pave the way for more long-term, sustainable solutions to migration management. In his address, Sandstad Stefan Alnehagen, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway in BiH announced the extension of the project for the next two years.



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UNHCR



Registration of an asylum-claim by the Sector for Asylum of the BiH Ministry of Security at UNHCR's Information Centre @UNHCR 2023

328

persons provided with information related to asylum in BiH

65

persons assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH

11

persons who are represented by UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH are waiting for the registration of their asylum claim

1,377

persons assisted with psychosocial support

50

social, recreational and occupational therapy sessions organized

At the end of October, **there were five asylum-seekers accommodated in the Asylum Centre Delijaš**, with an average length of stay of 48 days. UNHCR and its partners provided them assistance, including legal aid and psychosocial support. For example, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI) organized sowing of autumn cultures in the greenhouse, weekly visits to Sarajevo, and a workshop to mark World Mental Health Day.

UNHCR and its partner Vaša prava BiH organized 35 group information sessions on asylum and international protection in BiH, including joint sessions with IOM, in reception centres and other accommodation facilities. Majority of 289 participants were from Afghanistan and Morocco, many of whom are potentially in need of international protection.

BHWI regularly organizes social thematic events to acquaint persons in need of international protection with the administrative structure of BiH, as well as social, cultural and historical values of the country. In October, two group visits to Fojnica were organized, a city with a rich historical and cultural heritage, benefitting more than 40 persons from Ukraine, Türkiye, Afghanistan, the Russian Federation, and Iraq.

The latest round of voucher distribution for Ukrainians in BiH, for September and October, was concluded by UNHCR's partner the Catholic Relief Services together with the Red Cross societies. 156 persons (62 families) received cash-based assistance to support their basic needs.

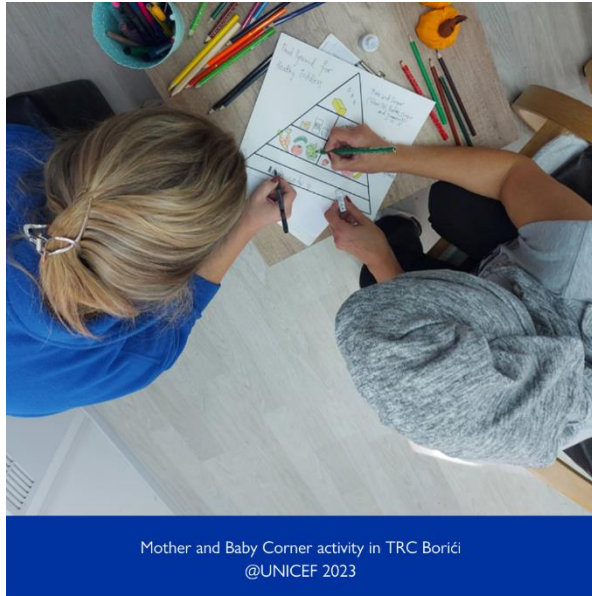
In partnership with the children's bookstore Bajkologija, workshops took place in five schools in the Una-Sana and Sarajevo Cantons to present the picture book "Magic Sight" by Ane Bjørn, which explores the perspective of a refugee girl.

UNHCR supported the stands organized by BHWI, as part of the #ImagineChange festival on the occasion of the UN Day in Sarajevo, offering persons under international protection in BiH the opportunity to presenting (and sell) traditional food from their countries of origin.



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UNICEF



In partnership with Fenix in TRC Borići and World Vision in TRC Ušivak 93 children (44 girls and 49 boys) and 109 parents out of which 10 pregnant women were reached with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) services. In October, the mother-baby corner pediatric nurses held educational workshop focused on subjects such as pregnancy, breastfeeding, nutrition, personal hygiene and the importance of regular immunization.

336 children (52 girls and 284 boys of which 179 UASC) were reached with non-formal education, including foreign and local language learning, support in learning and catch-up classes within reception centers and schools. Teachers have utilized the Akelius Digital Language course through a blended teaching method. 316 children (4 girls) in TRCs Borići and Ušivak attended the Akelius Digital Language course. 95 children (29 girls and 66 boys, of which 9 UASC) were supported with integration into the formal education system.

UNICEF/WV Child protection and legal guardian teams provided support with registration, accommodation and access to services for 493 unaccompanied and separated children in both TRCs ensuring 24/7 monitoring and support. The team also implemented 226 activities for children in TRCs including educational, creative and sport activities. 200 children were provided with mental health and psychosocial support in both TRCs through individual and group sessions.

UNICEF facilitated and lead Child Protection Working Groups at the Una-Sana and Sarajevo level as part of the child protection coordination. In addition, the regular quarterly meeting of the BiH Child Protection Working Group was held in October with the aim of exchanging information and discussing child protection priorities.

Throughout the reporting period 191 children (73 girls) benefited from activities in the Child Friendly Spaces in both TRCs. Significant dates in October were marked in both TRCs including "International Day of Nonviolence", "World Mental Health Day" and "International Girl's Day".

- 789**
children on the move benefitting from 24/7 protection and care
- 200**
UASC benefitting from the appointment and support of a legal guardian
- 336**
Refugee and migrant children benefitting from structured non-formal education, language courses and vocational training
- 95**
Refugee and migrant children supported with integration into the formal education system
- 93**
Refugee and migrant children benefitting from Mother-baby corner activities



UNFPA



506

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

313

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

842

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

355

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

450

Number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers educated on GBV

UNFPA training sessions on "Managing GBV in Emergencies" were finalized with humanitarian personnel (35) in TRC Blažuj. Also, UNFPA introductory training with PSEA as a part of UNDSS training was finalized for new UN staff (9). Through a survivor-centered approach, UNFPA GBV case management continuous work has been done to provide comprehensive support and reduce the negative effects of experienced violence emphasizing safety, PSS, SRH, as well as further empowerment of GBV survivors. Considering experienced violence in the form of discrimination of sexual orientation, intimate partner violence, and physical violence, UNFPA provided GBV education to raise awareness and increase readiness to respond and report.

On World Mental Health Day, UNFPA organized a set of psycho-educational group workshops promoting the importance of maintaining mental health especially during pregnancy, while in parallel, breaking the negative stigma of using psychological and psychiatric services. Additionally, the MHPSS group sessions on the psychological consequences of GBV equipped women, girls and young men with coping mechanisms and provided additional motivation for recovery. UNFPA provided individual PSS sessions leading to recovery and ensuring regular use of psychotherapy.

UNFPA, in cooperation with local health centers, enabled continuous access to quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for TRCs residents in the form of education, individual consultations and comprehensive clinical examinations. Also, the Think pink campaign was implemented in TRC Borici, with awareness on the importance of self-examination in the prevention of breast cancer raised through the production and distribution of pink ribbons. Through the Young Mothers Club UNFPA provided additional empowerment of pregnant women by transferring knowledge on the topics of maintaining a healthy pregnancy, diet, and use of vitamin supplements.

UNFPA delivered a diverse range of empowering sessions including informal education, creative-recreational and artistic expression activities, providing women and girls, adolescents and young men with both relevant knowledge and the therapeutic effect of engaging in occupational activities.



DRC



DRC's medical team noticed a lack of dental hygiene among the population on the move and **organized dental checkups** for children in TRC Borići. They plan to conduct health awareness sessions in the coming weeks.

There has been an issue with stray animals in TRCs, which pose health hazards. **The DRC has raised this concern with IOM, and the plan for now is that some animals will be relocated to a local shelter.** Additionally, beneficiaries feeding the stray animals has led to the presence of spoiled food, potentially causing infestations and parasitic diseases.

In terms of education, **DRC is actively conducting systematic examinations for school enrollment.** 14 beneficiaries have successfully completed their examinations and are set to be included in the educational program. This initiative is carried out in collaboration with UNICEF and WW.

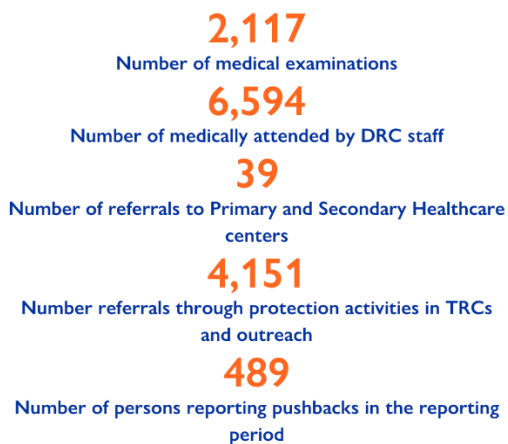
DRC co-partner: Médecins du Monde (MDM)

A record number of requests and individual psychological sessions held were noticed in October, which showed a significant **increase in needs for psychological support.**

During individual sessions, beneficiaries tend to report usual symptomatology related to stress and trauma, in most cases sleep disturbance. Often beneficiaries request medications for sleeping, but in some cases, they react very well to psychological support and psychoeducation.

Lack of energy, low mood, anxiety-depressive symptomatology, and sleep problems are most often present in October, in addition to this, some report distressing memories of the traumatic event, self-harm, and suicidal ideations.

Often beneficiaries who request individual psychological support are those with drug use-related issues. Most of the beneficiaries come with a long history of addiction mainly to benzodiazepines (Clonazepam) and specific anticonvulsants



(Pregabalin). These beneficiaries are included in the **Harm Reduction program**.

Save the Children (SC)



In October, SC provided essential support to 122 UASC outside reception centers across Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Una-Sana Cantons. Our teams dedicated their efforts to contribute to the harmonized response to the children's needs, encompassing initial assessments, psychosocial support, and dissemination of critical information on legal protection, accommodation options, and other protection measures, all tailored to be age appropriate.

Moreover, SC coordinated the referral and transfer of 94 potential UASC to Ušivak and Borići TRC. In collaboration with respective centers for social welfare, SC facilitated protection services and psychosocial support, including escort and transportation to Ušivak and Borići TRC.

Save the Children hosted a Child Protection Working Group for Tuzla Canton. The forum brought together government institutions, UN agencies, and NGOs, centering discussions on systematic solutions and effective strategies to address challenges faced by children on the move.

In observance of Children's Week in October, SC organized activities with children on the move and children from local communities, celebrating diversity and heightening awareness about the challenges faced by vulnerable children.

Educational engagement showed remarkable growth, with figures for newly enrolled children in the preparatory school program increasing significantly. **A total of 153 children (107 boys, 46 girls) participated in educational activities**, with 104 (68 boys, 36 girls) enrolling for the first time, marking an over 30% increase from September. The majority of children were from Afghanistan (65 children), with participants from 10 additional countries, including Mongolia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Angola, Morocco, and Pakistan.

122

potential unaccompanied and separated children benefited from the outreach child protection services

175

Referrals to services for children outside reception centers

94

Potential UASC successfully referred and escorted to accommodation in TRC Ušivak and TRC Borići

153

Children participated in the preparatory school program

694

Information-sharing instances to children and adults

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH IN PICTURES



Creative workshop organized in TRC Ušivak @IOM 2023



Stand of UNHCR/BHWI at the UN day festival presenting traditional food prepared by persons under international protection in BiH



Child Friendly Space activity in TRC Ušivak @UNICEF 2023



GBV trainings for humanitarian staff in TRC Blažuj @UNFPA 2023



activities to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and mental well-being @MdM 2023 (DRC partner)



Preparatory school program - Bosnian class @SCI 2023



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