

MIXED MOVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: SITUATION UPDATE

December 2023

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

KEY FIGURES

3,257

irregular arrivals recorded during the reporting month

34,409

total arrivals in 2023

2,638

persons accommodated in official reception facilities (as of 31 December 2023)

7%

children in families

6%

unaccompanied children

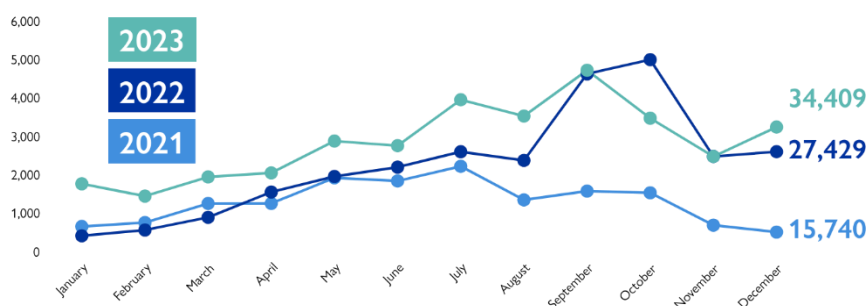
1%

single adult females

Main nationalities

- 51%** Syrian Arab Republic
- 17%** Morocco
- 11%** Afghanistan

In December 2023¹, authorities recorded 3,257 irregular arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), an increase of 31 per cent compared to the previous month (2,491). The majority of new arrivals declared to originate from the Syrian Arab Republic (51%), Morocco (17%) and Afghanistan (11%). Among them, 90 per cent (2,945) were issued an “Attestation on Intention to Seek Asylum” (AISA). In 2023, BiH authorities have registered 34,409 irregular arrivals in BiH, which is 25 per cent more compared to 2022.



As of the last day of the reporting period, 2,638 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 23 per cent compared to the last day of the previous reporting period (2,144). The map below depicts the distribution of beneficiaries in BiH as of 31 December 2023.



¹ Reporting period: from 4 to 31 December 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 December, **Syrian nationals constituted the largest nationality group**, a trend which has increased since November. According to interviews conducted with Syrian nationals who recently arrived in BiH, their initial plans was to cross from Serbia into Hungary, but the heavy presence of police near the border between Serbia and Hungary redirected them towards BiH. Authorities in BiH registered 1,674 Syrian nationals in December 2023, compared to a total of 812 in the first 11 months of 2023.
- Based on the results of a survey conducted with 1,114 persons on the move in BiH, **the average length of stay in BiH in December is 22 days**, which is similar to last month and a reflection of the fact that migrants and refugees are less mobile in the winter.
- In December, **the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security registered the asylum claims of nine persons** (nine cases) and conducted four Refugee Status Determination interviews (four cases). During the month, five persons (three cases) were granted subsidiary protection and one person had their claim rejected. Four applications were otherwise closed. As of 31 December, 110 asylum-seekers (79 cases) were awaiting processing and final decision in BiH.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION:

- During the Interagency Coordination meetings, partners exchanged information on the **demographic structure of the migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee populations, key upcoming activities, and challenges to adequately respond to the needs of people on the move**. One area of challenge pertains to the **initial reception process**, whereby the pressure is constant and close coordination is required between the various partners involved in the process, particularly for the medical screenings and when escorts are required. Recent changes to pre-registration systems have significantly improved the processing of new arrivals in the centres, notably processing the **arrivals of large groups during night shifts**.
- During the winter months, all **partner organizations coordinate their work to enhance efficiency** in the reception centers. In December, several strategic changes and improvements were implemented in TRC Blažuj to respond the increased number of beneficiaries and longer length of stay. The info corner was moved from the central area to the entrance, near the pre-registration zone. This new location facilitates access to information and assistance to newly arrived beneficiaries and simplifies the reception process. In addition, partners coordinated the organization of regular **celebrations and cultural events** to lift the moral of beneficiaries and mark important days.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- [IOM – Migrant Mobility Situation Report in Bosnia and Herzegovina - December 2023](#)
- [UNHCR - BiH monthly update – December 2023](#)
- [UNFPA Gender-based violence against women and girls on the move study](#)
- [UNICEF - Podrška i prijateljij kojim se djeca mogu povjeriti](#)
- [SCI – Global campaign](#)
- [DRC - Border Monitoring Factsheet](#)



IOM



Providing information and accommodation to new beneficiaries in TRC Blažuj @IOM 2023

771

Number of services provided by the IOM Mobile Team

5,145

Number of new assisted beneficiaries in TRCs

4,672

Number of emergency vulnerability screenings in TRCs

1,018

Number of persons identified with protection risks and needs

153,830

Number of meals distributed

41,914

Number of non-food items distributed

To mark International Migrants Day, IOM organized various activities in Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs). In TRC Lipa, to raise the awareness of local authorities and communities about beneficiaries needs, IOM and partner organizations presented the services available. In TRC Borići, pupils from Richmond Park Elementary School in Bihać accompanied by their teachers, exchanged gifts with children during a visit to the centre. In TRC Ušivak, **children participated in** the distribution of special meals prepared in the community kitchen, where migrant women and men cooked the most famous dishes from their homeland. In TRC Blažuj, singing, dancing and Moroccan pastries marked the joyful celebration.

IOM is adjusting shelter facilities to enhance responsiveness and capacity to address increased arrivals of beneficiaries to the centres. In TRC Ušivak, the quarantine building and five accommodation containers used for isolation during the Covid-19 period were repurposed for accommodation of new arrivals. Five containers remain operational for isolation purposes in case of need. **Winterization activities have been carried out**, whereby IOM teams are working on isolating pipes and checking all heaters and radiators to ensure adequate conditions in the centers.

IOM is continuously enhancing Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) mechanisms in TRCs. In TRC Blažuj, four new information boards were installed in strategic locations, and posters in English and other languages including Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu and French were designed to effectively communicate information to beneficiaries. In addition, a public audio address system was installed to inform beneficiaries about services, activities and rules within the center. It is particularly beneficial for those who stay for a short duration and for those who are illiterate.

UNHCR



UNHCR and its legal partner Vaša prava BiH organized 30 group information sessions on the national asylum procedure and principles of international protection in BiH, including joint sessions with IOM, in reception centres and other accommodation sites. Majority of participants were from the Syrian Arab Republic. Out of the total number of sessions, five were conducted specifically for 23 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), from Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt, Morocco and Pakistan. In total in December, 333 persons were informed on asylum in BiH through individual and group sessions.

By the end of December, Vaša prava BiH was representing 16 asylum-seekers from Palestine who had been evacuated from Gaza to BiH. All have been issued an AISA and one already registered his asylum claim. In addition, Vaša prava BiH is supporting seven evacuees from Gaza to subsequently record, confirm, or acquire BiH citizenship.

This month, 47 asylum-seekers and persons under international protection completed their B/C/S language courses, which is a key step in their integration journey. UNHCR's partner the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI) organized a graduation ceremony, attended by all participants and teachers at the Poliglot language school. To ensure learning continuity, the new semester will start in January. In addition, local language classes have started for residents of the Asylum Centre Delijaš.

In December, the children's bookstore Bajkologija held four workshops in elementary schools in Kalesija, Sapna, Međugorje and Sarajevo to present the picture book "Magic Sight" by Ane Bjørn, which explores the power of imagination through the perspective of a refugee girl. These workshops concluded a series of 12 workshops organized throughout the country, as part of a project supported by UNHCR, attended by 140 children from local communities as well as migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee families. All school libraries and children received copies of the book.

333

persons provided with information related to asylum in BiH

149

persons assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH

57

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

1,573

persons assisted with psychosocial support

55

social, recreational and occupational therapy sessions organized



UNICEF



In partnership with Fenix in TRC Borići and World Vision in TRC Ušivak 65 children (32 girls and 33 boys) and 79 parents out of which 9 pregnant women were reached **with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) services**. In December, the mother-baby corner pediatric nurses held educational workshop focused on subjects such as breastfeeding, infant nutrition, personal hygiene, and sessions with pregnant women with aim to support their well-being and prepare them for the new role.

249 children (35 girls and 214 boys of which 138 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. 205 children (26 girls) in TRCs Borići and Ušivak attended the Akelius Digital Language course. 64 children (16 girls and 48 boys, of which 6 UASC) were supported with integration into the formal education system.

- 700**
children on the move benefitting from 24/7 protection and care
- 129**
UASC benefitting from the appointment and support of a legal guardian
- 249**
Refugee and migrant children benefitting from structured non-formal education, language courses and vocational training
- 64**
Refugee and migrant children supported with integration into the formal education system
- 65**
Refugee and migrant children benefitting from Mother-baby corner activities

UNICEF/WV Child protection and legal guardian teams provided support with **registration, accommodation and access to services** for 516 unaccompanied and separated children in both TRCs ensuring 24/7 monitoring and support. The team also implemented 159 activities for children in TRCs including educational, creative and sport activities. 35 children were provided with mental health and psychosocial support in both TRCs.

UNICEF facilitated and led monthly **Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)** at the Una-Sana cantonal level as part of the child protection coordination. The CPWG serves as a coordinating tool and ensures regular exchange of updates and information from the field between UN agencies and NGOs and addressed the needs identified such as violent pushbacks and protection of sensitive cases.

Throughout the reporting period **152 children (51 girls) benefited from activities in the Child Friendly Spaces** in both TRCs. Creative workshops were held during the month of December with aim to create holiday spirit among children and a sense of security in a new environment.



UNFPA



Group GBV educational session with male residents in TRC Lipa
@UNFPA 2023

During December, male and female residents of TRCs benefited from the UNFPA GBV educational program that focused on prevention and empowerment in the fight against GBV. Through participation, women and young men were equipped with tools to recognize and combat various forms of abuse, and to foster an environment intolerant to GBV. Within the “16 Days of Activism against GBV” campaign, a competitive quiz on the topic of GBV in emergencies was held with frontline humanitarian personnel, elevating knowledge, promotion of non-violent attitudes, and familiarization with the basic concept of GBV with the aim of prevention and adequate response.

In December, there was a significant surge in the arrival of new residents in TRCs from Arabic-speaking regions, primarily Syria. A pivotal focus was placed by UNFPA on **integrating vulnerable young men into the Green Zone**, offering assistance and guidance to address their needs. UNFPA in close cooperation with SFA/IOM supported 251 vulnerable young men with protection sensitive accommodation in the Green Zones in TRC Blazuj and TRC Lipa.

458

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

327

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

742

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

427

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

259

Number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers educated on GBV

UNFPA together with partner agencies marked the **International Day of Migrants**. In addition to social activities, UNFPA participated in an exhibition of photographs made by women and girls during activities at the UNFPA Center. Within the campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence”, through PSS group sessions, UNFPA put in efforts to solve previously identified problems and challenges faced by women in emergencies, such as ways of fighting against traditional patriarchal beliefs, primarily forced, early, and child marriages.

Thanks to successful cooperation with local health care centers, **male and female residents including GBV survivors had improved sexual and reproductive health** and general wellbeing through UNFPA supported SRH services. UNFPA supported pregnant women within the “Young mothers Club” sessions of empowerment, as well as sexual and reproductive health medical services. Also, UNFPA, in collaboration with SFA, held a “Green Zone Council” meeting with young male participants.



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

DRC



During the reporting period of December, DRC staff encountered various critical cases but also focused on trends and gaps in the health services in TRCs. At the end of two weeks of December, it was noticed a huge number of new arrivals, **DRC Health staff was providing more than 100 medical screenings per day**. In the reporting month, the most common symptomatology was with respiratory diseases, skin and subcutaneous diseases. In the upcoming months, DRC will focus on info sessions in self-treatment (home) of some common symptomatology such as high temperature, minor cuts, pain in several regions, etc. With winter starting, the last week of December, five beneficiaries were referred to the infirmary due to frostbites on the legs, and one additional case was identified in the week prior, where due to frostbites gangrene emerged and the beneficiary was rushed to hospital for the surgery.

DRC co-partner: Médecins du Monde (MDM)

During December, the trend of an increased number of referrals to MdM services continued, mainly for beneficiaries who survived some form of violence. The most common are referrals by IOM Protection and MHPSS teams in PPCs. The sudden influx of Syrian refugees impacted MdM services since many of these beneficiaries requested psychological support.

The group sessions were well attended, and the focus was on psychoeducation about stress management, recognizing the symptoms of stress, introducing healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with stress, and relaxation techniques. The participants of the groups showed great interest, pointing out that in their countries of origin, there is no adequate support when it comes to mental health and that there is a great stigma related to mental health and the work of psychologists.



Save the Children (SC)



76

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

64

Referrals to services for children outside reception centers

395

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

233

Children participated in the preparatory school program

91

Information-sharing instances to children and adults

Save the Children protection teams continued providing vital services to children out of the official system of support. In December, SC assisted 76 UASC and 18 families outside reception centers in Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Una-Sana Canton. This represents an approximately 35% decrease compared to November. SC coordinated the referral and relocation of 233 potential UASC from Blazuj TRC and outreach locations in 3 cantons to the Ušivak and Borići reception centers. All children received comprehensive protection services, including information provision, first psychosocial support, the appointment of a temporary legal guardian, escort, and transportation to accommodation.

In Tuzla Canton, SC coordinates the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), which meets bimonthly. In December, members of the CPWG met and discussed the necessity for alternative accommodation, better integration of services for children on the move in the official social protection system, successes achieved in 2023, and challenges still to be overcome in 2024. Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, and Return of Tuzla Canton emphasized their commitment and readiness to support state and NGO actors in line with their scope of work.

A total of 91 children (69 boys and 22 girls) participated in the preparatory school program; of them, 75 children (63 boys and 12 girls) were new enrollees, including 13 unaccompanied and separated boys. While in the previous period, children from Afghanistan constituted the majority of children in the education program, in December, children from Syria made up 72% of all new enrollees and 93% of new enrollees who were unaccompanied and separated children. As many as 88 workshops were organized for children in Una-Sana Canton. Furthermore, SC organized a series of workshops with parents to overcome barriers arising from a significant number of parents being reluctant to send their children to school.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH IN PICTURES



IOM providing school transportation services TRC Ušivak @IOM 2023



Asylum-seeking and refugee students at their graduation ceremony of B/C/S language @UNHCR/BHWI 2023



Vocational training in Technical school Bihać. ©UNICEF 2023



GBV educational Quiz with frontline humanitarian personnel in TRC Blažuj @UNFPA 2023



Group psychological and mental health sessions @MdM 2023 (DRC partner)



SC legal guardian supporting UASC in Donja Vidovska @SCI 2023



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