



unicef   
for every child

## Humanitarian Action for Children

Refugee children at an asylum centre in Krnjaca, Serbia stand with bags of supplies provided by UNICEF.

# Refugee and migrant response on the Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes

### HIGHLIGHTS<sup>1</sup>

- Between January and August 2022, 165,738 refugees and migrants arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia, a 74 per cent increase compared with 2021. People mainly came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and from North Africa. There are currently 102,574 refugee and migrant children in the region, including 14,054 who are unaccompanied or separated from their families.
- These significant numbers of refugees and migrants have overwhelmed host countries' capacities to sustain and respond to their needs, particularly with the additional unprecedented arrivals of refugees from Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>
- With humanitarian and socioeconomic situations deteriorating globally, continued and increased inflows of refugees and migrants to the countries covered in this appeal are expected in 2023, with children and women remaining most vulnerable. UNICEF will continue working with national authorities and partners to ensure the rights of all children and families on the move are protected and access to quality services is ensured, regardless of their status or origin.
- In 2023, UNICEF requires US\$37 million to support host governments in ensuring that refugee and migrant children and families arriving through the Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes access health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education services.

### KEY PLANNED TARGETS



**45,000**

children reached with quality child protection support (including mental health and psychosocial)



**46,440**

women and children accessing gender-based violence mitigation, prevention, response



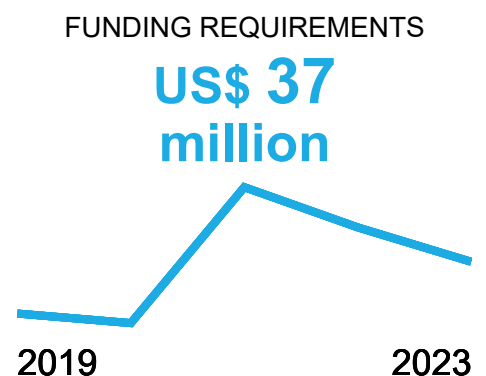
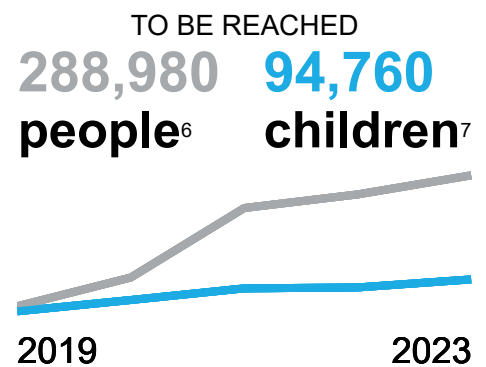
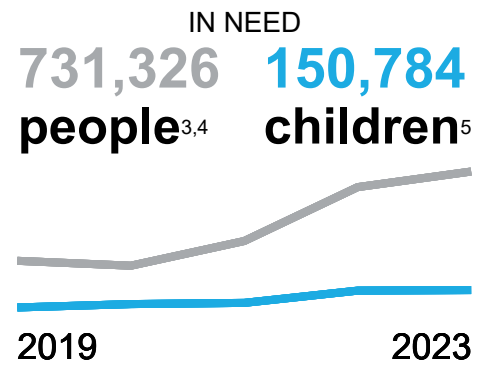
**32,020**

children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning



**862,500**

people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services



## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

As of August 2022, there were an estimated 473,450 refugees and migrants (22 per cent children) living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia, with approximately 165,738 new arrivals (up to 30 per cent children<sup>9</sup>) recorded in 2022 - a 74 per cent increase compared with 2021.<sup>10</sup> Arrivals came mainly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and North Africa.<sup>11</sup> In 2022, the countries covered in this appeal also received an estimated 265,118 refugees arriving from Ukraine in need of support and services.<sup>12</sup>

Globally, the number of people on the move has increased significantly. This is due to conflict, climate and food insecurity. As a result, the number of people seeking refuge in Europe is expected to continue to grow in 2023.

In 2022, Italy registered 63,588 refugee and migrant arrivals by sea, including 6,590 unaccompanied and separated children - a 52 per cent increase in sea arrivals compared with 2021 - in addition to 4,384 land arrivals.<sup>8</sup> Refugee and migrant arrivals in Greece have increased by more than 150 per cent compared with 2021, with more than 1,000 people (including 250 children) arriving on average per month.<sup>13</sup> Changes in the migration policy and the provisions for asylum-seekers and refugees, including accommodation, has had an impact on the number of people accommodated in these structures, with an overall drop in the population in reception facilities/programmes of almost 60 per cent compared with 2021, resulting in a significant increase in self-settled populations countrywide. Between January and August, more than 65,000 refugees and migrants (including 4,000 children) arrived in Serbia, double the arrivals compared with 2021. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 12,733 refugees and migrants arrived in 2022, a slight increase compared with the previous year; and 11,877 asylum applications were registered in Bulgaria, representing a steady rising since 2020.<sup>14</sup>

The increase in numbers of new arrivals has overstretched national capacities to sustain support to all refugee and migrant populations. Overcrowded reception facilities have generated additional challenges in providing adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities, sufficient access to health and protection services and learning opportunities for children and families. Insufficient measures to prevent and address gender-based violence put women and girls at increased risk. Inadequate reception, identification and protection mechanisms and the limited availability of alternative care and legal guardianship options exacerbate the vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated children.

## SECTOR NEEDS<sup>15</sup>



**473,450**  
refugees and migrants  
in five countries



**102,574**  
refugees and migrant  
children in five  
countries



**22,000**  
refugees and migrant  
children arrived in  
2022



**14,054**  
unaccompanied and  
separated children  
present

## STORY FROM THE FIELD



Neda, 10, lives with her parents and one-year-old sister in a refugee camp in Serres, Greece. She loves to draw, and her dream is to become a painter.

“After school, I attend non-formal education classes in the camp. I enjoy them a lot. The teachers help me with my homework and assist me with Greek, English, math and science.” In September 2021, UNICEF and the Government launched the “All Children in Education” programme to enable migrant and refugee children in Greece to access education.

**[Read more about this story here](#)**

Three years after her arrival in Greece, Neda, 10, stands behind one of her drawings not far from where she lives in a refugee camp in Serres. She wants to become a painter.

With expected continued arrivals of refugees and migrants throughout Europe in 2023, on top of already unprecedented numbers, UNICEF will work towards ensuring that the needs of all refugee and migrant children and their families are addressed.<sup>18</sup> Host governments and communities will be supported to provide essential services including child protection, education, health and nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, gender-based violence prevention, adolescent engagement and social and behavioural change. UNICEF will also undertake evidence generation to inform policy and planning.

UNICEF will continue working with national authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations to ensure the rights of all children and families on the move are protected, regardless of their status or origin. Multisectoral advocacy, coordination and inclusive responses at the local and national levels and at the regional (European Union) level will remain a priority. To protect and support refugees and migrants along the Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, there will be an emphasis on strengthening national capacities and systems through partnerships with national, subnational and municipal governments.

UNICEF will enhance the capacities of health professionals, social workers and front-line responders to identify and mitigate health and protection risks and support children and families through the asylum process. Technical support on specialized protection services for refugee and migrant children, access to legal aid and appropriate care and guardianship for unaccompanied children - preferably in communities - will be prioritized. Support will enable children to access education, including early learning, through national, formal and non-formal systems and teachers will be trained to support inclusive education and blended learning. Mothers and children will be supported to access health and nutrition services and check-ups. Survivors of gender-based violence and those in at-risk groups will receive age- and gender-appropriate information and support.

Unaccompanied and separated children and youth will have access to integrated mental health and psychosocial support and opportunities to learn life skills. They will also be given a platform to voice concerns. Information on access to services will reach refugee and migrant populations. UNICEF will fill critical, urgent gaps for children and families during the winter season with the provision of supplies, where required.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts will focus on national, regional and European Union policy reforms that uphold children's right to safe migration and improve best interest determination and age assessment procedures. UNICEF will advocate for an end to child immigration detention, unhindered access to social services, alignment of national policies with international norms as well as the relocation of unaccompanied and separated children to other European Union Member States.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/refugee-migrant-response-europe/situation-reports>



## Health and nutrition

- **2,040** children benefitting from increased access to general health checks and referrals, including access to life-saving vaccines
- **5,620** infants, children and mothers accessing health and nutrition services, including in mother and baby care centres



## Child protection, GBViE and PSEA<sup>19</sup>

- **46,440** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **45,000** children reached with quality child protection support (including mental health and psychosocial)
- **3,468** frontline workers and caregivers with improved knowledge and skills on child protection
- **8,520** unaccompanied and separated children accessing family-based care or a suitable alternative
- **1,548** frontline workers with improved knowledge and skills on gender-based violence prevention and response



## Education

- **32,020** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **4,620** formal school teachers trained on at least one key theme on inclusion of refugee and migrant children



## Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **8,700** children receiving culturally appropriate basic supplies, including clothes, baby hygiene items, dignity kits



## Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)

- **862,500** people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services<sup>20</sup>
- **243,600** people who participate in engagement actions



## Adolescents/youth

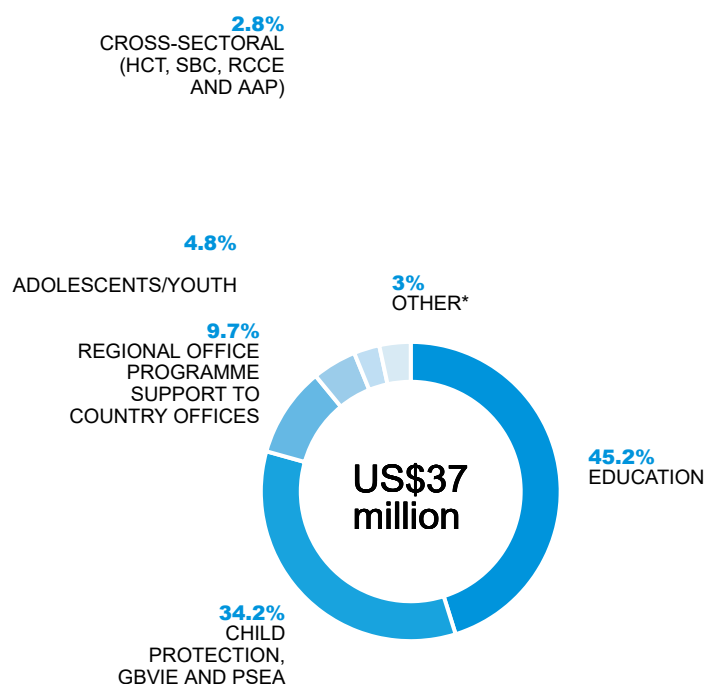
- **10,260** adolescent boys and girls benefitting from enhanced participation, social inclusion and empowerment

## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2023

In 2023, UNICEF requires US\$37 million to address immediate and longer-term humanitarian needs of refugee and migrant children, adolescents and families in five countries that are along the Mediterranean and the Western Balkan migration routes: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia.

UNICEF's response is part of an inter-agency refugee response plan aimed at ensuring equal access and quality services. It is delivered alongside government efforts. Child protection and education are priorities in 2023, together with filling critical gaps in key services for unaccompanied and separated children, and in health, nutrition, WASH and gender-based violence prevention and response. The provision of mental health and psychosocial support and the capacity building of front-line responders will continue. For Greece specifically, funds allocated to education will help the scale-up of inclusive formal education and structured non-formal education activities under the "All Children in Education" programme.

To uphold the Convention on the Rights of the Child and norms and standards around an equitable response to the needs of all children on the move, UNICEF is seeking flexible funding to maintain its core commitments to refugee children along the Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes. These funds will ensure a principled approach to support children, irrespective of their country of origin, race or ethnicity.



Sectors	2023 total requirement (US\$)
Health and nutrition	722,000
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	12,652,200
Education	16,718,120
Water, sanitation and hygiene	528,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	1,027,440
Adolescents/Youth	1,772,520
Regional Office programme support to Country Offices	3,600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,020,280</b>

\*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Health and nutrition (2.0%), Water, sanitation and hygiene (1.4%).

Sectors	Greece	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria	Serbia	ECARO	2023 total requirement (US\$) <sup>21</sup>
Health and nutrition	372,000	-	120,000	180,000	50,000	-	722,000
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	1,050,000 <sup>22</sup>	8,428,200	1,770,000	660,000	744,000	-	12,652,200
Education	14,000,000	2,010,120	480,000	120,000	108,000	-	16,718,120
Water, sanitation and hygiene	-	-	270,000	210,000	48,000	-	528,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	228,000	655,440	-	120,000	24,000	-	1,027,440
Adolescents/Youth	288,000	1,118,520	-	186,000	180,000	-	1,772,520
Regional Office programme support to Country Offices	-	-	-	-	-	3,600,000	3,600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,938,000</b>	<b>12,212,280</b>	<b>2,640,000</b>	<b>1,476,000</b>	<b>1,154,000</b>	<b>3,600,000</b>	<b>37,020,280</b>

## ENDNOTES

1. COVID-19 remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern as declared by the World Health Organization in January 2020. On 1 July 2022, UNICEF deactivated its Level 3 Sustained Phase for the global COVID-19 pandemic response. All activities related to COVID-19 pandemic response, including programme targets and funding requirements, have been shifted into regular development programming and operations. While UNICEF's Level 3 emergency response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic was deactivated, the organization is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, their families and their communities and on the social systems they rely on.
2. The response for the Ukrainian refugee populations is provided for and reported under the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal for Ukraine and Refugee Response. UNICEF's support efforts for refugee and migrant children and families throughout Europe are complementary, providing services and access to all affected populations. Additionally, UNICEF's systems strengthening approach in host countries benefits all refugees and migrants equally and prepares systems to cater to new arrivals.
3. Present population and estimated arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia in 2022 and 2023. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
4. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
5. Present population and estimated arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia in 2022 and 2023. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from UNHCR and IOM.
6. This includes 53,780 people in Greece; 180,000 in Italy; 21,960 in Bulgaria; 22,540 in Serbia; and 11,700 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women/girls are estimated at 35 per cent and people living with disability at 0.8 per cent. UNICEF is targeting 30 per cent of the population in need as a provider of last resort.
7. This includes 38,020 children in Greece; 36,000 in Italy; 7,440 in Bulgaria; 6,400 in Serbia; and 6,900 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This includes 33,166 girls. It is estimated that 0.8 per cent of children are living with disabilities.
8. Data for sea arrivals are between January and mid-September, and land arrivals between January and July. These estimates are based on statistics from the Italy Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, along with data from UNHCR.
9. This varies: 30 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 25 per cent in Greece, 18 per cent in Italy and 6 per cent in Serbia. Figures for Bulgaria are not available.
10. Based on UNICEF's internal refugee and migrant flow monitoring tool. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from UNHCR and IOM.
11. Data based from the following: Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (Greece), Ministry of the Interior (Italy), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from UNHCR and IOM.
12. UNHCR, operational data portal, Ukraine refugee situation, as of 13 September 2022, available at <<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>>. The response for the Ukrainian refugee populations is provided for and reported under the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Ukraine and Refugee Receiving Countries. UNICEF's support efforts to refugee and migrant children and families across Europe are complementary, providing services and access to all affected populations. Additionally, UNICEF's systems strengthening approach in host countries benefits all refugees and migrants equally and prepares systems to cater for new arrivals.
13. There were 7,156 arrivals (1,774 children) through July 2022. Estimates are based on statistics from the National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece) and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece).
14. Estimates are based on statistics from the National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia), Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from UNHCR and IOM.
15. Estimates in this section are based on statistics from the National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia), Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from UNHCR and IOM.
16. This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.
17. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
18. This Humanitarian Action for Children appeal continues to provide for support and response to refugee and migrant communities living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia. The scaled up response for Ukrainian refugee populations is provided for and reported under the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Ukraine and Refugee Response. UNICEF's support efforts for refugee and migrant children and families throughout Europe are complementary, providing services and access to all affected populations. Additionally, UNICEF's systems strengthening approach in host countries benefits all refugees and migrants equally and prepares systems to cater to new arrivals.
19. Child protection interventions target services through community-based mechanisms.
20. The population targeted is higher than the total number of people/children to be reached because the target includes mass media outreach.
21. The funding requirement under this appeal covers the ongoing response to refugee and migrant communities living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia and new arrivals along the Mediterranean and the Western Balkan migration routes. Given its unprecedented scale, the response for Ukrainian refugee populations in these countries is provided for and reported under the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Ukraine and Refugee Response.
22. Funding needs for Greece have decreased because the Government is increasing its capacity to address refugee and migrant needs.