

Alert

Hungary

Support to Migrants in Hungary

Geneva, Monday 03 August 2015

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Since the beginning of 2015 a mass influx of asylum seekers could be noticed in Hungary. The number of asylum seekers has constantly risen from a few thousand in 2014 to approximately 83,000 until July 2015. Migrants are arriving from countries of armed conflict, deep poverty, or social unrest, like Northern and Central Africa, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Almost all of them are coming through the Balkan countries of Greece, Macedonia and Serbia. Approximately 1,500 persons per day cross the border. Government authorities are scaling up their capacities, but are unable to handle all the needs. A total of 200,000 migrants are expected to arrive in Hungary by the end of this year.

Migrants who cross the Hungarian-Serbian border are first taken to the centre in Röszke or Kiskunhalas by the police, where they are registered before being transferred to other migration and asylum facilities in Hungary. During these few hours they are given food, water and can take some rest. About 10% are under the age of 14, one third is under 18, and there are also many pregnant women among those registered. Reception centres are operating to stretched capacities of 300-400 %. Migrants on their way to the centres, or to Western European countries such as Austria, Germany, Sweden and others are staying on railway stations, parks, underpasses, trying to find some rest after long journeys.

The EU Commissioner for Migration discussed the crisis with Hungarian officials in Budapest and said: "Hungary is under pressure. We were talking so far about Italy and Greece. Now we have added Hungary."

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

The situation calls for prompt action. The government is trying to manage the alarming situation. Authorities are working on the enlargement of necessary capacities. New temporary shelters are opened to accommodate migrants. The country has less than 3,000 residential places for asylum seekers, while the number arriving this year alone is more than 20 times that figure.

At present the government has asked for support from NGOs to supplement their work, as its human capacity and infrastructure is insufficient to respond. Although there are many small initiatives by people who are trying to assist migrants both in community places and in reception centres these initiatives will soon end as they have no sufficient financial means to sustain them.

With the onset of autumn and winter, new facilities and forms of assistance will have to be started, if the number of migrants will further increase.

3. National and international response

Civil society organizations and volunteers are active in community places, such as railway stations, and surrounding areas and parks. They are providing food, water, blankets and sometimes first aid medical care.

Bigger NGOs, like Red Cross, Caritas, Hungarian Maltese Charity Service, Baptist Aid, Hungarian Reformed Church Aid are all scaling up their involvement in supporting migrants and are also trying to coordinate their activities among themselves and with the government.

Local authorities in towns of bigger railway junctions such as Szeged, Cegléd, Győr, Debrecen, and others have set up makeshift help centres where they are providing fresh water taps, stocks of sandwiches and power sockets for migrants to charge their phones. In these points civil organizations and individuals have joined to assist arriving migrants.

4. ACT Alliance response

So far Hungarian InterchurchAid has made preliminary surveys, and has started to coordinate its activities and plans with the relevant authorities and is participating in the coordination mechanism of the largest NGOs.

A national fundraising appeal was issued by HIA to raise funds to support the organization's activities.

Collaboration with the Lutheran Church in Hungary and congregations is given priority during the work. The Lutheran Church was the first to support HIA's actions by a total of 3,500 EUR, which was used to provide assistance to children and their mothers in the form of children's clothes, diapers, baby food and hygienic items. The donation was delivered to the Nagyfa temporary reception centre on 1 July, 2015. The first donation of HIA provided a one-month' supply for 100 children in the camp.

HIA has also called on other aid agencies to make every effort in their respective areas to make migrants' conditions more humane when staying in Hungary and waiting for the authorities' decision concerning their status.

In co-operation with the Lutheran Church a significant, national action has been initiated: volunteers in the congregations will collect toys, sporting goods, clothes and other supplies for migrant children staying in Hungary to be distributed by HIA in the reception centres.

HIA have started to provide psychosocial services for children in two temporary reception centres: Bicske and Vámoszabadi. The target group of the project is children between 3-14 years.

5. Planned activities

Hungarian InterChurchAid plans to launch an ACT appeal with a budget of 250,000 -300,000 USD to intervene in the following sectors of work:

1. Psychosocial assistance to children and mothers in two reception centres (Vámoszabadi, Bicske), provision of necessary tools for activities
2. Distribution of hygienic items to women with small children in two locations (Vámoszabadi, Bicske)
3. Partial reconstruction of HIA's former reception centre and re-opening it for migrant families (total capacity 100 persons)
4. Preparation for winterization

6. Constraints

Main constraints include limited national fundraising opportunities, and very few professionals on migration issues.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org).

For further information please contact:

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