



Refugees in Serbia need our help. Photo by Dino Mujanovic/CRS



Emergency: Migrants in Crisis

PROVIDING RELIEF TO FAMILIES FLEEING CONFLICT

CRS SCALES UP RESPONSE TO MIGRANT CRISIS

Conflicts, civil strife and economic conditions in the Middle East, Asia and Africa have dramatically increased the flow of refugees and economic migrants to Europe. As the Syrian conflict enters its fifth year, a combination of desperation and hope is leading growing numbers of Syrians to attempt an extremely perilous journey toward Europe. Harrowing stories have emerged of death, starvation and abuse at the hands of people smugglers. In 2015 alone, some 2,000 Syrians have drowned in the Mediterranean in their attempt to reach European shores.

Desperate Conditions, Desperate Choices

Many families risking their lives today are fleeing war, conflict and persecution. These are valid reasons to seek safety and international protection. But the refugees are often unable to enter Europe through regular channels: Restrictive policies and a lack of documentation and legal alternatives are keeping them out. Over land, they confront increasingly restrictive border control measures. Many have become victims of trafficking and are subjected to abuse en route. They often see no other options but to undertake dangerous journeys at the hands of smugglers. Some spend their life savings or take on massive debt and risk their lives for a new start.

QUICK FACTS

Displaced in 2014	59.4 million
Origin of most	Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Eritrea
CRS response locations	Albania, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia
Funding needs	\$2 Million
Priorities	Food, shelter, living supplies, legal support
Partners	Caritas and the Church, UN, NGOs, Gov't Ministries

CRS is working with our Church partners in Greece, Albania, Macedonia and Serbia to provide immediate assistance, including food, water, sanitation, medical care and legal services. With assistance to the most vulnerable and destitute along the main migration routes, we are helping to alleviate their hardship. CRS and our partners will adapt programming to meet the rapidly changing needs on the ground. We remain faithful to our principles to support those in greatest need, regardless of national, religious and ideological beliefs.

At the Frontlines of Need

More than 85% of those arriving in Greece are from refugee-producing countries, principally Syria (60%) Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Eritrea. While Italy has received a slightly larger number of sea arrivals, Greece is the most seriously affected so far. In May 2015, 18,586 people arrived in Greece. But the routes appear to be shifting in response to the situation in Libya and other developments. The situation of the new arrivals is dire: Capacity on the Greek islands—Lesvos, Chios, Kos and Rhodes—is overstretched. Most people continue onward to Northern and Western Europe, including through the Balkan countries of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia, to seek asylum. The deteriorating security situation in Libya, where many migrants reside before departing for Europe, has increased migration pressures.

In locations of transit and arrival, migrants face abysmal conditions. Many report being tortured and abused by traffickers. Children and women are at higher risk of being exploited or trafficked. Under the United Nations Convention on Child Rights, refugee children have the right to special protection.

People stay where they can—occupying public parks, forests and abandoned factories and other properties. Many countries in southern Europe are unprepared to meet the growing needs. While the rights of refugees are protected by the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), economically unstable countries, such as Albania, struggle to have the capacity and resources to respond.

Food and Emergency Living Supplies

By the time refugee families arrive in Greece, Serbia or another country, they are exhausted and hungry from a harrowing journey. In many government-operated registration centers or camps where families, including many children, are staying, there are few toilets and insufficient access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. CRS and our partners are providing vital food, living items and dignified shelter so refugee and migrant families—especially women, children and the elderly—can meet their most basic human needs. Living supplies include sleeping bags and mats, hygiene packages, food rations, clean water and other support. Humanitarian relief kits are provided at key transit points, and in locations where migrants are arriving with their families.



A young Syrian refugee. Photo by Kim Pozniak/CRS

Temporary Shelter

Families who still have financial resources are buying tents from local shops, while many others are sleeping under the open sky or in former hotel buildings. Governments in key transit sites, like Serbia, cannot shelter the unregistered or those unwilling to go to asylum centers. As a result, these refugees and migrants are occupying public parks, forests and abandoned factories while continuing their trip towards the European Union. CRS and our partners are providing temporary shelters where possible. These are large structures equipped with beds, toilets and showers to provide basic shelter and sanitary needs for transiting refugees, those returned from the border or those returned based on readmission agreement from Hungary.

Information, Translation, Legal Resources

Migrants arriving in a new country rarely receive complete or accurate information about their rights to apply for asylum. Furthermore, information is typically provided in the local language, while most migrants' native language is Arabic. CRS and our Church partners provide critical information, translation and language services, as well as legal resources so refugees and migrant families know their rights and options, and are able to make informed decisions. All legal support takes place in accordance with domestic legal and international obligations.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

To donate online: donate.crs.org/migrantcrisis

By mail:

Catholic Relief Services

P.O. Box 17090

Baltimore, MD 21297-0303

In the memo line, write "Migrant Crisis"

By phone: 877-435-7277

