Refugee and Migrant Children’s Perceptions of Access to Services in Accommodation Sites

Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, April 2017

Context
As of March 2017, it is estimated that more than 20,000 (or one third) of the recent refugee and migrant population in Greece are children. More than one third of them (34%) live in accommodation (open) sites across the country. Government actors, national and international NGOs, UN agencies and volunteer groups offer services at these sites with many catering specifically for the needs of children. This factsheet presents a snapshot of children’s perceptions of services provided with a focus on healthcare, legal advice, food, education and protection.

Methodology
This factsheet presents findings from an assessment conducted by REACH, in the framework of a partnership with UNICEF, on refugee and migrant children’s perception of services available in accommodation (open) sites in April 2017. The data was collected from one safe zone for unaccompanied and separated children in an open site near Thessaloniki and one accommodation (open) site near Athens. On each site, three key informant (KI) interviews were conducted with service providers, coordinators and child protection officers. In addition, focus group discussions took place with children and mothers living in these sites; three discussions with unaccompanied and separated children aged 15 to 17, and one discussion with mothers. As data collection took place in two locations only, findings are not representative of the entire refugee and migrant children population in accommodation (open) sites in Greece and should be considered as indicative only.

Children’s Concerns over available Services

Healthcare
2/2 sites reported healthcare to be easy to access, as medical care was available in the location, as indicated by KIs. Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing healthcare, by number of group discussions:

1. Long waiting times for appointments (2)
2. Lack of specialised care (2)
3. Lack of psychological support (1)

Legal advice
2/2 sites reported legal advice to be easy to access, as lawyers were regularly visiting the location (twice per week), as indicated by KIs. Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing legal advice, by number of group discussions:

1. Slow procedures with getting documents (3)
2. No one available to give legal advice (2)
3. Lack of information about procedures (1)

In 2/2 sites, KIs reported that children of certain nationalities have more challenges in accessing legal advice.

Food
2/2 sites reported food to be easy to access, as food was provided three times a day, as indicated by KIs. However, in both sites, KIs reported the food was either of poor quality or not enough.

Children and mothers reported the following problems in accessing food, by number of group discussions:

1. Food is of poor quality (3)
2. Not enough food is provided (2)
3. Children not allowed to buy and cook on their own (2)

Education
41% of school-aged children attending formal education. 19% of school-aged children attending non-formal education.

Barriers to access to formal education
Key informants and children reported different barriers in accessing education. Most reported barriers included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key informants</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties with language</td>
<td>Lack of awareness why children cannot go to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children do not want to stay in Greece</td>
<td>Non-formal education is not sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment time has passed</td>
<td>Long waiting times to register</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Children who stop attending formal education

2/2 sites reported that at least one child had stopped attending formal education, as indicated by KIs.

Reported reasons for children dropping out of school, by number of sites:

1. Difficulties with language 2/2
2. Lessons are not helpful 2/2
3. School is too far away 1/2

Activities

Children and mothers reported that there were not enough freetime activities offered on site. Most frequently reported concerns about activities for children, by number of group discussions:

1. Not enough activities provided (3)
2. Boredom (3)
3. Low mood due to inactivity (2)

Protection concerns on site

2/2 sites reported child-specific protection concerns occuring on site, as indicated by KIs. Most reported concerns, as reported by children, mothers and key informants, included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported by children</th>
<th>Reported by mothers</th>
<th>Reported by key informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fights on site, including people carrying knives</td>
<td>Fights on site</td>
<td>Drug use on site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Children want to work irregularly to meet their needs</td>
<td>Risk of sexual abuse for children</td>
<td>Violence towards children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No further concerns</td>
<td>Children engage in transactional sex</td>
<td>Strangers on site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End notes

3. Respondents could provide multiple answers.
4. ‘Non-formal education’ is an organised educational activity, which takes place outside the established formal system, but is administered by trained personnel. This data pertains to the assessed population only. For attendance rates across Greece please consult: -UNICEF/REACH Education FS Link to be added once final-.
5. Lessons were reported as not helpful because children were waiting to be relocated and, as such, not interested in classes taught in Greek, or because lessons were not adapted to children’s skill level.