

OCTOBER 2015

04_NEWSLETTER



IOM International Organization for Migration
ΔΟΜ Διεθνής Οργανισμός Μεταναστεύσεως

Supporting Organizations that Assist Migrant asylum seeking population in Greece (SOAM)

The International Organization for Migration in Greece is the Fund Operator for the Programme “**Supporting Organizations that Assist Migrant Asylum Seeking Population in Greece**” (**SOAM**) in the framework of the European Economic Area Grants (EEA Grants).

The **SOAM Programme** aims at increasing the quantity and the quality of the reception centres, managed by NGOs, to the migrant asylum seeking population in Greece. Based on the current situation in Greece, civil society is increasingly called upon to provide asylum seekers with shelter, primary and secondary care. SOAM’s primary goal is to support NGOs to operate reception centres for vulnerable asylum seekers, especially unaccompanied minors in Greece.

The **Programme** supports Non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs), with at least 2 year - experience working with asylum seekers and providing services such as medical and psycho-social care and legal counselling.

Also, beneficiaries of the **Programme** are asylum seekers with emphasis on unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups such as single-parent families, people with disabilities, people with chronic health problems and the elderly.

Newsletters' Scope

The purpose of the SOAM Newsletters is to share information on the operation of the funded reception centres, identify and promote good practices and raise awareness on issues concerning the asylum seeking population in Greece.

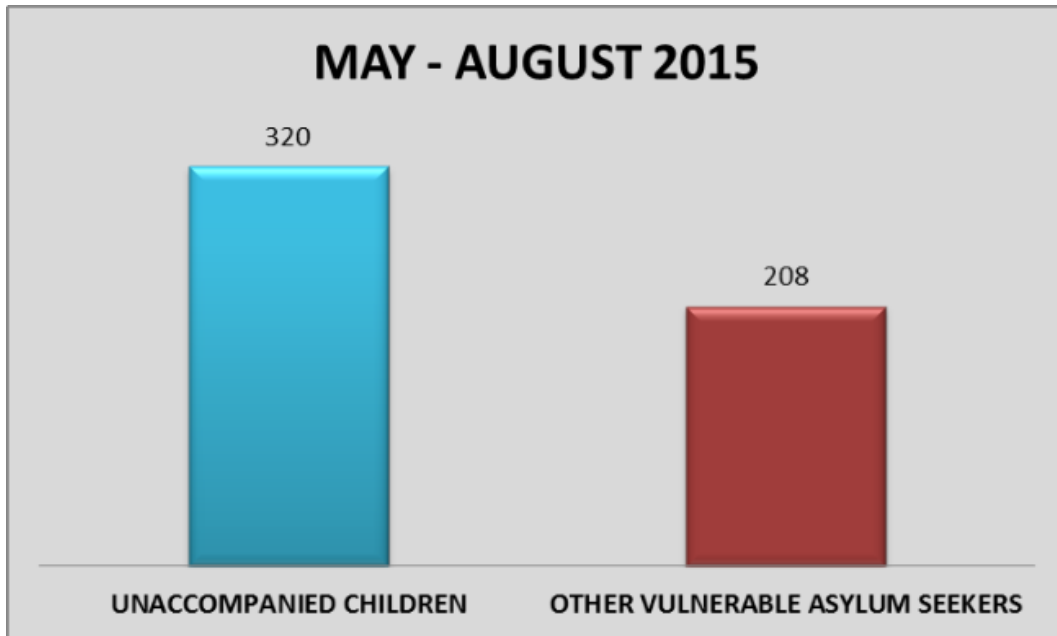
04_Newsletter includes some quantitative data about the operation of SOAM Programme for the period May 2015 - August 2015 together with some information concerning practices that are implemented in the Reception Centres run by the SOAM Consortiums.

International Organization for Migration - SOAM Programme Management Unit

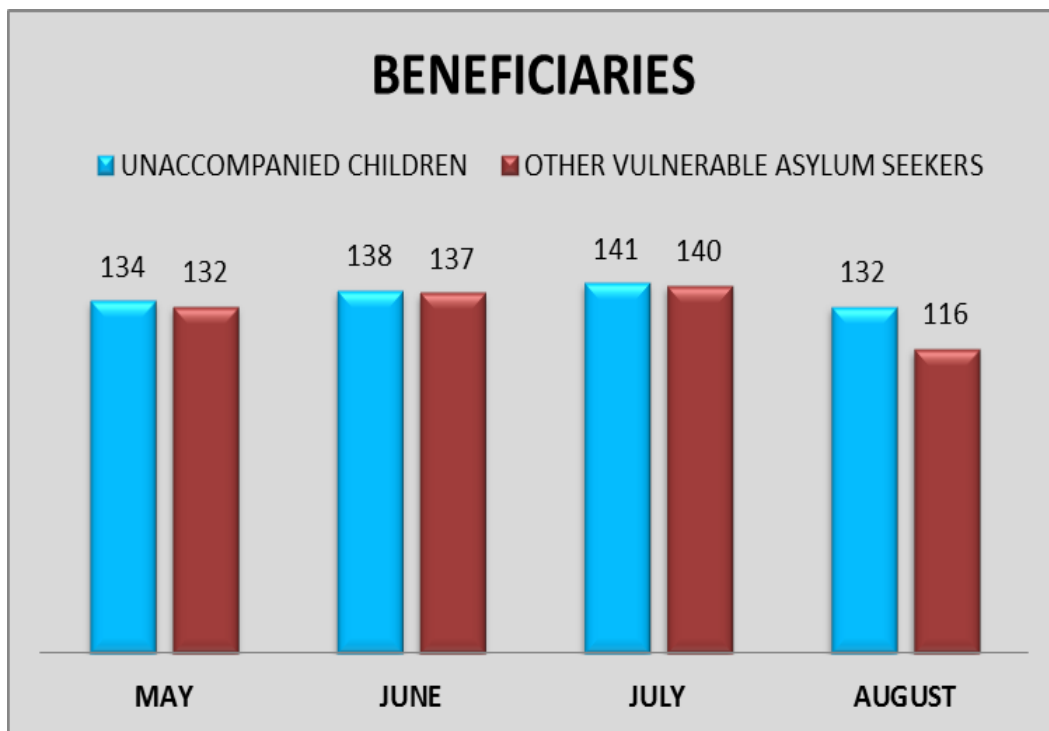


SOAM Programme supports the operation of 4 Reception Centres with total capacity of 272 spaces. Out of the 272 spaces the 120 are for unaccompanied children and 152 for other vulnerable asylum seekers. The referrals are coordinated by the National Centre for Social Solidarity, under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity.

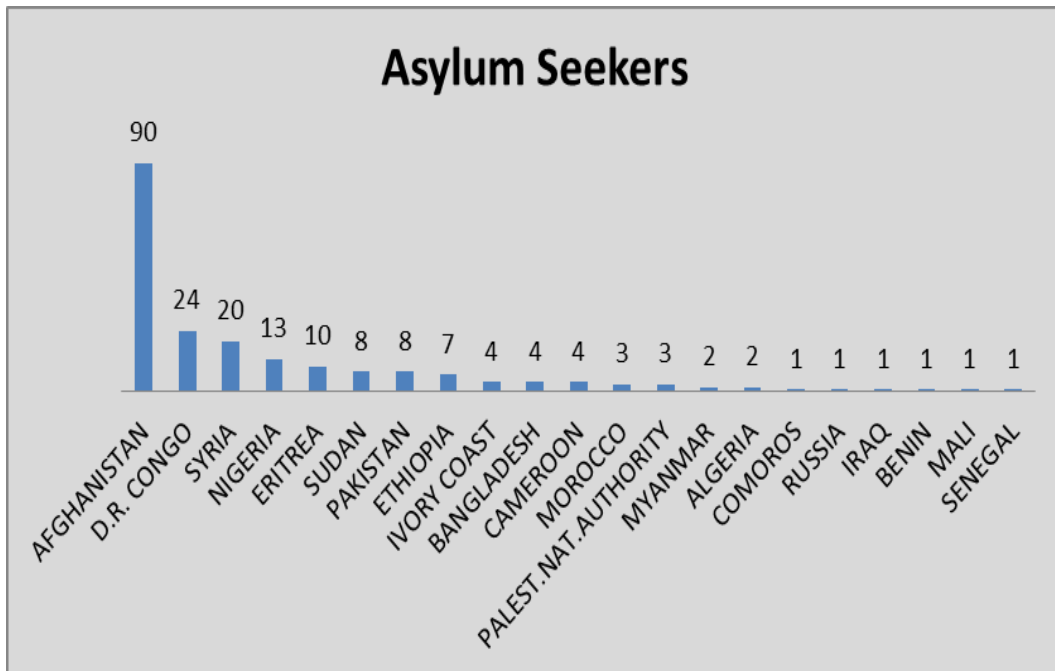
During the period May - August 2015, SOAM Reception Centres hosted 528 beneficiaries, and more specifically, 320 unaccompanied children and 208 other vulnerable asylum seekers.



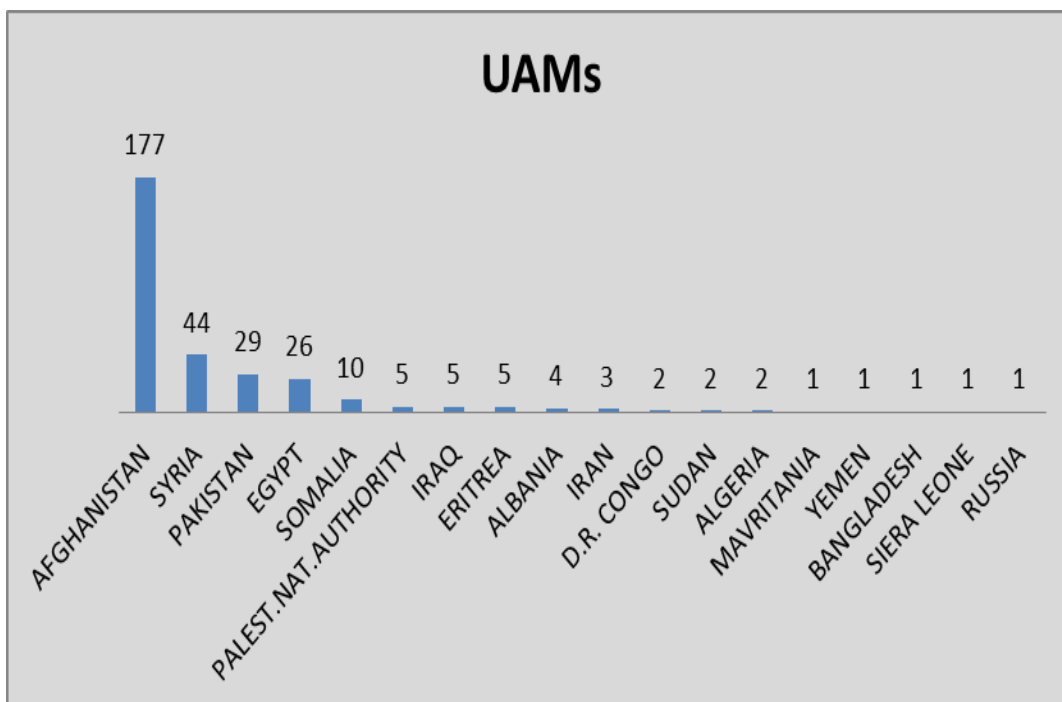
According to the available monthly data the number of beneficiaries demonstrates just a small increase in July while figures remain almost on the same level for the other 3 reported months.



With regards to the countries of origin of the vulnerable asylum seekers who benefited by SOAM Programme, 43% was from Afghanistan, 12% from D.R.Congo and 10% from Syria.



Concerning the countries of origin of UAMs, Afghanistan has again the highest percentage that is 55%, and it follows Syria with 14% and Pakistan with 9%.



Reception Centre for vulnerable 70 asylum seekers in the center of Athens, coordinated by Medecins du Monde - Greece in partnership with the Greek Council for Refugees.



Since February 2015 psycho - educational groups have been organized on a weekly basis, for the empowerment of adults staying in the Reception Centre for Vulnerable Asylum Seekers. The groups consisted of 10 women and 35 men. Without doubt, these people have experienced extreme conditions (abuse, loss of loved ones, war) and in addition to the above, today, they have to deal with living together with other persons coming from different cultures and civilizations.

On this basis, the team geared towards meeting two objectives:

- To encourage the free expression of feelings and thoughts and emotional relief, mainly through

various themes for discussion and through experiential exercises.

- The psycho-education in framing, assertive behavior and harmonious coexistence.

The coordinators that have the responsibility for the proper functioning of the group, the design and selection of activities and have a supervisory role in the whole process is a social worker and a psychologist. Auxiliary and yet highly important role in this part of the work played by interpreters since the participants in the group speak different languages.

The material that was used as "food for thought" in the meetings varied; a very important debate based on the lyrics of the song of Tony Allen's "Boat Journey" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeNCLU_Ho6M) concerning the crash of "Lampedusa" and the refugee drama that unfolded there. The selection of these verses was to discuss the issue of migration and to make a first contact with the feelings and thoughts of the participants on this issue. Our aim was to connect the group with an experience so common to them and realize that although they are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds can share the same anxieties, the same fears, and the same dreams for a more dignified and better quality life.

During another meeting, the short film "Strange fruit" was screened (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_v0CYJY0Tck). The short film concerned racism and xenophobia and because it belongs to animation where no words rather than move, the image would be understood by all and we would avoid the lengthy process of simultaneous translation. The choice of the film aimed at participants speaking on the subject of racism, identify themselves and their place in present reality, whether themselves are affected by such events and they can react against it.

The operation of groups brings positive elements in the cooperation between the guests and help in better understanding of people who are staying temporarily at the Reception Centre as also to improve their mental state.



MELLON (FUTURE), coordinated by NOSTOS in partnership with the organizations EADAP, IASIS and Ergoerevnikiki. The centre is located in Moschato (Attica) and its capacity is 102 spaces, 60 for unaccompanied minors and 42 for mothers with children.



“MELLON” (“FUTURE”) - Asylum Seekers Shelter hosts 60 unaccompanied minors and 14 single mother families. The age of the beneficiaries varies from new-born babies to 40-year old mothers, including school age kids and teenagers. Their countries of origin, the language they speak, their cultural background are different. But there is one thing that they have in common: they have all been through a dangerous journey in their attempt to avoid the risks of war and poverty in their home countries. And, they feel that they have made it. They have arrived in Europe or at least they have arrived somewhere safe.

The goal of the MELLON Shelter, in other words its “raison d’être” is to respond to their needs. However this is more complicated than it sounds: cultural background, family conditions, aspirations and expectations, the past and the plans for the future and, more importantly, age

and legal status are decisive factors of what the person (no matter his/her age) acknowledges as a need that has to be fulfilled. In other words, a pair of shoes may be of equal importance as the urgency of imminent birth-giving. So, what comes first?

The answer to the question is obviously the setting of priorities. This is no easy task though, given the diversity mentioned above. To help the MELLON staff with addressing it, besides their common sense and their awareness on the limitations of resources, the partnership that runs MELLON has established a methodology centred at the MELLON partnership and staff: Mainly it is the synergy between the partners; each of the partner organizations has a speciality that acts complimentary to the expertise of the rest of them. As such, the MELLON partnership represents the whole range of services that address the needs of the residents. At its core, acting as its main operational "tool" also reflecting the partnerships synergies is the Social Service.

The Social Service of MELLON is the connecting node of all the different aspects in the beneficiaries' lives and therefore of the range of needs that have to be accommodated and covered in order for the occupants to feel safe, secure and able to make decisions about their life. For this, the social workers and psychologists that work at MELLON have at their disposal a set of tools that help them address individually each person's needs. Are these tools enough, are we always successful? Of course not. More often than not, the reality is stronger than our goals or aims: the freedom of the journey-to-be-continued is more attractive, especially for our young guests, than the "care with rules" that MELLON has to offer. However, realizing your limits without giving up is what we gain. At least in terms of knowledge and expertise.



STEGI PLUS (+), coordinated by PRAKSIS in partnership with the Hellenic Red Cross. The consortium operates 2 centres, one in Athens for 30 unaccompanied minors and one in Patras for 30 unaccompanied minors and 40 other vulnerable asylum seekers.



One of the highlights of summer 2015 was the enrollment of beneficiaries (from both Accommodation Centres in Athens and Patras) in various summer camps. The minors had the chance, first of all, to relax and enjoy days which were full of creative activities, swimming and playing with their new friends. The minors had also the chance to explore the nature, to get accustomed with rare species such as the sea turtle *caretta caretta*, to camp in the forest and to make new friends.

The summer camps proved to be an important means for not only for the interaction of the

beneficiaries in Greek society but also an educational tool for getting the Greek people familiar with the population of unaccompanied minors. Children from Afghanistan, Greece, Syria, France and Egypt played together, spent days together and communicated in a creative way.

Moreover, during summer - as it is the case for the whole year round, the reception centres focused on outreach activities (cultural and creative ones), communal activities having as public information and awareness, further educational sessions for unaccompanied minors who will be reunited with their families. The methodology implemented in these outreach and community activities focuses on the information and awareness of the public - local communities, local authorities and agencies, enterprises, civil society. Special emphasis is given in joint activities where the beneficiaries and members of local communities get together and participate in activities that integrate them and - most importantly - provides the beneficiaries with a sense of belonging and assertiveness.





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