

CARITAS BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA STRATEGY FOR WORKING WITH MIGRANTS/REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS 2021



January 2021



CONTEXT: MIGRANTS/REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Around 10,000 people on the move are waiting for a better life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In total, state institutions registered almost 60,000 persons arriving in the country since 2018. The accommodation in camps and centers is demanding and difficult due to insufficient capacities. There are never enough accommodation places for those in need.

Migrants and refugees do not ask for many things, only for an opportunity to shower, a change of clothes, some food, and access to internet to contact their loved ones far away. They left family members behind in their country of origin who are waiting for them to settle and start a better life, and bring to them the same better life one day. The national and diocesan Caritas organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina provide support in Sarajevo Canton and Tuzla Canton (Caritas Archdiocese Vrhbosna), in Una Sana Canton (Caritas Banja Luka), and in Herzegovina Neretva Canton (Caritas Dioceses Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkan). Between 2018 and May 2020 Caritas in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported over 62.000 persons. The partners of Caritas are the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women Initiative (BHWI), the Italian organization IPSIA, Association Puž, Association Emmaus, IOM, UNHCR, Merhemet Tuzla, as well as volunteers from Sarajevo and Tuzla. Caritas Bosnia and Herzegovina received financial support from the Caritas network (Italy, Austria, Spain, Poland, Slovenia, USA, Switzerland and Belgium), and outside the network from informal groups of people from Switzerland, the Embassy of the Maltese Order and LDS (Latter-Day Saints) charity.

All the efforts undertaken by Caritas, with the goal to support the people in reception and asylum centers, could not be implemented without the endorsement by the Ministry of Security and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the managers of the centers in assessing the needs and collecting advice for better and more adequate support.

Achievements for the period May 2018 – May 2020

- Total supported persons in two years through different actions: 41,525
- 3,305 persons with food in the asylum center of Delijaš, of which 960 children
- 26,481 persons on the move in Bira camp in Bihać, in Ušivak camp in Hadžići and on the streets of Tuzla by distributing hygiene packages and by giving access to the Caritas laundry service and washed and dried 97,266 kg of clothes
- In just two months, 179 persons used the showers, Internet access, and other support in the daily centre in Tuzla
- 2,357 persons received non-food items
- Caritas provided 8 washing machines, 10 boilers, 8 fridges, 4 stoves and 33 bed sheets for the centers in Salakovac and Delijaš
- Medical devices to measure blood sugar, blood pressure and body temperature, and inhalers. In three months, 123 persons used these devices, 90% of which were children
- 126,217 hot drinks were distributed to 28,795 persons on the move

Period May 2020 – November 2020: Important events for Caritas:

- Pope Francis made a donation that was used to open the “Social Corner” in the centers in Ušivak and Sedra as well as for the distribution of non-food items (NFI) for people in camps
- The “Social Corners” in the centers in Ušivak and Sedra were opened in the end of October 2020 and in the beginning of November 2020
- The laundry service in the center in Ušivak is in process of opening, in cooperation with IOM and funded by Caritas Switzerland
- After the closing of Bira camp, Caritas, with the support of CRS, established a mobile laundry service for Lipa camp

Other important events:

1. Bira camp closed in October 2020, and all residents were moved either to the center in Borići (if they were minors) or to the newly established Lipa camp. However, most residents ended up without shelter due to a lack of accommodation places in Lipa camp.
2. Lipa camp had not been winterized due to a lack of infrastructure, and IOM asked from the authorities to reopen Bira camp in order to introduce adequate living space for the wintertime in Lipa camp. All negotiations progressed very slowly, and were further complicated by local elections in November.
3. In Tuzla, Puž opened a second safe house with funding by CRS. In Tuzla Canton, there are accommodation capacities for around 50 to 60 persons.
4. Over 5,000 migrants are living on the streets, in woods and in ruined facilities; only a small number lives in private accommodation. In Una Sana Canton (USC), the local government forbids the distribution of the support, so all actors provide the support secretly.
5. Caritas together with other actors is distributing support for migrants in a difficult situation, to help them survive the winter.
6. Blažuj and Hadžići camp are in the focus from November 2020 of attention after the recent death of a local young boy. Allegedly, migrants wanted to enter a local café bar, but were forbidden to do so by the owner. He called his friends and brother to prevent them from entering the bar. A fight broke out and a local man died. The police is searching for the persons responsible for the death; a migrant. The same day, the local population in the municipality of Ilidža organized protests, requesting that the authorities deal with the migrants who live in the streets and “cause trouble”.

The situation in the country is unsecure and it is highly important to remain flexible when implementing activities. Unstable support systems and a toxic political climate often require a quick and flexible adjustment of the action implemented by Caritas staff in the field.

CURRENT CARITAS PROGRAMME FOR MIGRANTS

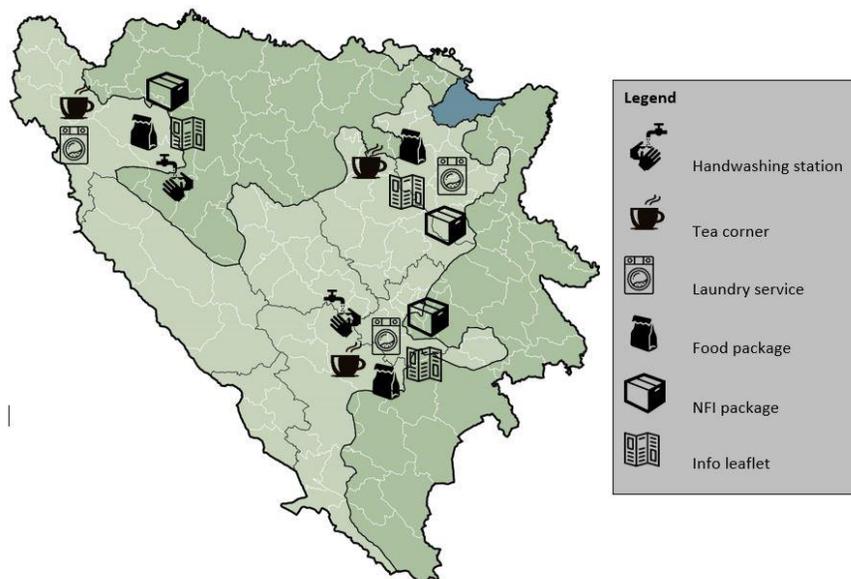
Caritas is strategically well positioned, both geographically and in terms of sectors of work. Caritas Bosnia and Herzegovina works in three thematic areas:

- water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) with the provision of laundry services)
- psychosocial support with the establishment of “social corners” and daily center
- food and non-food item (NFI) distribution.

Geographically, Caritas is supporting migrants in three Cantons:

- Una Sana Canton
- Tuzla Canton
- Sarajevo Canton.

The support provided by Caritas is a mixture of camp and outreach activities, and can easily be adapted according to the needs and turnovers in the country regarding the migrant situation. The map below presents the outreach and camp activities in the three locations.



During the implementation of its support for migrants, Caritas in Bosnia and Herzegovina established a network of different partner organizations in different locations, which are supporting the implementation of the Caritas programme.

Activities in Una Sana Canton

In Una Sana Canton, Caritas runs a laundry service in Bira camp. It was a stationary activity until the camp was closed in October 2020. Together with its partners, Caritas established a mobile laundry service for Lipa camp. Only 14 days after the closing of Lipa camp in December 2020, Caritas started anew as a laundry mobile service. The daily number of services varies between from 100 to 150 bags of clothes.

For its outreach activities, Caritas benefits of its good relationship with partner organizations such as IPSIA, its volunteer network, the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to distribute food, hygiene and NFI for migrants sleeping roughly on streets and woods.

In the camps of Lipa and Sedra, Caritas, together with IPSIA, runs a social café and a social corner. In both places, migrants can get a hot drink and take part in social activities for different vulnerable groups. The activities created in the social café and corner are adjusted to men, women and children.



Activities in Tuzla Canton

The mobile laundry service in Tuzla is a service provided to migrants living in three accommodations (in the two safe houses run by Puž and in the Emmaus house), as well as to the migrants visiting the daily center. Employees from both Caritas and its partner organization Merhamet Tuzla operate the laundry service together in a space owned by Merhemet. This joint effort by Caritas and different local organizations provides a comprehensive support for people on the streets or accommodated in safe houses.



The daily center is a common project by Puž, Emmaus and Caritas. The center provides migrants with the opportunity to take a shower, eat some food, get a few non-food items, drink a hot tea or coffee or use internet. The daily center is a safe place for migrants where they can take part in workshops to overcome their fears, and speak about their pain suffered on their way to a better life.

Sarajevo Canton action

Caritas opened a third laundry service in the camp in Ušivak, on January 2021. This service is provided for migrants living in the camp, with the intention to extend the service for people living on the streets in Sarajevo Canton.

The social corner in Ušivak camp has the same aim as those in Una Sana Canton. It is operated in cooperation with the Youth Center in Sarajevo.



Volunteers, DRC and Caritas organize the other distributions of food, hygiene and NFI.

Distribution of food, NFI



Caritas is devoted to contributing to a better life for migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and therefore coordinates all distribution of food, hygiene and non-food items with all actors who are present in a specific location. Since the beginning of the migrant emergency in the country, in 2018, Caritas has been distributing food packages to people on the move in asylum and refugee center, while at the same time delivering food for migrants stranded in Bihać, Tuzla, Ključ and Sarajevo. All non-food items are procured and delivered upon the needs identified on each location and depend on the situation and the number of people present.

STRATEGY FOR 2021

For 2021, Caritas brainstormed the possibilities of being active in all fields of the action currently ongoing. It will develop a new Emergency Appeal (EA) to continue with the ongoing humanitarian activities in the camps and during outreach missions.

Caritas Belgium is taking actions in advocacy and to submit a project proposal to ECHO with Caritas Bosnia and Herzegovina as a local implementing partner. Caritas Bosnia and Herzegovina is also planning to develop a long lasting project for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees/migrants staying for a longer time in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Covid-19 is still an ongoing problem in the country affecting all Caritas actions. Covid-19 should be addressed in each segment of emergency response, but also in the integration project.

The Caritas strategy has three segments planned for the upcoming year: an emergency response, integration and advocacy

Emergency response

- WASH – laundry service Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton and Canton Sarajevo
- FOOD – distribution of food packages in winter time for people on streets
- NFI – distribution of non-food items (NFI) in winter for people on streets
- COVID 19 – leaflets and protection gear distribution

The Emergency Appeal (EA) is the emergency response project launched through the Caritas Europa network, for the first time in 2018. It consisted of three segments WASH, FOOD and NFI. As stated above, the WASH segment covers the three laundry services, while FOOD and NFI distributions take place in the most critical time and place. The current appeal is ongoing until March 2021, and Caritas has the full intention to renew the appeal for at least one year.

Additionally, Covid-19 is a crosscutting activity focused on prevention measures, in different languages, and on the distribution of protection gear.

Integration programme for people seeking asylum long-term accommodated in Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Social café Lipa
- Social corner Sedra
- Social corner Ušivak
- Daily center Tuzla

For its integration project, Caritas plans to develop a project with specific education and social activities using the already existing resources in the social café and corners and the daily center. Caritas will implement the activities with collaborating organizations and associations who are already working in the field with migrants, such as Puž and IPSIA. The activities as such are in the process of being developed with the diocesan Caritas from Sarajevo and Banja Luka. This is an ongoing process and Caritas still needs to apply for these funds through one of the partners

who already suggested this as an opportunity. The plan is to have an integration project of three years, after it is submitted and approved.

Advocacy with local authorities is also one of the activities, which will be developed in the project, together with Covid-19 awareness. It concerns not only migrants/refugees and asylum seekers, but also staff working with these people. Due to poor conditions and situation with migrants in the country, the advocacy for respecting human rights and establishing humane living conditions are very important.

Advocacy part is also planned through different media releases to highlight all problems and gaps on global and regional channels. This mean coordination with both secretariat to raise questions regarding human dignity, living conditions, protection and security of people for which we support.