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Press Briefing Note

Mobile Medical Units Reach over 1,200 Migrants and Refugees in Greece in two months

Athens - IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and partner Médecins du Monde (MdM) announced today that they have rapidly provided primary health care services to over 1,200 migrants and refugees on the Greek mainland via mobile medical units in a two-month period (September and October 2017).

The medical teams have also conducted over 3,400 primary health care consultations -almost 80 per day- since the EU-funded project started in September 2017. The consultations cover examinations, medicine prescriptions and referrals to other facilities for secondary care in three open accommodation facilities in Greece.

Gianluca Rocco, IOM's Chief of Mission for Greece explained that thousands of migrants and refugees currently living in Greece face health issues that require immediate care. However, they often face difficulties in accessing the National Health System outside the accommodation facilities where they reside.

"The medical assistance is very much needed. Improving the health of migrants and refugees is a fundamental step towards helping them begin to rebuild their lives," said Mr. Rocco.

"We are collaborating closely with MdM in Greece and supporting the Greek Government and authorities to alleviate suffering, protect human dignity and safeguard the human right to health," he added.

IOM and MdM are also working closely to ensure a smooth transition and handover of health services to the Greek Government from 2018, and welcome the integration of migrants and refugees in the national healthcare system.

"We are very satisfied with the cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and the European Commission," said Christos Dimopoulos, Protection and Integration Projects Manager of Médecins du Monde in Greece.

"Through the project we have been able to provide needed health care services to vulnerable migrants and refugees while also moving towards handing over their health coverage to the National Health System," he added.

The mobile medical units are comprised of general practitioners, pediatricians, dentists, nurses, interpreters and drivers who provide primary healthcare services five days per week in morning and afternoon shifts. They work in the Thermopyles, Serres and Oinofyta (which closed on 3rd November) open centres.



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The units conduct health consultations and provide primary health care services for minor medical issues such as viral infections, colds and injuries. They also prescribe medicine and follow persons with chronic illnesses such as heart diseases, diabetes, respiratory problems, and gynecological health problems.

For people in need of secondary health care, MdM medical units facilitate referrals to hospitals by organizing appointments, and by providing transportation and escorts where possible.

"Health care is essential for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece, as it is for every person. For this reason, the European Commission supports its humanitarian partners in the country in their efforts to provide them with primary health assistance," said Evangelos Petratos, the European Commission's humanitarian expert in Greece.

"We are glad to see the achievements so far and the good cooperation between our partners and the Greek health authorities," he said.

The joint IOM - MdM project is funded by the European Commission.

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