



SUCCESS STORY

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for prevention of COVID-19 transmission

The coronavirus in BiH is equally risky and hard for anyone living or temporary residing in the country - locals, migrants, tourists, even those who are just traveling through BiH. We are facing a difficult situation in which everyone needs to do their part in order to overcome the crisis which has become a global problem.

Even before the appearance of the first confirmed COVID-19 positive patient in BiH, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), together with partner organizations, was committed to reducing the risks of spreading the disease. During the first operational and coordination meetings of health authorities, a set of preventive measures were defined, as well as detailed instructions shared on a daily and transparent exchange of information, pieces of advice and experiences among the organizations dedicated to health care of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. DRC is particularly active in training and educating of our staff, in accordance with the recommendations of the WHO and health authorities. Preventive measures implemented within TRCs are within the lines of WHO recommendations and include information dissemination on all needed materials within the camps. DRC teams together with the camp management were also providing informative sessions for beneficiaries in the camps (in all languages) and making sure that the emphasis is put on all important measures, as well as on minimized contacts with other people. The materials which contains information on Covid-19 prevention are available in each TRC in the following languages: English, Urdu, Pashto, Arabic and Bengali.

“The DRC in BiH – with the funding from the DG ECHO – focuses on improving access to primary and secondary health care including psychosocial and mental health services to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, as well as on enhancing the overall protective environment, primarily for the most vulnerable persons of concern, including the survivors of SGBV. Previously prescribed safe measures and steps to be taken in case that viral disease occurred among a migrant population, were quickly adapted to the needs of COVID-19, in cooperation with local health institutions and the WHO. Together with IOM, we have provided and equipped special parts within the temporary reception centers for the needs of isolation wards for preventive purposes, but also for the treatment of patients. Thanks to the funding of DG ECHO and IcSP, we have additionally strengthened the already quality referral mechanisms with health care institutions and confirmed that only teamwork would bring results,” said **Verica Rečević**, DRC Program Manager.

Through the projects of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, DRC has provided full support to health institutions to alleviate the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in BiH, but also to relieve medical workers from an increased number of examinations and interventions under the influence of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees. Specialized medical equipment was donated, as well as numerous devices to the health centers and public health institutes, which has improved the quality of services provided.



"The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic aggravates the situation for all people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with even higher health risk exposure for migrants. Switzerland thus strongly urges the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities at all levels to step up their efforts to provide emergency assistance and to agree on a longer-term, sustainable solution for the current migrant crisis. We remain committed to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in managing the challenging migrant and public health situation in line with international human rights standards", stated **Barbara Dätwyler Scheuer**, Director of Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Particular attention is on health care institutions in Una-Sana Canton, Canton Sarajevo, Herzegovina-Neretva and Tuzla canton, which are affected by the increased influx of migrants and asylum seekers, being without adequate accommodation, without access or with limited access to basic services, including health services. Within the project **"Response to health needs of migrants and general population in relation to COVID-19 outbreak"** funded by the Government of Switzerland, the Danish Refugee Council BiH with the support of relevant health institutions seeks to find necessary solutions and provide effective answers to prevention and risk mitigation of COVID-19, concerning healthcare professionals, various service providers and people on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On that occasion a series of online workshops for the health workers which are direct service providers for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, have been held with the aim to establish the Standard Operating Procedure for prevention of COVID-19 transmission (SOP) in order to prevent the occurrence of COVID-19 among people on the move and local population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Employees of the Sarajevo Canton Public Health Institute, together with the DRC, have been 'on the go' for the past two years, but successfully, resolving situations concerning the health care of people on the move. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and our joint reaction and response to this virus among the people on the move, we finally assessed that the conditions are meet to formally draft a document with progress so far made, in the form of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), comprehending all aspects into a standardized form. In practice, these procedures have been carried out for a long time. We have defined the chain of responsibility of all directly involved health actors, but also of those who cooperate with health workers, in terms of access to health by people on the move," said **Aida Pilav**, director of the Public Health Institute of Sarajevo Canton.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, teams of local health centers and the DRC have performed 63.723 medical examinations for people on the move, both within temporally reception centers and in outreach locations. So far 417 people were tested, while 33 have been confirmed as COVID-19 positive. The medical treatment of people with confirmed COVID-19 presence, among migrant population, has been successfully obtained.