



Hungary:
Population
Movement
Emergency
Appeal

“LESSONS LEARNED” SURVEY

– organised by IFRC–

Final Report
November 2017

I. BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

During 2015, Hungary responded to an unprecedented influx of migrants entering the country. According to the reports of the Hungarian National Police (ORFK), a total of 238,491 people who transited to Western Europe were registered in Hungary during 2015. The increment in numbers was exceptionally high from early July 2015, with an average of 1,000 migrants being registered along the border daily. The highest numbers were recorded in September 2015, when 46 per cent of the total number of migrants entered Hungary. In 2016, 19,236, and January–February 2017, 304 migrants were registered, making the overall total number of arrivals 258,031.¹

In June 2015, the Hungarian Red Cross (HRC) was requested to respond to the new wave of migration into Hungary through the south-eastern border. Local authorities in Csongrád County requested HRC to provide daily assistance at Röszke, to a growing number of migrants coming through the border. On 5 August 2015, an allocation was made from IFRC’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to the National Society, to meet the needs of 72,000 migrants in the Röszke pre-registration facility. Subsequently, due to the increase of migrants to an average of 1,500 people per day, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), on behalf of the HRC, launched an Emergency Appeal ([MDRHU004](#)) on 17 September 2015, to meet the needs of 120,000 beneficiaries.

The border with Serbia was closed in mid-September 2015 with a fence along its entire length causing the migratory routes to shift through Croatia. On 17 October 2015, the Croatian-Hungarian border was also closed, forcing the migratory routes to further shift towards Slovenia. The Hungarian authorities, with the bilateral assistance of some other states, provided intense control of the southern borders. The number of irregular border crossings lowered to about a hundred per day. Those who attempted to cross the green borders were arrested by the authorities.

In response to the population movement, from July to mid-October 2015, HRC assisted over 300,000 people transiting through the country – with psychosocial support, medical assistance, and water and food distribution. Assistance was provided at pre-registration facilities, collection points, and at entry and exit points of the country: Beremend and Zákány (Croatian border), Hegyeshalom and Szentgotthárd (Austrian border). Other locations for assistance were Budapest Nyugati railway station transit zone and at the M1 highway.

From 18 March 2016, the EU-Turkey agreement brought migration flows through the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan route to a relative standstill, resulting in thousands of migrants being stranded in Hungary. Consequently, the Emergency Appeal was revised to reflect the changed situation with a decreased budget to meet the needs of 5,000 people accommodated in Hungary in reception centres and detention facilities. In these government-run facilities, basic needs and medical care was provided by the authorities. HRC supported beneficiaries with First Aid services, and provision of supplementary food and water in facilities such as Vámoszabadi (Győr-Moson-Sopron County), Körmend (Vas County) and Röszke (Csongrád County).

¹ Official figures are lower than the estimated actual figures.

a. Purpose of the evaluation

The IFRC focal point for Emergency Appeal MDRHU004, with support from HRC technical staff, conducted an online “lessons learned” survey with HRC June–July 2017. In September–October 2017, a second online survey was conducted among IFRC staff involved in the operation. Both surveys aimed to examine the success of the operation in terms of **relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness, as well as impact and sustainability**.

b. Survey design and respondents

The IFRC ROE, in consultation with HRC, prepared a **survey for HRC personnel** consisting of two questionnaires – one of which was sent to HRC HQ management and branch secretaries, and the other to operative staff and volunteers working in the field. For the detailed questionnaire, please refer to Annex X. The survey targeted HRC management, staff and volunteers who participated in the relief and provided assistance to migrants between August 2015 and December 2016. It was conducted in Hungarian, and made compulsory for HRC employees – both at the management and technical level.

HRC technical-level staff and volunteers received a questionnaire with 11 questions, and management-level staff received another one, with ten questions to be answered. The questions featured a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended, allowing for a mix of quantitative and qualitative insights. For both groups, the first two questions focused on the respondents’ profile (branch and scope of activities), and three other questions on their opinion about the HRC response to the migrant crisis – its **relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness**. Technical-level staff and volunteers were asked to rate different components of the response separately, and to comment on any contact they had had with IFRC during the operation. In addition, managers were asked to rate nine different dimensions of the assistance received from IFRC, as well as HRC-IFRC cooperation both before and after the closure of the southern border in October 2015. Both groups were asked to share any challenges and recommendations for the future.

A total of **89 respondents completed the questionnaire** – 22 management-level staff (both HQ- and branch-level), 42 technical-level staff (at both HQ and in the branches) and 25 volunteers engaged in operational implementation. The composition of respondents to the HRC survey is displayed in *Figure 5*, and a map showing the branch affiliation of respondents can be seen in *Figure 6* (see pages 6 and 7, respectively – both in *Annex*).²

In addition to the HRC survey, IFRC PMER prepared **an internal survey for IFRC staff** who had worked on the Appeal. A total of **six respondents** filled in the survey, which – like the HRC version – focused on the relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness of the response, as well as on HRC-IFRC cooperation and coordination.

II. FINDINGS: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness

The overall assessments of HRC and IFRC differed on the three dimensions of the survey (relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness). A recurring observation among HRC respondents pertained to the **novelty of the crisis** and related relevancy of the response: HRC had never experienced such a crisis in its area of activity, and best practices for response – including from other similar crises from around the world – were missing from its institutional knowledge base. Reportedly, HRC was also unfamiliar with the beneficiary profile, which is why assistance was not always provided in a timely and appropriate manner. IFRC staff also mentioned shortcomings of relevancy, including **interruptions and redundancies** in relief provided.

Challenges encountered by **HRC** staff converged on a number of components, including **difficulties with language, cultural differences, and access to information; as well as challenges related to staffing, the political environment and the local context**. *Figure 1* on page 3 summarises the types of operational challenges mentioned by HRC, broken down by the staff category of respondents.

² Other than the (self-reported) branch affiliation and scope of activity, no information was collected about the group of respondents. Consequently, while providing valuable anecdotal information, the results of the survey cannot be considered representative of HRC.

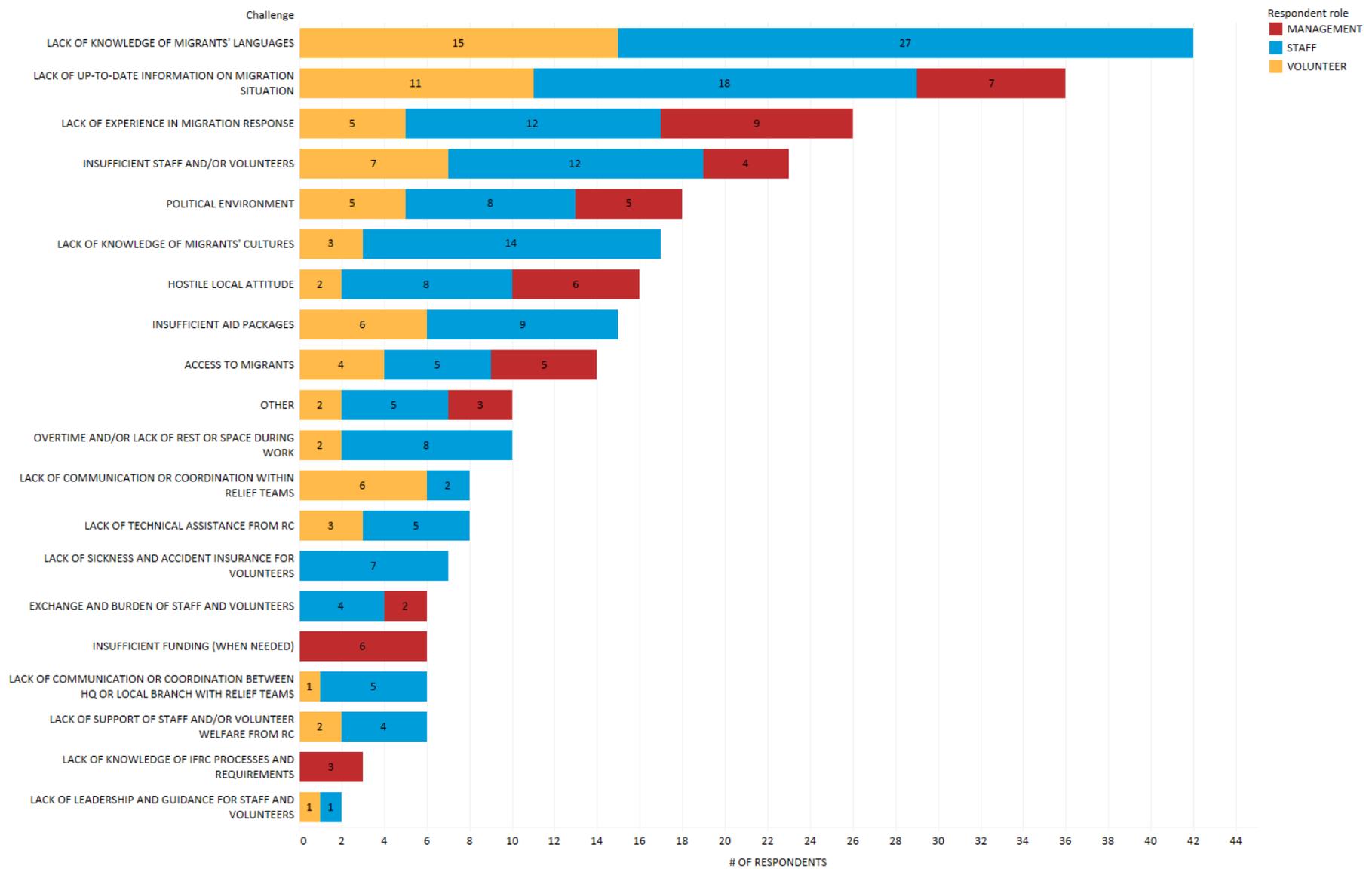


Figure 1. Operational challenges reported by HRC respondents (Note: not all components were relevant for management, which is why not every row contains responses from management)

In their narrative responses, **HRC staff listed several challenges related to the services** provided, including:

- lack of adequate healthcare personnel and medical aid equipment/items – such as band aid and medicine; challenges to transporting disabled people; or complete unavailability of doctors in the field;
- HRC having to provide (first) aid to Hungarian police alongside refugees;
- complete lack of legal counselling from pallet of services;
- clothes, shoes being too big;
- county branches not having easy-to-set-up, heated tents in stock;
- more drinks and foodstuffs needed with more attention to cultural sensitivity; more flexible provision based on needs.

Regarding **communications**, HRC staff highlighted a number of difficulties, including:

- lack of information on trains – when does the train leave, how many people on it;
- insufficient communication to migrants and to local population;
- negative national media coverage of migrants palpable in the field;
- lack of coordination with other actors (such as the Maltese Order), frequent compromises to be struck with local, regional and national partner organisations regarding the scope of services to be provided.

IFRC respondents mentioned a number of operational challenges and room for improvement, including:

- inadequate overall scale of the response – did not rise up to the needs;
- interruptions and delays in service delivery due to bureaucratic procedures;
- lack of permanent staff, and constant change of IFRC focal points, which resulted in loss of information;
- difficult access to the medical assistance, clothes, supplies (mobile toilets missing), PSS and relevant information – at the same time, redundancy of items already received by beneficiaries;
- no designated volunteer to monitor needs of most vulnerable people/children – such as clothes, urgent medical assistance, etc.

HRC respondents recommended the following measures to overcome operational difficulties:

- involve more volunteers;
- hold international knowledge sharing and volunteer-training events before the crisis reaches the country, as well as internal knowledge sharing and capacity building throughout;
- sensitise population with well-positioned messaging along Red Cross Red Crescent principles;
- implement more flexible methods – rapid response to changing needs, less bureaucracy;
- dedicate more money, and transfer funds in a more timely manner;
- secure better cooperation of government;
- cooperate more closely with National Societies of other transit countries;
- IFRC should liaise more directly with county branches and teams working in the field.

Figures 2-4 below juxtapose the overall assessment of HRC staff with that of IFRC respondents along the three main dimensions of the survey – relevancy, sufficiency and timeliness.

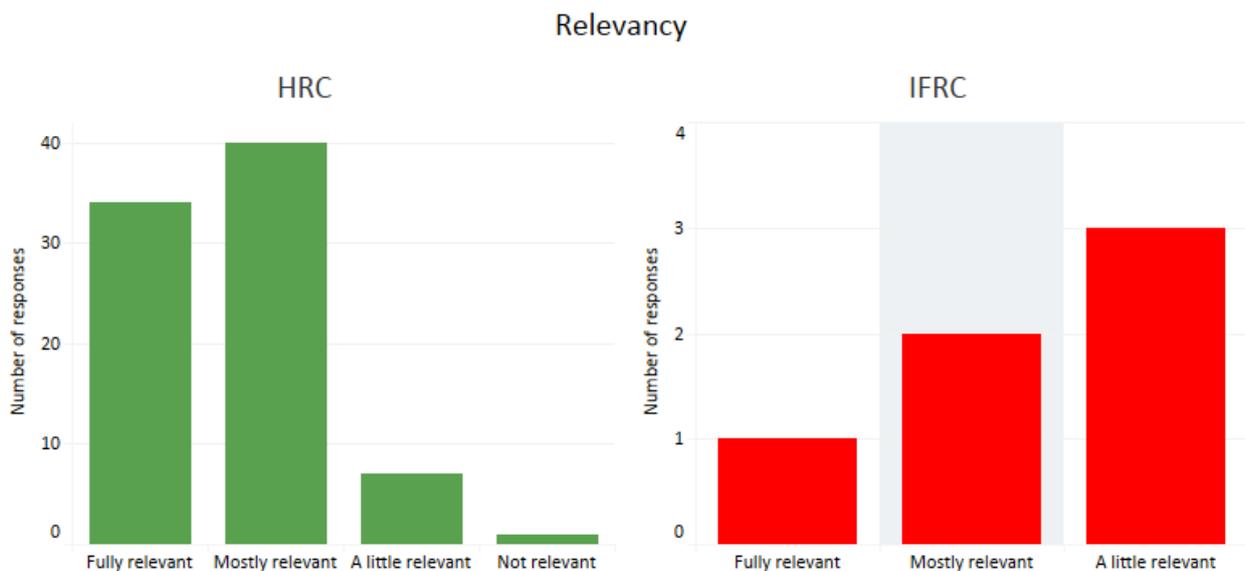


Figure 2. Relevancy of services (=types of services provided in line with beneficiary needs; provided in the needed way)

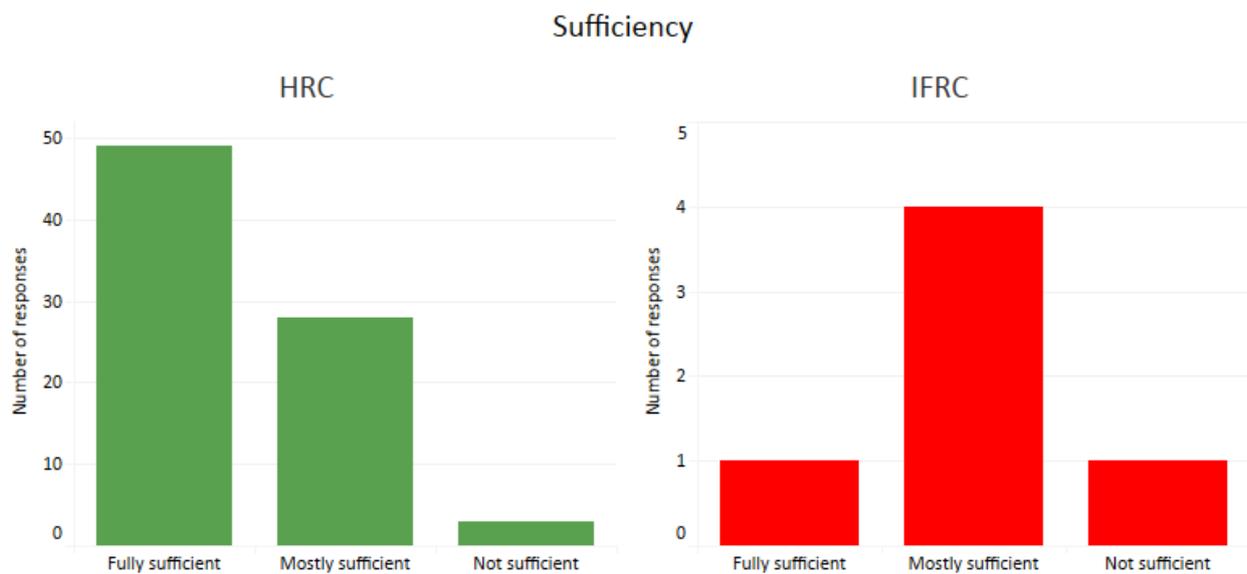


Figure 3. Sufficiency of services (=necessary amount, not less)

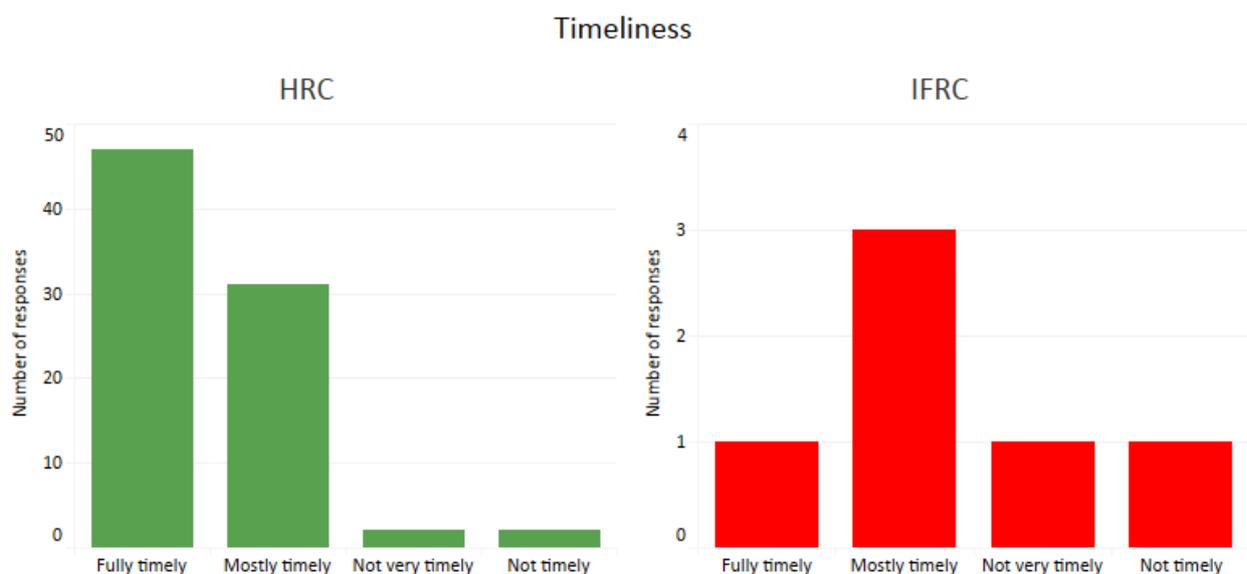


Figure 4. Timeliness of service provision

Overall, **IFRC respondents provided a more negative assessment** of the operation along all three dimensions of the survey.

b. IFRC–HRC coordination

In both surveys, opinions differed greatly regarding the quality and dynamics of coordination efforts. While opinions voiced by HRC respondents generally ranged from „politically correct” to outright anodyne, IFRC respondents converged vocally along following two, partially conflicting lines of argument:

- (1) IFRC sought to pro-actively motivate a reluctant HRC – both at the advocacy/diplomacy and operational levels; ownership of the appeal was in IFRC hands; and
- (2) HRC was open and favourable to IFRC support, and owned the response as far as realities allowed. IFRC could have done more to support HRC in a largely unfavourable political and public context.

III. ANNEX

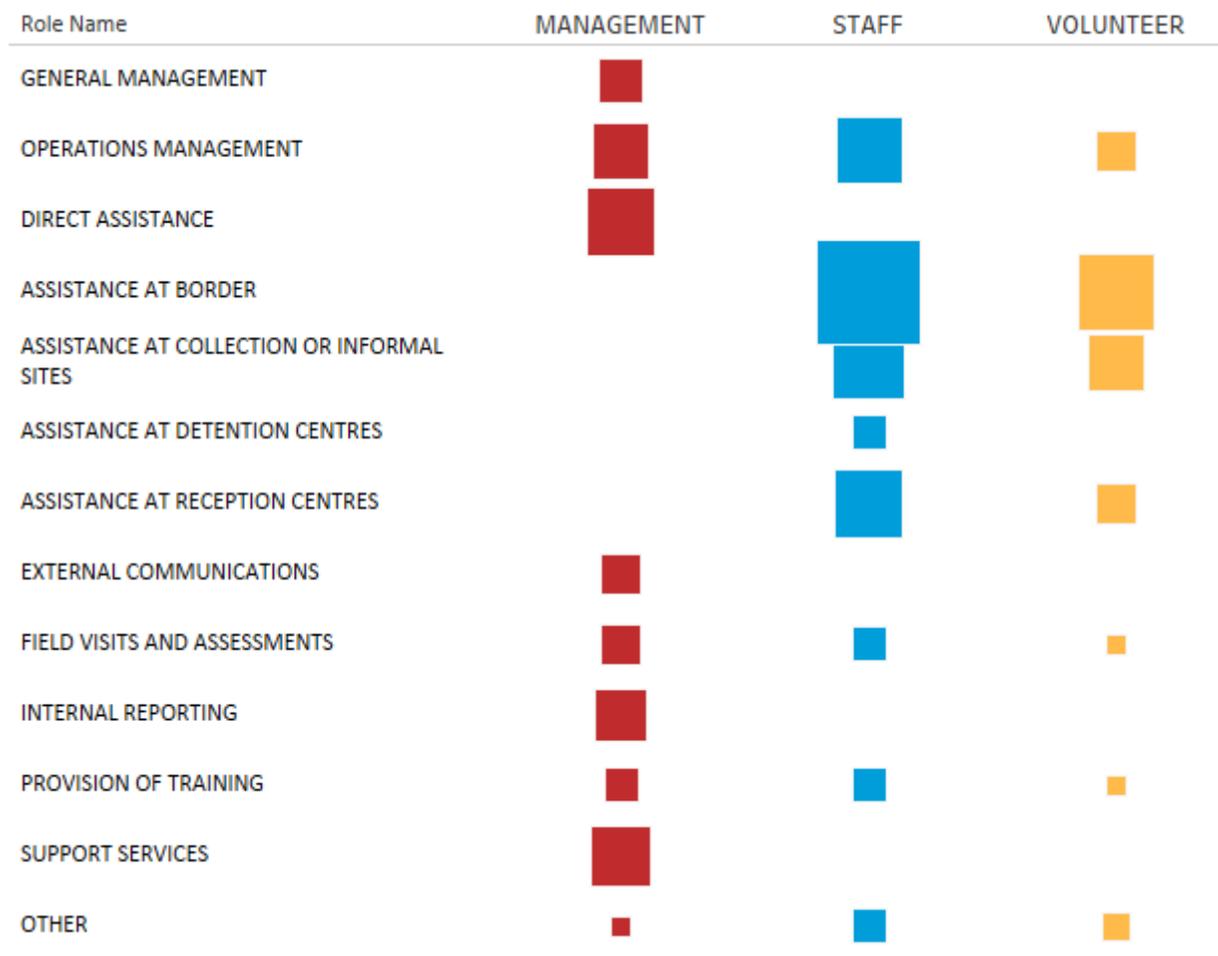


Figure 5. HRC respondents by staff category and role in response

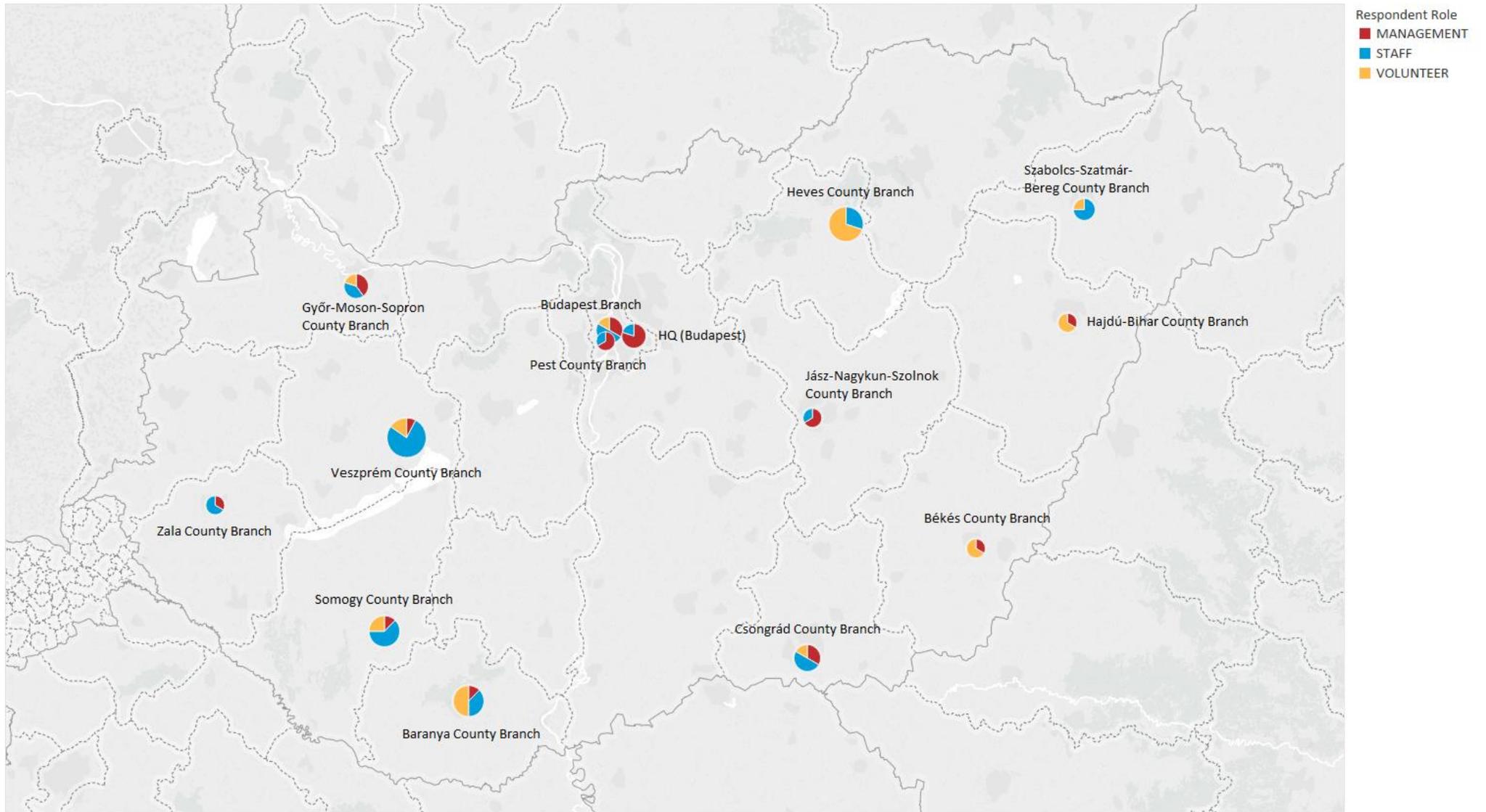


Figure 6. HRC respondents by organisational unit

Respondents:

HRC HQ management staff

HRC branch management staff

QUESTIONS:

1. Which HRC office or branch did you work for during the migration emergency response?

- HQ in Budapest
- County Branch Bacs-Kiskun
- County Branch Baranya
- County Branch Bekes
- County Branch Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen
- Branch of Budapest, Capital City
- County Branch Csongrad
- County Branch Fejer
- County Branch Gyor-Moson-Sopron
- County Branch Hajdu-Bihar
- County Branch Heves
- County Branch Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok
- County Branch Komarom-Esztergom
- County Branch Nograd
- County Branch Pest
- County Branch Somogy
- County Branch Szatmar
- County Branch Tolna
- County Branch Vas
- County Branch Veszprem
- County Branch Zala

2. What was your role during the emergency response of the Hungarian Red Cross? Please select all that applies.

- Overall management of the Headquarters or the branch office
- Management of operations (response plan, team, budget, monitoring, etc.), including sub-areas such as health, food, non-food or other type of support
- Management or provision of support services (admin, HR, finance, logistics)
- Direct assistance to migrants (distribution and services)
- External representation and/or communications
- Provision of trainings and capacity-building to HRC staff and/or volunteers
- Carrying out of field visits and assessment and/or monitoring visits
- Internal reporting of activities
- Other:

3. How relevant was, in your opinion, the HRC's support (items and services) to the actual needs of migrants? (By relevant, we mean, that migrants received the types of services and items and in that way as they needed it.)

- Fully relevant
- Mostly relevant
- Little relevant
- Not relevant at all
- No comment

If you selected "Fully relevant" or "No comment", please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not relevant (enough) and how this could have been improved:

4. How timely was, in your opinion, the HRC's response to the migration emergency?

- Fully timely
- Mostly timely

- Not very timely
- Not timely at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully timely” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the response was not timely (enough) and how this could have been improved:

5. How sufficient was, in your opinion, the HRC’s support (items and services) to migrants? (By sufficient, we mean, that it was of the necessary amount, and not less.)

- Fully sufficient
- More or less sufficient
- Not sufficient at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully sufficient” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not sufficient (enough) and how this could have been improved:

6. What were the main challenges that you faced in your work during the migration emergency? Please select all that apply.

- Lack of up-to-date information on migrants’ situation and needs
- Lack of experience and/or knowledge in dealing with a migration emergency
- Lack of experience and/or knowledge of IFRC’s systems and requirements
- Lack of sufficient funds available when required
- Access to migrants (at the border or the facilities)
- Hostile attitude of the local community

- Political environment and the government's position
- Lack of required number of staff and/or volunteers
- Staff and volunteer turnover and burn-out

Please add any additional challenges that you faced which is not listed above:

How could these challenges have been avoided or tackled in your opinion?

7. Did you and/or your team received any programmatic and/or operational support and capacity-building from the IFRC during the migration emergency response?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8. How do you rate the programmatic and/or operational support as well as capacity-building provided by the IFRC to you and/or your team during the migration emergency response in terms of relevance, timeliness and sufficiency as well as overall? Please select the option that best describes your opinion.

	Support in field assessments	Field visits / monitoring visits	Trainings/ Capacity-building	Thematic advice (in food, non-food, medical assistance, restoring family links, psychosocial support)	Technical support in the appeal's management (procedure, formats, budget, etc.)	Support with handling external communications and international media	Assistance in negotiating with governmental partners	Assistance in coordinating with NGOs and other civil and private actors	Assistance in negotiating with donors and mobilizing funds
Always relevant									
Mostly relevant									
Not relevant									
Always timely									
Mostly timely									
Not timely									
Fully sufficient									
Mostly sufficient									
Not sufficient									
Overall satisfied									
Overall not satisfied									

Please add additional comments on any of your points above, if any:

--

9. How do you rate the overall cooperation between the Hungarian Red Cross and the IFRC during the joint migration emergency response?

	In the first phase of the emergency until mid-October 2015 (closure of the southern borders)	In the second phase of the emergency, after mid-October 2015 (closure of the southern borders)
Excellent		
Good enough		
Poor		
No comment		

Please add any additional comments, if any, on how you evaluate the cooperation:

--

10. How can we, the IFRC, improve our support to the Hungarian Red Cross in similar future migration emergency operations?

Please add your thoughts and suggestions here:

--

Respondents:

HRC HQ operational staff

HRC branch operational staff

HRC volunteers engaged in operational implementation

1. What was your status during the migration emergency response?

- HRC staff
- HRC volunteer

2. Which HRC office or branch did you work or volunteer for during the migration emergency response?

- HQ in Budapest
- County Branch Bacs-Kiskun
- County Branch Baranya
- County Branch Bekes
- County Branch Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen
- Branch of Budapest, Capital City
- County Branch Csongrad
- County Branch Fejer
- County Branch Hajdu-Bihar
- County Branch Heves
- County Branch Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok
- County Branch Komarom-Esztergom
- County Branch Nograd
- County Branch Pest
- County Branch Somogy
- County Branch Szatmar
- County Branch Tolna
- County Branch Vas

- County Branch Veszprem
- County Branch Zala

3. What was your role during the emergency response of the Hungarian Red Cross? Please select all that applies.

- Coordination of operations (response plan, team, budget, monitoring, etc.) locally, including in sub-areas such as health, food, non-food or other types of support
- Direct assistance to migrants (distribution and services) at the border
- Direct assistance to migrants (distribution and services) at collection points and/or informal sites
- Direct assistance to migrants (distribution and services) in a reception facility
- Direct assistance to migrants (distribution and services) in a detention facility
- Provision of trainings and capacity-building to HRC staff and/or volunteers
- Carrying out of field visits, assessments and monitoring visits
- Other:

4. How relevant was, in your opinion, the HRC's support (items and services) to the actual needs of migrants? (By relevant, we mean, that migrants received the types of services and items and in that way as they needed it.)

- Fully relevant
- Mostly relevant
- Little relevant
- Not relevant at all
- No comment

If you selected "Fully relevant" or "No comment", please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not relevant (enough) and how this could have been improved:

5. How timely was, in your opinion, the HRC's support (items and services) to migrants?

- Fully timely
- Mostly timely
- Not very timely
- Not timely at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully timely” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not timely (enough) and how this could have been improved:

6. How sufficient was, in your opinion, the HRC’s support (items and services) to migrants? (By sufficient, we mean, that it was of the necessary amount, and not less.)

- Fully sufficient
- More or less sufficient
- Not sufficient at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully sufficient” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not sufficient (enough) and how this could have been improved:

7. Please rate the relevance, timeliness and amount of each specific type of the HRC’s assistance provided to migrants. Select the option that best describes your opinion.

	Food parcels	Drinking water	Blankets and sleeping bags	Hygiene kits	Second-hand clothes distribution	Other non-food items	First aid and other medical assistance	Support with restoring family links	Psychosocial support
Fully relevant									
Mostly relevant									
Little relevant									
Not relevant at all									
Fully timely									
Mostly timely									
Not very timely									
Not timely at all									
Fully sufficient									
More or less sufficient									
Not sufficient at all									

Please add any additional comments on the above, if any:

8. What were the main challenges that you faced in your work during the migration emergency? Please select all that apply.

- Lack of up-to-date information on migrants' situation and needs
- Access to migrants (at the border or the facilities)
- Limited availability of the required items to be distributed
- Hostile attitude of the local community
- Political environment and the government's position
- Lack of experience and/or knowledge in assisting migrants with distributions and services
- Lack of knowledge of languages spoken by migrants
- Lack of cultural awareness and orientation skills
- Lack of technical support or guidance from the relevant branch or HQ technical departments
- Lack of staff/volunteer welfare support from the relevant branch or HQ departments
- Lack of communication and coordination between the HRC HQ or branch management and the operational teams
- Lack of communication and coordination between and within the operational teams
- Lack of management of and orientation for volunteers
- Lack of required number of staff and/or volunteers
- Overtime and/or lack of resting opportunities while assisting on-the-ground
- Staff and volunteer turnover and burn-out
- Lack of insurance for volunteers

Please add any additional challenges that you faced which is not listed above:

How could these challenges have been avoided or tackled in your opinion?

9. What were your key learning points for yourself while assisting migrants on the ground as staff or volunteer of the HRC during the emergency?

Please describe here:

10. Do you have any other thoughts or feedback on the HRC's response and suggestions for future improvement?

Please describe here:

11. If you had any contact with IFRC staff during your activities, do you have any feedback on the interaction with them and/or support you have received from them?

Please describe here:

QUESTIONS:

1. In your opinion, how relevant was the support (items and services) to the actual needs of migrants? (By relevant, we mean that migrants received the types of services and items that they needed – in the way that they needed them.)

- Fully relevant
- Mostly relevant
- A little relevant
- Not relevant at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully relevant” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not relevant (enough) and how this could have been improved:

2. In your opinion, how timely was the response to the migration emergency?

- Fully timely
- Mostly timely
- Not very timely
- Not timely at all
- No comment

If you selected “Fully timely” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the response was not timely (enough) and how this could have been improved:

3. In your opinion, how sufficient was the support (items and services) provided to migrants? (By sufficient, we mean that it was of the necessary amount, and not less.)

- Fully sufficient
- More or less sufficient
- Not sufficient at all

No comment

If you selected “Fully sufficient” or “No comment”, please proceed to the next question. If you selected any of the other answers, please briefly describe why you think the support was not sufficient (enough) and how this could have been improved:

4. How would you characterise the overall cooperation between IFRC and Hungarian RC throughout the emergency response? Please provide any details or examples you deem relevant.

5. What were your impressions about the ownership of the emergency response (i.e. between IFRC and Hungarian RC)? How, if in any way, did the dynamic change throughout the life span of the Emergency Appeal (from September 2015 to December 2016)?

6. Please list any challenges in IFRC-Hungarian RC cooperation you faced within in your area of expertise, and how you would recommend overcoming them in the future.

7. Looking ahead, what new or improved capacities do you think the HRC will be able to rely on in the long term, as a result of your work?