



MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS
INTERNATIONAL

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REPORT FROM THE GROUND

VELIKA KLADUŠA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Velika Kladuša is a small town situated in the northwest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, located near the border with Croatia. This region hosts hundreds of migrants on the move looking to claim asylum in Europe.

These asylum seekers start their journey from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and several countries in Africa. Then they face a dangerous journey, passing through Turkey, Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia until finally arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Velika Kladusa town - Photo by Felipe

This intense and complicated journey brings several survival challenges. Long walks, lack of food and water, exposure to cold temperatures, terrible accommodation conditions, physical and mental violence, and lack of medical support during movement between countries.

And when these people arrive in Velika Kladusa, they are in serious health conditions. They are families, children, elderly people and single men.



"Squats" - Photo by Felipe Lopes

"Squats" are abandoned houses that people on the move sleep while they wait for the best time to cross into Croatia. These accommodations do not provide proper places for sleeping, cooking and basic hygiene.



Inside a squat while a person on the move cooks food for his family - Photo by Felipe Lopes

In order to keep alive, these people improvise utensils to cook and keep warm.

According to the World Health Organization, “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition”.



Medical team inside a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

The MVI medical team visits several locations every day to ensure the right to healthcare. But it is a huge challenge to make this basic right accessible to everyone, especially one in this region.



Medical team on the way to a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

The rain makes the terrain very bad to drive, making it necessary to walk to the squats, and the distances between the squats are long, making logistical organization very important for the team working on the ground.



Medical team on the ground - Photo by Fellipe Lopes



Medical team on the ground - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Once we arrive, a consultation takes place. This initial conversation is very important to understand people's medical needs and to explain the steps and recommendations of medical assistance.



Medical team visiting a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Due to the different nationalities of people on the move, the support of MVI partners to translate patient needs and provide operational assistance is important for the team to continue offering medical care. Some of them carry medical prescriptions from other countries, and they seek continued treatment as they go their own way.



Medical team visiting a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Our team consists of an operations coordinator, field communications, two nurses, and two doctors. And the team is divided into several tasks during the day and during the night, aiming to provide medical care at anytime.



Medical team visiting a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Our team is prepared to deal with different medical conditions. Weekly, we create an activity report, and this helps us to understand the medical condition of people on the move.

We have seen many people with symptoms of common colds, like sore throat, coughing, and running noses. The circumstances and living conditions of the people on the move are very welcoming to the virus and bacteria.



A squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Another cause of respiratory problems is due to the smokey environments that people are living in. Cold temperatures in winter result in people having open fires to stay warm or to cook food. Smoke inhalation is a serious reoccurring problem with long lasting affects.



A squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

We have seen patients complaining about stomach pain, diarrhea, and nausea, who boil up stagnant water in order to drink. The lack of access to basic hygiene, ventilation, clean water, sanitary system, added to the low temperatures during the winter, is one of the factors that contribute to several health problems that these people face during their journey.



Stagnant water inside a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

Another demand that the medical team receives every day is from people who have experienced police violence in their attempts to reach Europe. They share situations on the border between Bosnia and Croatia, where they are brutally attacked by border police.



A person on the move that needed a medical support- Photo by Fellipe Lopes

We met this person in one of the visits, he was desperate in need of medical help, and the medical team provided all the necessary assistance.



A person on the move that needed a medical support- Photo by Fellipe Lopes

In another situation, we visited a squat where a person had an accident while trying to reach Croatia. He is only 21 years old, and he dreams of arriving in Europe to have a better life.



A person on the move that needed a medical support- Photo by Fellipe Lopes

The medical team visited this patient for over a week to ensure his recovery. And all the medication, cleaning material for his hand care were provided to the patient.



A person on the move that needed a medical support- Photo by Fellipe Lopes

One of the pillars of the MVI medical team is to establish a trusting relationship with people on the move. These families carry a painful journey in their goal of reaching Europe and our team seeks to provide a safe space to talk and understand the challenges of these people.



Medical team visiting a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

The people on the move around Velika Kladusa are in a dramatic situation. The surviving conditions in the houses are terrible, basic access to food, clean water, clothing, basic hygiene, heat, transport and legal assistance are precarious. And the winter that is just beginning is a concern. They carry the trauma and fatigue of a long journey that seems to have no end.



A person on the move outside a squat - Photo by Fellipe Lopes

But, the MVI team is committed to the mission of providing medical care for everyone.



MVI team- Photo by Fellipe Lopes



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