



HUNGARY

January – March 2023

As the war in Ukraine has entered its second year, the refugee crisis continues to be a pressing issue in Hungary with a continued need for protection support and enhanced inclusion needs. Across Hungary, the partners of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) provided protection support to nearly 20,000 refugees, including case management, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and referrals to specialized services.

The 2023 RRP appeal for Hungary was launched in Budapest on March 7 in partnership with the government. It sees the participation of 37 organizations, of which most are local charities and NGOs, refugee-led organizations, and actors from civil society. RRP partners support the efforts in place by Government authorities, including municipalities, to identify and support vulnerable refugees and promote their resilience.

The RRP priorities in Hungary remain linked to ensuring a safe and protective environment for vulnerable refugees and their families, equitable access to basic assistance and protection of all refugees, including persons with specific needs and Roma refugees, as well as meaningful access to education, employment and affordable accommodations for a more sustainable response.

KEY FIGURES*

35,030

Refugees registered for Temporary Protection in Hungary (as of February 2023, NDGAP) **

84%

Of the refugee population from Ukraine are women and children (Protection Monitoring, March 2023, UNHCR)

23,068

Individuals assisted with basic needs (RRP partner reporting)

19,473

Individuals supported with protection services (RRP partner reporting)

2,200

Individuals received socioeconomic inclusion support (RRP partner reporting)

2023 REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN ***

USD 1.69 B

Overall financial requirements

10%

Overall percent funded

USD 62,7 M

Hungary financial requirements

22 %

Hungary percent funded

37

Partners involved in the Hungary response

*See the [Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation](#) and the [Hungary portal page](#) for more details on refugee population figures and information resources. ** In addition, 29,033 residence permits were granted to Ukrainian nationals since February 2022 (as of February 2023, source: NDGAP). *** See the [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) for a breakdown of sectoral response priorities and requirements and the [Refugee Funding Tracker](#) for RRP funding information.

Operational context

Refugees from Ukraine continue to arrive to Hungary, and while the pace has slowed and many choose to continue their journey onwards to other countries in Europe, 35,000 people have applied for Temporary Protection status in the country; there are also a number of others residing in the country under different statuses, including those who fled Ukraine that have applied for work permits. By the end of March 2023, there had been over 2.5 million border crossings from Ukraine to Hungary; pendular movements continue. As the population of those with Temporary Protection has stabilized, with the increasingly protracted stay in exile refugees in Hungary are facing increasing vulnerabilities, while those more newly arriving have faced longer exposure to the effects of armed conflict and depletion of savings. Over a year after the war in Ukraine began, inclusion response is increasingly a priority in the refugee response, alongside re-enforcing access and assistance for those with particular vulnerabilities, and ensuring key services, e.g. long-term and stable accommodation and increasing opportunities for socio-economic inclusion.

On March 7, the [Regional Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\) Hungary Launch event](#) was held, with over 100 guests in attendance, including government officials, ambassadors, and representatives of UN organizations and RRP partner organizations. The event was opened by State Secretary Mr. Miklós Soltész, State Secretary for Relations with Churches and National Minorities and UNHCR Representative for Central Europe, Mr. Roland Shilling, and included speeches from various dignitaries, the screening of a short RRP/HRP video, and a performance by Spiv. Ochi, a choir comprised of refugees from Ukraine. The choir sings authentic Ukrainian folk songs and practices at the Budapest Helps! Community Center, run by UNHCR and IOM. The event also featured a photo exhibition of RRP partners.



Mr. Miklos Soltész, State Secretary for Relations with Churches and National Minorities opens the launch of the Hungary Response Plan alongside UNHCR and United Way © z.balla/UNHCR

Global Compact on Refugees and Cash-based Intervention in Hungary

By promoting self-reliance, and supporting local economies, cash-based interventions (CBI) set up within the interagency framework of the RRP in Hungary are helping achieve the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, including burden and responsibility sharing. In the specific context of the response to the Ukraine refugee situation, CBI is one of the main modalities to meet immediate basic needs of refugee families effectively.

Approximately 1,370 refugee households (equivalent to nearly 4,200 individuals) have received cash assistance in the first quarter of 2023. RRP partners have provided cash assistance typically delivered through electronic cash transfers, mobile money, or vouchers to meet the diverse needs of refugee families, such as food, shelter, health care, education, and other necessities, allowing refugees to prioritize their own needs based on their individual circumstances.

Cash-based interventions for refugees in Hungary respects the dignity and independence of people forced to flee. First, cash assistance enhances the dignity of refugees, as they can use the cash to purchase items according to their own needs and preferences, which can help restore some sense of control and agency. Second, cash assistance can support local economies and stimulate economic growth, which is beneficial for both refugees and host communities. Finally, cash-based interventions can be more cost-effective and efficient compared to in-kind assistance, as they reduce administrative costs, transportation costs, and storage costs. Finally, cash assistance helps to reduce negative coping mechanism and achieve further protection outcomes.

Sectoral Achievements



Protection, including Gender-Based Violence

Achievements and Impact

- In the first quarter of the year, RRP partners in Hungary provided protection support to nearly 20,000 refugees, including over 5,000 refugees with specific needs assisted with targeted interventions, and nearly 4,200 adult refugees with focused psychosocial support. In addition, RRP partners also provided protection information to nearly 10,000 refugees on available services and rights in Hungary. Protection support was provided across Hungary, including at border crossing points, in Budapest, and in cities and counties such as: Győr, Debrecen, Pest, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Vas and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg.
- RRP partners also targeted over 600 third-country nationals (TCN) in need of protection with information provision mainly at the crossing point in Zahony and targeted protection support for vulnerable individuals.
- Almost 400 refugees were provided with information on gender-based violence and 79 humanitarian personnel were trained on GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation measures.
- Examples of activities by partners:
 - Emma and Patent have established good relationships with various parties addressing gender-based violence (GBV). They have helped refugees to get proper medical attention during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, as well as access to contraception. Their staff members have been trained and have the necessary skills to provide comprehensive support related to mental health, legal, and administrative matters.
 - UNHCR, IOM and Menedek jointly organized a workshop on the risk of labour exploitation and trafficking for labour exploitation, in the context of the inter-agency framework and with the participation of relevant government stakeholders and specialized NGOs. During the workshop, participants discussed specific risk factors and vulnerabilities among refugees from Ukraine, existing services, and possible way forward, with a view to enhancing awareness among the refugee population and reinforcing identification and referral mechanisms.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- New restrictions at the border for refugees arriving from Ukraine were put in place in February which has resulted in denial of entry for some TCN who would be eligible for TP status based on family relations. There is a need for free legal aid at the border for persons in need of protection under police proceedings. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee is present with an attorney once a week offering free legal aid and representation for the process of the judicial review of return decisions.
- Collaborative management of complex GBV cases (reporting to police, finding safe housing for abused women and their children) is extremely challenging, as the infrastructural and human capacities are insufficient.
- Hungary extended the validity of TP residence permits until 4 March 2024 via a government decree issued on 28 February 2023. Following a decision, TP residence permit cards are not being systematically replaced by the authority and are still showing the previous expiration date of 4 March 2023, which has led to obstacles in TP holders accessing certain services (e.g., healthcare and banking).
- One year into the crisis, refugees are increasingly requesting assistance in Hungary to replace lost or expired personal Ukrainian documents often requested at border controls. The support of police and Ukrainian consular authorities (e.g., the Ukrainian consulate in Nyíregyháza) are important.



Child Protection

Achievements and Impact

- RRP partners supported almost 4,000 refugee children through safe spaces, protection and support hubs across the country and in Blue Dots set up at the border crossing points from Ukraine. Over 1,400 children were targeted with community-based child protection services and almost 3,000 children were supported through specialized child protection services. RRP partners also trained over 500 humanitarian staff on child protection and children's rights.
- The Child Protection Sub-Working Group continued to work with NGOs, as well as national and local governments to provide mental health and psychosocial support, child protection, and social work services to vulnerable children and families. They focused on improving access to community-based services for refugees and other at-risk children in deprived areas, including mental health support, parenting help, and preventing gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.
- The Child Protection SWG worked together more closely with government organizations responsible for child protection. A representative from the Ministry of Interior's Child Protection Department explained the legal requirements for reporting and referring cases of child protection issues. The CP SWG created a set of questions and answers about child protection issues, which the Ministry of Interior approved. Additionally, the National Child Protection Service (OGYSZ) shared information about their services and improved their collaboration with humanitarian groups.
- Examples of activities by partners:
 - Terres des Hommes (TdH) with the support of UNICEF established a feedback and complaint mechanism in refugee shelters they oversee to provide refugees, including children, a means to provide feedback and file complaints. TdH partnered with the IX. District Municipality of Budapest and UNICEF organized a one-week camp for 20 children aged 10-14 from Bucha, Ukraine. The children received various services and support from Ukrainian-speaking psychologists.
 - UNICEF established cooperation with national law-enforcement authorities to build knowledge and capacity of front-line professionals in the field of identifying victims / persons at risk of human trafficking.



On 9 February 2023 in Debrecen, Hungary a mother holds her child at the Dorcas Ministries Refugee Center ©UNICEF/UN0818922/Ruszthi.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugee children of Roma background are at a higher risk of discrimination and social exclusion due to their ethnicity and refugee status, which can hinder their access to services. Language barriers, lack of information and understanding of the child protection system, and limited access to legal assistance can pose significant challenges. Additionally, the socio-economic status of many Roma families can further exacerbate these difficulties, as poverty and inadequate housing conditions can lead to increased vulnerability and risk of harm to children.
- The unavailability of reliable and comprehensive data remains a significant challenge in ensuring adequate protection of refugee children from violence, exploitation, and abuse, as well as providing accessible, inclusive, and equitable family and community-based services to them and their families. It hinders the ability of humanitarian actors to make informed decisions, prioritize resources, and advocate for policies and funding to meet the needs of refugee children and their families.



Education

Achievements and Impact

- As of January 31, the State Secretary for Public Education released enrolment statistics showing that 4,965 Ukrainian students are currently enrolled in schools in Hungary. Out of the total number, 508 students hold dual nationality, with 1,069 students in kindergarten, 3573 in primary education, 319 in secondary education, and 4 students receiving alternative types of education and care.
- RRP education partners supported around 2,500 refugee children with education initiatives, including non-formal catch-up classes for almost 2,000 children who missed formal education due to the conflict. The catch-up classes aimed to provide foundational skills necessary for formal education and were held in alternative locations or flexible arrangements to accommodate the specific needs of the children better. Furthermore, nearly 500 refugee children received learning materials.
- The Education Sub-Working Group focused on introducing Education in Emergencies Guidelines, advocating for inclusion, and enhancing Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) in Education through monthly meetings.
- Examples of activities by partners:
 - Menedek created a [video](#) to showcase positive examples of refugee children's enrolment in Hungarian schools, which has been viewed over 1,400 times.
 - The Ukrainian Refugee Education Centre at the American International School of Budapest supports 130 Ukrainian refugee children aged 6-17 in Budapest, witnessing a gradual increase in the number of children supported since the conflict escalated (for a total of over 250 children). The program provides education in various subjects, including Ukrainian language and literature, mathematics, science, social studies, and physical education, with after-school activities available in various areas.



Click on the picture to access Menedek's video on education for refugee children. @Menedek



©AISB – The Ukrainian Refugee Education Centre, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/715193213406348>

- Migration Aid successfully enrolled 187 refugee children into schools in Budapest and provided them with catch-up education and recreational activities.
- The Hungarian Charity Society of the Order of Malta assisted 13 refugee children with non-formal catch-up classes, as well as provided support for 79 refugee children with school and kindergarten enrolment, as well as assistance for enrolment and learning materials to 181 refugee children.
- UNICEF collaborated with civil society organizations to ensure the inclusion of Ukrainian refugee children in public education, capacity building among school principals and teachers, and presented at a conference on inclusive education at the University of Debrecen on the occasion of the 8th International Interdisciplinary Conference about Children with Special Needs.
- The refugee-led organization Unity, in collaboration with IOM, supported 271 refugee children with learning materials.



Recreational activities at the center in Budapest. ©MigrationAid.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The integration of refugee children into the Hungarian education system is challenging, as school acceptance is a problem in some countryside locations, such as in Pilisszanto, and additional educational support for integration is lacking. Furthermore, acquiring proficiency in the Hungarian language remains one of the most pressing needs of refugee children.



Health and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Nearly 800 refugees were assisted in accessing medical care and treatment in Hungary by RRP partners. This includes having access to healthcare facilities, doctors, nurses, and medication. It also involves being able to receive healthcare services without facing discrimination or barriers, such as language barriers or lack of documentation. Access to healthcare is crucial for refugees as they may have experienced trauma or face unique health challenges due to displacement.
- Within the framework of the partnership agreement with the Municipality of Debrecen, UNICEF supported DAEFI (Primary Care and Health Promotion Institute) in carrying out health check-ups and vaccinations for refugee children living in the Dorkasz camp. A full health screening was also carried out for the families of the refugee children. To improve the health quality of refugee and disadvantaged children and their relatives in the local community, a wide range of health promotion and prevention services were undertaken, including mental health support through animal-assisted therapy sessions.



Young refugee boy from Ukraine getting his vision checked as part of UNICEF supported DAEFI (Institute of Primary Care and Health Development, Debrecen) health interventions in Debrecen. @Municipality of Debrecen/Hungary/2023/Erdei Balázs.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The public healthcare system faces numerous challenges. Despite legislative amendments that guarantee access to healthcare on equal terms with Hungarian citizens, Ukrainian refugees and other non-Hungarian nationals encounter hindrances in both obtaining essential healthcare and purchasing medicines due to reimbursement concerns.
- The language barrier results in inadequate communication between healthcare providers and patients and can cause patients to seek alternative methods to avoid or forgo treatment altogether.



Basic Needs

Achievements and Impact

- Nearly 20,000 refugees were provided with in-kind food assistance, such as food parcels and groceries, and additional 4,500 refugees were provided with prepared meals, predominantly in Budapest. Almost 15,000 refugees were provided with non-food items, including hygiene kits (29%), clothing (26%), blankets (23%), and kitchen sets (including furniture and home appliances; 16%). 1,750 refugees were provided with short-term accommodation (under 1 month), mostly in Budapest and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.
- Examples of activities by partners:
 - Through governmental funding, Migration Aid continues running the Győr shelter for refugees. All adult refugees have been employed in different local factories and all the children are enrolled in the public schooling system, with possibilities for extra-curricular activities for children with special needs.
 - At the Beregsurány crossing point, where the Hungarian Charity Society of the Order of Malta is operational, 45 Ukrainian refugees received hygiene kits, 86 persons received hot meals, food packages were distributed to 1,516 refugees and 604 refugees were provided with short-term accommodation through the Beregsurány relief point and 772 refugees received assistance with lodging through the regional offices.
 - Through the partnership between UNICEF and the Municipality of Zahony, 239 Ukrainian refugees and host communities with children residing in Zahony municipality received a second round of cash grants.
 - Baptist Aid, in partnership with UNHCR, provided around 2,500 vulnerable individuals with cash for basic needs.
 - IOM has supported 568 refugees with short-term accommodation, 1,143 refugees received non-food items, and 230 refugees received vouchers for a total of 23.5 million HUF.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- As the crisis becomes protracted it is becoming evident that there is a need for longer-term individual accommodation and integration support. Many partners are implementing transitional programs that are focusing on rental and cash support that will allow refugee families to move out of collective centres to their own accommodations. Access to the rental market is still one of the main challenges for refugees as, together with the language barrier, the demand for rental properties in Hungary is high, which results in landlords being reluctant to rent premises to families with children (80% of the refugees) or for a period less than 12 months.
- It is important to allocate resources to Roma-led Community-Based Organizations to address the challenges of Romani refugees, particularly those hosted in collective shelters.



Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion

Achievements and Impact

- RRP partners supported close to 500 refugees with livelihood and employment in different counties, including Győr, Budapest, Pest, and Vas. Of them, more than 340 refugees received professional and skill training to improve their employability, while almost 100 refugees received counselling and other forms of support to access employment. Additionally, over 50 families were provided with childcare services to enable parents, mostly mothers, to work. The support also extended to accommodation, with nearly 1,700 refugees provided with mid-to long-term private accommodation, mostly in Budapest, and 680 refugees receiving mid- to long-term housing in collective shelters, mostly in Budapest, but also in other areas such as Zemplén, Sopron, Pest, and Somogyi. Nearly 700 refugees received counselling on accommodation arrangements in Hungary.
- Examples of activities by partners: Romaversitas aimed to enhance the skills of civil society members who work with Roma refugees and collaborated with over 30 experts to develop recommendations for government and non-governmental organizations. They also developed a plan to distribute grants, which will be carried out during the second quarter of the project, to foster the inclusion of Roma refugees.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees face significant challenges in accessing vocational training and job opportunities, which hinders their ability to achieve financial stability. Compounding these challenges are limited language skills and cultural differences, which can impede effective communication and integration into Hungarian society. The lack of child-care services and flexible work opportunities also hinders refugees' access to employment, especially for single mothers, who are overrepresented among the demographics.
- Moreover, legal barriers and bureaucratic obstacles create additional difficulties for refugees attempting to obtain documentation and navigate the administrative requirements to work and live in Hungary.
- Social support networks for refugees are also limited, leading to social isolation and further hindering socio-economic inclusion.

Cross-Cutting Priorities



Accountability to Affected Populations

- RRP partners have created opportunities for feedback and complaints to ensure that the voices and needs of refugees are considered. Language is a major barrier for refugees accessing basic services in Hungary, and financial support is needed to complement low subsidies from the government. Finding accommodation and jobs is also challenging, with landlords often refusing to rent to unemployed refugees. On social media, refugees have raised concerns about accommodation, mental health support, financial assistance, and access to medicine, due to language barriers and staff failing to recognize temporary protection status. UNHCR's Helpsite had over 19,000 visits and 35,200 views until March 2023, while their Telegram channel had almost 2,000 subscribers and 53% post-visualization rate.



Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

- The PSEA Task Force (TF) continued to extend support to partners along the priority lines identified by its members and under the Interagency PSEA Action Plan: it issued a [Briefing Note](#) in January 2023 and contributed significantly to the roll-out of a joint GBV-SEA safety assessment. The latter's findings were reviewed by the TF members and informed a set of tailored recommendations aimed at strengthening response-wide PSEA measures. A task group was established to draft key interagency PSEA messages for Hungary in March 2023. Considerable efforts were made to support PSEA capacity-building initiatives targeting organizations in Hungary: 233 staff were trained through Training of Trainers, in-person and online sessions across the country. UNHCR and UNICEF completed PSEA assessments for 19 partners and have been providing them with technical support to implement PSEA capacity-strengthening plans and enhance community engagement around PSEA. UNHCR produced multi-language PSEA visibility material to disseminate messages on staff conduct and on how to report sexual misconduct.
- Persistently scant registration and vetting mechanisms for personnel and volunteers contributing to the response and for offers of private accommodation remain key SEA risk factors, compounded by organizational level policies and practices to prevent and respond to SEA that still require considerable strengthening. Low awareness and capacities on how to deal with community members and survivors in a victim-centred manner persist – these can in turn undermine reporting and investigation of SEA. Broadly speaking, and while few improvements are observed, mechanisms to channel complaints and feedback and to report SEA are not always available to staff or not designed around the views and preferences of affected communities and groups –this underscores the need for continued investment in a culture of accountability to affected people.



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- RRP MHPSS partners provided nearly 6,000 focused psycho-social consultations to refugees - focused psycho-social consultations are brief intervention that provides support to individuals experiencing mild to moderate levels of psychological distress. It involves a consultation with a mental health professional, who provides guidance, psychoeducation, and practical strategies to help the individual cope with their situation. To individuals with more severe mental health needs, partners ensured access to more comprehensive and intensive interventions, such as longer-term psychotherapy, medication management, and other specialized interventions delivered by mental health professionals with specific training in related mental health conditions. Additionally, 6,000 refugees were reached through online and remote awareness raising activities on MHPSS.
- RRP partners engaged over 1,000 refugees in community-based psychosocial support activities, including peer support groups, recreational activities, and skills-building workshops. The activities were accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate, and provided by community-based organizations or trained volunteers to promote the psychosocial well-being of refugees.
- Examples of activities by partners:
 - Pszi Pont established an online platform of over 300 mental health professionals to provide MHPSS services to Ukrainian refugees in 13 languages. They provide regular supervision to school psychologists to aid in the inclusion of Ukrainian children into the host community and created a professional handbook to assist psychologists and the host community. There is a need for Ukrainian-speaking psychologists in schools to support traumatized refugee children and those with severe mental conditions.

- The Training of Trainers (ToTs) on the World Health Organization's Scalable Psychological Interventions such as Problem Management Plus (PM+), Self Help Plus (SH+), and Doing What Matters in the Time of Stress (DWMS) is being rolled out under the Well-U program funded by the European Union (EU) in Hungary.
- Trauma Center launched its Connect to Recharge program that offers individual interventions in 3 languages, mental health awareness-raising workshops, supervision for frontline workers, and trauma-informed training for educational actors
- Stigma remains among refugees to access mental health services, as service providers report the hesitancy of refugees to receive counseling and assistance from MHPSS actors, in particular psychologists.
- Refugees are still reluctant to access mental health services due to lack of time and survivor's guilt.

Working in partnership

The Refugee Response Plan highlights the funding needs of 37 partners working in Hungary: American International School of Budapest | Budapest Methodological Social Center | Center for Reproductive Rights | Cordelia Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims | Dévai Fogadó | United Way Hungary | Foundation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church | Hungarian Baptist Aid | Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta | Hungarian Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Association | Hungarian Helsinki Committee | Hungarian Interchurch Aid | Hungarian Red Cross | Hungarian Reformed Church Aid | HunHelp | International Organization for Migration | International Rescue Committee | Jesuit Refugee Service | Litera Association | MedSpot Foundation | Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants | Menekültek Online Segítő Társasága (Refugee Help Digital Network) | Migration Aid | Next Step Hungary Association | Oltalom Charity Society | Pszi Pont | Romaversitas Foundation | SOS Children's Villages | Terre des hommes Foundation – Tdh | Trauma Center | United Nations Children's Fund | United Nations Educational | Scientific and Cultural Organization | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | Unity | Vamos Foundation | Voice Amplified | World Health Organization

31 different organizations have contributed to the reporting for Quarter 1: American International School of Budapest | Budapest Methodological Social Center | Cordelia Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims | Dévai Fogadó | Foundation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church | From Street to Homes Association (ULE) | Hungarian Baptist Aid | Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta | Hungarian Helsinki Committee | Hungarian Interchurch Aid | Hungarian Reformed Church Aid | International Organization for Migration | International Rescue Committee | Litera Association | Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants | Migration Aid | Next Step Hungary Association | Oltalom Charity Society | Pszi Pont | Romaversitas Foundation | SOS Children's Villages | Terre des hommes Foundation – Tdh | Trauma Center | United Nations Children's Fund | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | United Way Hungary | Unity | Vamos Foundation

In addition, the following organizations reported activities for refugees in Q1 (even if not directly part of the RRP appeal): partners: Adventist Development and Relief Agency | Budapest Municipality | EMMA Association.

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LINKS: [Regional data portal](#) – [Hungary Portal](#) – [Ukraine Situation RRP](#) – [Refugee Funding Tracker](#)