Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

MOLDOVA Inter-Agency Winterization Plan

2024 - 2025

TARGETED REFUGEE POPULATION	TARGETED HOST COMMUNITY	FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (US$)	FUNDING AVAILABLE (US$)
33k	**29k**	**10.7M**	**5.1M**
Refugees from Ukraine	Vulnerable Moldovans living in refugee hosting areas		

Key Targets within Winter Activities

MULTI-PURPOSE CASH TO COVER WINTER NEEDS

48.3k

IMPROVEMENT OF MID, LONG-TERM ACCOMMODATION

591

IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

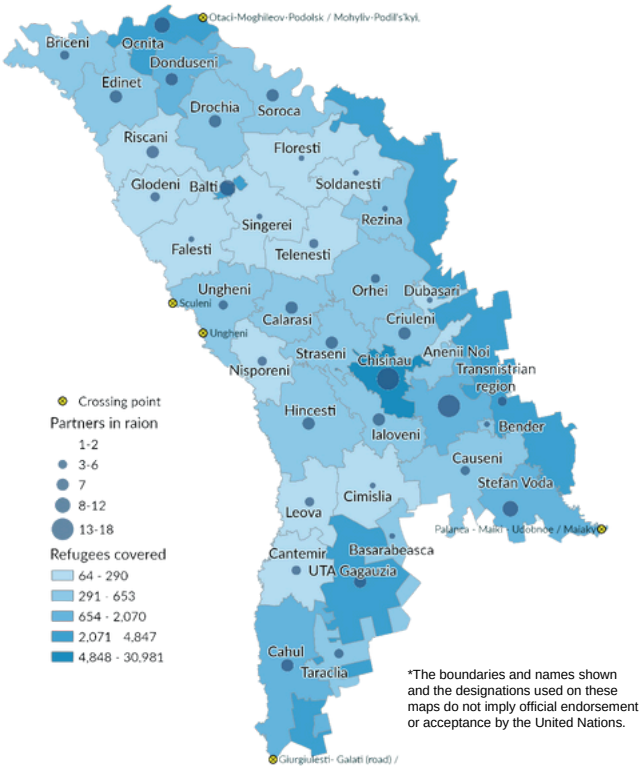
39

This document provides an overview of the activities outlined in the 2024 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to address specific humanitarian needs caused or exacerbated by the cold season in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter: Moldova). The number of people targeted and the total funding required are part of the response prioritization and financial requirements of the RRP. This document also includes figures related to the first three months of 2025, which will be incorporated into the upcoming RRP.

Considering the ongoing 2025-2026 RRP planning process and the development of the overall situation during the upcoming months, the figures presented in this document may be updated to ensure an adequate response in the first quarter of 2025.

For the upcoming cold season, 13 partners have planned to implement 28 winter activities across 37 regions in Moldova, targeting approx. 62,000 refugees and affected host community members. While some activities are already being implemented to ensure suitable conditions during the winter period, the timeline of the winter response spans from November 2024 to March 2025.

28 Winter Activities by **13 RCF Partners** targeting **62k Refugees** and affected host community members.



*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The Moldova Winterization Plan is a collaborative effort of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) partners in Moldova to mitigate the effects of the winter season on affected populations. The plan aims to ensure that refugees and vulnerable Moldovans have adequate protection against the harsh climatic conditions. It is coordinated with the Government of Moldova and complements the activities of various government agencies.

An estimated 33k refugees and 29k Moldovans (those identified as vulnerable and living in refugee hosting areas) fall within the scope of this plan. Of these, 48,350 individuals are targeted with MPCA to cover winter needs, with an overall financial requirement of 10.71 million USD covering activities from November 2024 to March 2025.

The plan continues to prioritize cash-based interventions, the preferred modality of both refugees and host community members, in line with the findings of several assessments highlighting the functionality and accessibility of markets in Moldova. In addition, partners are working to ensure critical winter shelter repairs, provision of winter-related items to individuals with limited capacity to access markets, and support to Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) and community infrastructure.

ACTIVITIES	REQUIREMENTS (US$)	FUNDING AVAILABLE (US$)	TARGET
Improvement of collective sites (including WASH rehabilitation)	660,000	330,000	74 Facilities
Improvement of mid-/ long-term accommodation	945,000	545,000	591 Facilities
Multi-purpose cash to cover basic needs	5,429,823	2,276,533	48,870 PAX
NFI distribution	1,706,923	951,023	25,160 PAX
Support for the improvement of community infrastructure	1,972,090	1,012,090	39 Facilities
Grand Total	**10,713,836**	**5,114,646**	

Funding Requirements

Winterization activities aim to enhance preparedness for the cold season and directly pertain to the provision of life-saving assistance against cold weather. This particularly includes heating and related issues, which should be classified as winter-related. Therefore, 'regular' humanitarian interventions, which are delivered irrespective of the season, should not fall under this classification. The response detailed in this plan will be provided through a mix of in-kind and cash assistance. Whenever feasible and appropriate, cash assistance will be given priority based on the existing criteria, the accessibility and proximity of functional markets, and the availability of essential winter items and services. The response package constitutes a minimum set of relief activities and a level of access to services designed to enable vulnerable groups to cope adequately with the cold season.

Out of the overall ask of the Refugee Response Plan, the implementation of this winterization plan requires US$10.71 million. This funding requirement will cover needs from November 2024 to March 2025. Funding requirements covering activities implemented in 2024 are reflected in the current 2024 RRP, while the portion related to the remaining period of the cold season (January to March 2025) will be included in the 2025 Refugee Response Plan.

RCF Partners have developed and will implement their winterization response based on ongoing coordination discussions and established agreements under relevant sectoral working groups and sub-working groups. The Government's winterization strategy and activities have been considered when planning the winterization response, with the active participation of key line ministries and other government counterparts in the planning process, especially regarding multi-purpose cash assistance and community infrastructure improvements. Partners will also advocate for the inclusion of refugees in national winterization support programmes at national, regional, and municipal levels.

Analysis of the Situation

Since February 24, 2022, Moldova has received around 1,600,000 Ukrainian refugees. By the end of July 2024, over 125,000 refugees[1] remained in Moldova, with 54,900 receiving temporary protection [2].

The winter period presents heightened vulnerabilities for both refugees and Moldovan citizens, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities, and single-headed households with high dependency ratios. This is due to the increased cost of living, predominantly attributed to additional heating expenses and the potential barrier to accessing services and community life for certain groups during harsh weather conditions. From the recent Socio-Economic Insights Survey, 5% of refugee HHs indicated not having sufficient/adequate heating to keep themselves and their household warm, and 13% not having sufficient insulation in their dwellings.

According to UNHCR's Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) of Multipurpose Cash Assistance (Round 10, July 2024), substantial needs persist among the refugee population despite ongoing humanitarian efforts. 38% of refugees could fully meet their basic needs with cash support, while around 11% could meet less than half of their basic needs, underscoring the continuing requirement for humanitarian support. During the winter months (Round 9, March 2024), only 16% of refugees could fully meet their basic needs and 7% managed to meet less than half of the basic needs only.

Refugees from Ukraine face significant barriers to accessing wage-earning and self-employment opportunities. Due to restrictions in national legislation, they have limited access to government social protection systems. 56% of refugees rely on humanitarian aid as their primary income source and lack full or part-time employment. Refugee households report an average monthly per capita income of 2,250 MDL, which is significantly below the Moldovan average of approximately 5,480 MDL per capita.

[1] Disaggregated data shows that out of these 125,000 refugees, 20% are girls, 38% women, 23% boys and 19% men.
[2] Disaggregated data shows that out of these 54,900 beneficiaries of TP, 13% are girls, 40% women, 14% boys, 33% men.

The latest PDM results indicate an increase in refugees' engagement in the labor market. However, this increase has not reached the expected level, and many refugees still rely on financial assistance programs. According to UNHCR's household vulnerability assessment survey, the prevalent income sources (excluding UNHCR cash assistance) are as follows: 33% have no income, 25% receive pensions from Ukraine, 17% have casual/temporary employment, 12% receive remittances, 7% have regular employment, 5% receive social protection benefits from Ukraine, and 1% receive financial assistance from other partners.

Data from UNHCR's 10th round PDM reveals that 67% of refugees employed at least one livelihood coping strategy in the 30 days preceding the survey. The most commonly reported coping mechanism was using savings to cover basic needs (51%) followed by reducing expenditure on hygiene items, health, or education (50%). Generally, utility bills were among the top expenditures from the received cash (55% on average of the last 6 rounds of PDM). The proportion of cash assistance expenditures on utilities and bills increases up to 64% during wintertime. Based on the findings of the household vulnerability assessment for targeting, using the scorecard methodology, the combination of extensive household vulnerabilities, residence in primarily rural areas, and large dependency on firewood or coal constitutes 10% of the overall refugee caseload. Given its positive outcomes and significant impact on poverty levels, particularly seasonal poverty, it is anticipated that the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF) will continue to be implemented in 2025. According to the proposed revised State Budget Law for 2024, the total budget allocated to the EVRF is 2 billion MDL (approximately USD 135 million).

However, it is important to note that the implementation details of the EVRF for the upcoming winter season are currently being revised by the Government. A draft law proposes significant changes to the EVRF, including the elimination of category-based vulnerability classifications and a shift towards direct cash transfers to beneficiaries. The draft law also explicitly includes refugees with Temporary Protection Status as eligible beneficiaries, addressing previous uncertainties about their access to the fund. These changes aim to simplify the system, improve its efficiency, and ensure more equitable support.

In light of these developments, if Temporary Protection (TP) holders are indeed included in the EVRF, the winter cash support provided by RRP partners will focus on three key groups: newcomers who have not yet obtained TP status and accessed the EVRF system, refugees facing barriers to obtaining TP status, and those TP holders who may face additional barriers to accessing the EVRF due to various factors. This targeted approach ensures that the most vulnerable refugees receive the necessary support while complementing the government's efforts. As these changes are being discussed by the Government, it is key to advocate for inclusion and support for all vulnerable populations, including refugees, during the winter months.

4 October, 2023
UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Response Strategy

For the 2024/2025 Winter Response Plan, RCF partners are appealing for USD 10.71 million to support 62,000 refugees and affected host community members across Moldova.

As in previous years, the response will focus on supporting the most vulnerable individuals and households who are unable to meet their winterization needs. The reasons for this inability include:

- **Inaccessibility of Basic Winterization Means:** Refugees and affected host community members may be unable to access basic winterization means due to socioeconomic vulnerabilities.
- **Limited State Assistance:** Refugees and affected host community members may not be receiving winterization-related assistance from the state, or their critical winter needs may not be fully covered.

RCF and its partners will advocate for the inclusion of refugees in state winterization support, including initiatives like the EVRF. Assistance from humanitarian partners is designed to address existing gaps in the state response and, when necessary, to complement it. This alignment is based on the specific needs of target groups and prioritized vulnerable populations. Development partners have been working closely with the government of the Republic of Moldova at all levels to strengthen the country's resilience to the cold season, including support for the implementation of the EVRF.

In August 2024, the Government of Moldova published a draft of Law No. 141/2022, which outlines changes to the EVRF. Notably, the draft law proposes shifting assistance from bill compensation to direct cash transfers. It also introduces a more flexible approach to eligibility criteria and includes provisions for temporary protection holders. However, these changes require parliamentary approval for final adoption. Further clarity is needed on the eligibility requirements and how refugees can access the EVRF program.

The Cash Working Group (CWG) partners plan to complement the government's winter support program. Once eligibility criteria and transfer values are confirmed, partners, in coordination with the line ministries, will evaluate how best to include refugees in need of assistance. Partners will focus on filling gaps for those not yet covered, such as newcomers who have not obtained temporary protection or refugees who do not qualify for the EVRF but still require assistance. In cases of severe need, top-up payments may be provided for vulnerable groups where the standard transfer value is insufficient to cover winter-related expenses.

However, these top-up payments must be carefully managed to avoid overpayments to those already receiving adequate support. The Refugee Assistance Information System is ready to be used to coordinate winter-related support, helping to avoid duplication and maximize the efficient use of resources.

Considering the functionality and accessibility of local markets, RCF partners will continue to prioritize winter cash-based interventions, specifically through Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programs for individuals in need. MPCA is designed to respect the dignity and independence of beneficiaries, empowering them to make choices aligned with their priorities. This approach fosters a sense of normalcy and ownership among those receiving aid. While the value of cash transfers is still being coordinated with the government and must remain coherent with the EVRF, partners are planning based on a value of 800 MDL per month per household from November 2024 to March 2025, totaling 4,000 MDL for the entire winter season.

The response for this year includes the insulation of refugee accommodation centers based on technical assessments to identify the major needs for ensuring thermal comfort. This effort also encompasses the insulation of reception centers in Palanca and Otaci, as well as safe spaces, including Blue Dots and Community Service Centers.

The distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs) will be considered as a complementary measure when other options are not feasible or appropriate, such as when there are difficulties accessing local markets or challenges in obtaining certain goods. In this context, RCF partners aim to support approximately 25,000 people with winter NFIs, in line with planning figures for those in need of such assistance, including both refugees and the affected host community. Partners will coordinate NFI distribution within the framework of the RCF Basic Needs Working Group.

RCF partners will also work to support the upgrading of heating systems and thermal insulation in private accommodations to ensure adequate living conditions in 9 regions. This will cover the most vulnerable refugee and affected host community households in need of critical winter repairs.

Additionally, partners will implement community infrastructure upgrades needed for critical winter repairs to ensure continuity of activities during the cold season. This year, the focus on community infrastructure is on educational facilities, including schools and kindergartens. By ensuring the continuity of activities in these locations, RCF partners aim to benefit over 5,500 Ukrainian and Moldovan children who will receive in-person classes. RCF partners will continue to support accredited RACs during the cold season.

Courtesy of People in Need Moldova

Centrality of Protection

Winter season brings additional challenges to refugees and host community members to meet their basic needs and to participate in the daily life of the communities where they live. Additionally, the availability of services and their accessibility is also likely to be affected. In this context it is key that humanitarian actors adopt the necessary measures to mitigate winter related protection risks, and ensure refugees and host communities are aware of their rights and existing services.

Moldova's refugee response underscores its commitment to protection, evident through the initiatives of the Protection Working Group, sub-working groups, task forces, and the supportive efforts of the PSEA, AAP, and Gender Taskforce. By incorporating an age, gender, and diversity approach, coupled with a consistent emphasis on accountability to affected people and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, RCF partners aim to make humanitarian programs inclusive, equitable and safe.

While a significant portion of the refugee population is in urban centres, the 30% located in rural areas present distinct challenges. Winter poses increased risks to these communities, so RCF partners are prioritizing outreach in rural areas, deploying mobile teams to identify and assist high-risk profiles, such as individuals with disabilities, older people, and Roma refugees.

The target groups for the 2024 Winter Response include refugees living in RACs, those in substandard housing, refugee-hosting households in similar conditions, and refugees in rural areas.

Winter-related assessments in the past have highlighted specific vulnerable groups requiring prioritization, such as individuals with chronic illnesses, older people, people with disability, Roma refugees, unaccompanied and separated children, and single female-headed households with a high dependency ratio. Tailored responses are required to address the unique needs of each group, ensuring their access to support and services.

To ensure the centrality of protection throughout the winter response, RCF partners will:

- **Increase outreach and monitoring activities** inside and outside RACs, and actively outreach to individuals at higher risk due to the winter season (including older refugees or refugees with disabilities) to mitigate risks and promote their access to essential services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Child Protection and Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response activities.
- **Ensure safe and timely referral of refugees** and affected host community members with uncovered winter needs to organizations providing winter assistance, including MPCA, as a means to also prevent mitigate risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the adoption of negative coping mechanisms.
- Work to **ensure that activities at community centers and safe spaces are maintained** throughout the cold season, as maintaining a sense of connection, as well as access to services is critical to protection and for mental health, and this will be more needed as the cold winter months arrive.
- Support refugees to **obtain a secure legal status** in Moldova to ensure access to government services for which they may be eligible during the winter months, and provide the necessary assistance to help them access winter support.
- Continue ensuring that **aid workers are aware of their obligations** when engaging with refugees and host communities, and also aware of where and how to safely refer survivors of GBV, including SEA, for care and support.

Support for the host community during winter is essential for maintaining social cohesion and mitigating the overall socio-economic impact of the winter season. Winterization assistance for Moldovan households should complement the aid package provided by the government and must be closely coordinated with relevant government counterparts. RCF partners shall prioritize and support the inclusion of vulnerable host community members in existing government winter response and must not create parallel systems.

Courtesy of Acted Moldova

Funding and Target by Partner

PARTNER	TOTAL BUDGET (US $)	AMOUNT SECURED (US $)
Action Against Hunger (Action Contre la Faim)	50,000	50,000
Asociația pentru Drepturile Omului Lex XXI	50,000	0
Caritas Moldova	135,037	135,037
Catholic Relief Services	50,000	50,000
Charity Centre for Refugees	135,300	112,800
Dorcas	9,155	9,155
International Organization for Migration	1,730,000	340,000
Moldova Red Cross Society	930,000	0
Norwegian Refugee Council	1,370,000	1,370,000
People In Need	758,354	758,354
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	5,002,500	2,035,210
United Nations Population Fund	331,400	92,000
WeWorld	162,090	162,090
Grand Total	**10,713,836**	**5,114,646**

Version 1	09/09/2024	N/A
Version 2	25/09/2024	Correction of references to planning figures in the document.

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL AT MDACHRCF@UNHCR.ORG

For updated information on the refugee response in the Republic of Moldova, please visit the UNHCR Operational Data Portal. To view the 2024 RRP Funding Requirements and Funding levels, refer to the Refugee Funding Tracker.