Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

MOLDOVA

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ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT OF PSEA INFORMATION MATERIALS

Disability & Age Task Force
Refugee Coordination Forum Moldova

BACKGROUND

The Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network is committed to promoting the protection and safety of all individuals, including refugees, from sexual exploitation and abuse. As part of its activities, the Netowork has developed various information materials to raise awareness and provide guidance on PSEA, including reporting mechanisms, among refugees and affected host community members. These materials include videos for online dissemination, printed and electronic posters explaining key PSEA concepts, and pocket cards detailing how to report incidents and seek assistance.

To ensure effective accessibility, the PSEA Network recognizes the need to ensure that its information materials are accessible to all individuals, including persons with different types of disabilities. This commitment aligns with international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by the Republic of Moldova the 21st September 2010, particularly Article 9 on Accessibility and Article 21 on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. These articles underline the obligation of states to provide information in accessible formats and to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully and effectively participate in society on an equal basis with others.

Humanitarian actors, guided by a human rights-based approach must also guarantee that the people they serve and work with are able to access information in accessible and inclusive formats. This obligation is hihglighted in key policies and guidelines. For example, in 2019 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action were released. These guidelines emphasize the need to remove barriers to information and communication for persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, ensuring that information is provided in multiple formats, such as large print, and sign language, and is compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) also highlights the importance of ensuring that information is accessible, understandable, and actionable for all individuals, regardless of disability.

By abiding to these standards, the PSEA Network seeks to promote accountability to affected populations, including persons with different types of disabilities.

The Disability and Age Task Force supported the PSEA Network and conducted an assessment to evaluate the accessibility of PSEA information materials for persons with disabilities, with a particular focus on individuals with intellectual disabilities and sensory impairments (visual and hearing disabilities). People with disabilities are a heterogeneous group and specific needs within the group need to be considered. This effort aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, has access to critical information on PSEA and reporting mechanisms.

METHODOLOGY

Participants:

- Refugees with different types of disabilities (sensorial and intellectual disabilities were represented).
- UN staff with visual impairment.
- Representative from an Organization of Persons with Disabilities (Center for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

Materials Reviewed:

- Videos for web dissemination
- Four printed and electronic posters explaining PSEA and reporting methods in simple terms.
- Pocket cards providing concise PSEA information and reporting details.

Approach:

- Accessibility: Ensuring usability for people with sensory disabilities.
- Message clarity: Evaluating how well the message was conveyed and if it is in an easy to read language.

FINDINGS

Videos:

- The video content was generally clear and well-received by all participants interviewed. The messaging was considered easy to understand. Participants appreciated the use of simple and direct language to explain the key principles of PSEA and the available reporting mechanisms. The videos were considered comprehensible to a broad audience.

- The videos lacked some accessibility features, such as sign language interpretation, significantly impacting the accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments. The lack of sign language interpretation excluded a part of refugees that relies on interpretation for communication. These gaps reduce the accessibility of the videos, hindering the ability of the materials to reach all affected populations effectively.

Posters and Pocket Cards (Printed Versions)

- **Strengths**: The printed posters and pocket cards were considered accessible and easy to understand by participants which represented sensorial and intellectual disabilities. The use of straightforward language and easy but clear designs contributed to their effectiveness. The participants also comment on the good logic of the message and the structure of the materials. Overall, only minor changes were needed to improve text clarity, showing that the materials were well-designed.

- **Challenges**: Participants suggested a minor change: bolding the text slightly to improve readability, particularly for individuals with low vision or mild visual impairments. While the overall layout and font were considered suitable, this adjustment could further enhance accessibility and ensure that the materials are user-friendly for a broader audience.

Posters (PDF Versions)

- **Strengths:** In terms of content, the electronic versions of the posters effectively communicated the intended messages as for the printed version. Some participants found the messaging clear and easy to understand. The overall structure and language of the posters were welcome for being easy to read and informative.

- **Challenges**: For those with visual impairment, the electronic (PDF) versions of the posters presented significant accessibility issues. They were not formatted to be compatible with screen readers, a crucial assistive technology for individuals who are visually impaired. Participants noted that the lack of tagged text, alternative descriptions for images, and document structuring made it impossible for screen readers to interpret the content accurately. In particular it was mentioned that the screen reader was reading the entire document as an image. This creates a significant barrier, as visually impaired individuals rely on such technology to access digital information.

RECCOMANDATIONS

General Recommendations:

- Conduct future material assessments during the design phase to address accessibility concerns.
- Collaborate with OPDs for technical input when developing new materials.
- Provide alternative formats (e.g., audio descriptions for videos and materials) to ensure full accessibility.

Videos:

- Add sign language interpreter consistently to all videos to ensure accessibility for people with hearing impairments.

Posters and Pocket Cards (Printed Versions)

- Slightly bold the text of the main messages in all printed materials to improve readability.

Posters (PDF Version)

- Revise the PDF versions of the posters to ensure compatibility with screen reader software by embedding text descriptions and proper tagging.

CONTACTS

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