

MOLDOVA

Inter-Agency Winterization Plan

November 2022 to March 2023

Targeted Refugee Population

130,000

Refugees from Ukraine
(90K currently in Moldova
+ 40K newcomers)

Targeted Host Community

92,000

Vulnerable Moldovans
living in areas hosting
refugees

Funding Requirements (US\$)

43.83M

Funding Secured (US\$)

35.48M

Summary

The Moldova Winterization Plan is the result of combined efforts of Refugee Coordination Forum partners in Moldova working in various sectors to mitigate the consequences of the cold season to refugees and affected host community members. The goal of the plan is to ensure that adequate measures are put in place to ensure that refugees, Moldovans, and third-country nationals have appropriate protection against the harsh climatic conditions. The implementation of the plan is coordinated with the Government of Moldova, and should complement activities foreseen by different governmental bodies - such as firewood distribution, the Energy Vulnerability Fund and APRA. 130K refugees and 92K Moldovans are targeted with various activities, with the overall financial requirement being 43.83M USD.

This plan serve as a preparedness and response guide for partners when implementing winter related activities at the local level, and it outlines key humanitarian activities with the main focus on life saving winter support in line with findings from the [Winterization Rapid Needs Assessment](#) and consultations held with both refugees and host community members.

The plan prioritizes activities delivered through multiple modalities, including winter cash support in line with government winter response, critical winterization repairs, provision of winter-related items, support to Refugee Accommodation Centres, among others.

While this plan is primarily focused on winterization humanitarian efforts, regular humanitarian programming under the Refugee Response Plan will continue – at the same time that development actors scale up their response in support to Moldova’s resilience to the cold season and strengthening longer-term response systems, including the Energy Vulnerability Fund.

WINTERIZATION ACTIVITY	FUNDING (US\$) REQUIREMENTS	FUNDING (US\$) SECURED
Cash and monetized assistance	24,395,048.48	23,255,048.48
Food distribution	4,511,234.00	2,183,234.00
Improvement of collective sites (including WASH rehabilitation)	2,352,564.00	966,564.00
Improvements (e.g. accommodation insulation) of private infrastructure	500,000.00	150,000.00
NFI distribution	4,622,323.00	2,566,823.00
Health Services and Procurement and supply management for medicines, vaccines, devices, consumables, including laboratory items	3,350,000.00	3,350,000.00
Support for the improvement of community infrastructure and public spaces in host communities	1,242,390.00	1,012,390.00
Coverage of utility bills in Refugee Accommodation Centres	2,861,830.11	2,000,000.00
Grand Total	43,833,559.48	35,484,059.48

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Winterization activities are those seeking to improve the preparedness to the cold season and relate 'directly' to provision of life-saving assistance against the cold weather, particularly heating, and related issues should be classified as winter related. Therefore, the 'regular' humanitarian interventions, which are delivered irrespective of the season, should not be classified as such. The response outlined in this plan will be delivered via a combination of in-kind and cash assistance. Whenever feasible and appropriate, cash assistance will be prioritized, according to the existing criteria, the access and proximity of functioning markets and the availability of the needed winter items and services. The response package is a set of minimum relief activities and level of access to services to enable vulnerable groups to adequately cope with the cold season.

Out of the overall ask of the Refugee Response Plan, the implementation of this winterization plan requires US\$43.83 million. This funding requirement will cover needs from November 2022 to March 2023. Funding requirements covering activities implemented in 2022 are reflected in the current 2022 RRP, while the portion related to the remaining period of cold season (January to March 2023) will be included in the 2023 Refugee Response Plan.

Refugee Coordination Forum 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 in line with findings from [the Winterization Rapid Needs Assessment](#) supported by People in Need (PiN), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Acted, IFRC and UNHCR. Government winterization strategy and activities have been considered when planning the winterization response, with active participation of key line ministries and other government counterparts in the planning process, including the Joint Crisis Management Center and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

Protection Sector

Sectoral Winterization Strategy

Response activities of the Protection Sector will complement those provided by other sectors, such as Cash, Accommodation, Health and Education, and will ensure that risk mitigation measures are considered in their strategies. Efforts will build on work already done or underway by protection and other actors in the areas of referrals and case management and service mapping at the local level. Several considerations should be taken into account in terms of planning the response for winter needs:

- Rising energy costs may result in refugees losing access to shelter and being forced to engage in negative coping strategies (e.g., exchange and sale of sex as a coping mechanism) to pay/contribute to higher energy bills. Refugees may face eviction by host families unable to pay higher energy bills, or by landlords if/when refugees are unable to pay these bills themselves. Refugee Accommodation Centers (accredited and unaccredited) may be full or also close due to energy costs (eg, MoldExpo).
- Protection risks already existing in RACs (e.g., GBV, disability access, integration of Roma refugees) will become more pronounced if there is an increase in the RAC population.
- Risks of domestic violence/IPV in private housing may also occur due to worsening living conditions/increased economic burdens, as well as within refugee households.
- Refugees may be at heightened risk of trafficking or labor/sexual exploitation, either in Moldova or abroad, as they seek financial opportunities to cover increased costs.
- Uncertainty about legal status may cause refugees to forego services (health, education, MHPSS) that could be particularly important during the winter months.
- Schools and safe spaces may also close or have restricted hours due to high energy costs, negatively impacting learning by refugee children and forcing families to care for their children at home such that they are unable to work and financially support their families and increase caring responsibilities on women.
- Refugee families, especially the most vulnerable, may not be able to access local services due to weather conditions (eg, snow) and become more isolated, and may be at greater risk due to poor living conditions.
- Refugees arriving in Moldova may be unaware of winter-related services.
- Refugees, in particular at-risk populations such as children, older persons and PwD, will need warm clothing and blankets to avoid medical complications and to be able to study.
- Overnight accommodations in Palanca (tent camp) may not be suitable to accommodate refugees, especially those with disabilities and medical conditions, overnight.
- Possibility of increased tensions with host communities if host community members believe additional services and cash are being directed only to refugees. Increased assistance to host community members, by the government or humanitarian agencies, may mitigate this.



Sectoral Priority Response Activities

Prioritized activities for the PWG (including the CP SWG, GBV SWB, Disability TF and Roma TF) in the context of the winter response include:

- Increase outreach to, and monitoring of, refugees in RACs and host communities to stay abreast of protection risks and needs during the winter months.
- Increase legal counseling for refugees as to legal rights and complaint mechanisms.
- Deployment of mobile services and alternative service delivery modalities, to extent possible, to ensure provision of protection services (MHPSS, GBV, CP) to those who are housebound due to snow and weather conditions.
- Provide information on winter-related services and assistance to refugees arriving at border crossing points, monitor information needs, and refer refugees to service providers.
- Increase awareness-raising on risks of trafficking and labor/sexual exploitation and monitor advertised employment opportunities, to the extent possible.
- Ensure basic needs are met, especially for particularly vulnerable refugees, through timely identification and referral for provision of cash assistance and NFIs, including clothes, heaters and blankets, to avoid resort to negative coping mechanisms.
- Work with the Accommodation and Transport Sector to make available heated community centers to the extent possible, as well as safe spaces in RACs and community locations.
- Promote social cohesion through target activities and by including vulnerable and at-risk members of host communities in the winter response, while working with all partners to advocate for the inclusion of refugee on the Government's winter response.

The PWG will work closely with and support government counterparts in providing protection-related services. This includes the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Border Authorities and Bureau of Migration and Asylum), Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ombudsperson's Office. Areas of support include continued capacity-building on delivery of services to persons of concern, awareness of protection risks during winter months and need to adapt accordingly, and capacity to respond to rights violations that are weather-related.

The PWG will also share the results of its monitoring activities with government counterparts to ensure a common understanding of winter-related protection risks and to coordinate protection responses.

Gender Based Violence Sub-Working Group

During the winter season, GBV actors coordinating under the GBV Sub-Working Group will work to ensure that survivors and persons at risk of GBV do have access to specialized services adapting service provision to the winter context and its challenges. · Alternative activities and interventions should be considered to ensure survivors have access to services, such as strengthening mobile teams and online digital platforms, while providing connectivity to refugees and vulnerable host community members.

GBV Actors will also work in close collaboration with relevant sectors to ensure GBV risk mitigation measures are considered throughout the winter response, including in the context of delivery of Cash Assistance and in Refugee Accommodation Centres. Moreover, the sub-working group and its partners will continue strengthening the technical capacities of first responders on GBV principles, as well as enhancing the quality of GBV response services provided, in order to ensure the timely and appropriate assistance for survivors. Training efforts will include a component of GBV risks during wintertime and key messages on the needs of adapting the current services to the weather conditions and the related restrictions.

Child Protection Sub-Working Group

CP SWG and partners will jointly work to ensure vulnerable children are identified and access timely winter support, while working with relevant sectors for the prioritization of vulnerable children for cross sectorial responses, including cash assistance.

CP partners will continue their standard activities, with additional support to ensure that children's basic needs are met. For example, some partners will distribute winter clothing and shoes to vulnerable children, and health and nutrition kits which include food as well as protection messages to vulnerable families with children. Partners will also strengthen their focus on MHPSS activities. The Blue Dots will maintain their activities, ensuring that all children at risk who are identified are referred to appropriate services. Some partners envisage visage mobile activities, to better address the changing needs of children and families and to better identify children who may not be regularly accessing services.

Challenges, Risks and Constraints (Protection WG)

- Closure of RACs and other community spaces (schools, medical centers, community centers), placing refugees at particular risk of harm and increased psychological distress.
- Disruption of service provision by humanitarian actors and government due to constraints related to the energy crisis (e.g., reduced ambulance services, closures of schools and medical centers, etc.),
- Inability to travel to communities and monitor conditions/provide services due to weather conditions.
- Significant influx of refugees from Ukraine due to weather conditions amid ongoing armed conflict, exacerbating challenges around accommodation, medical care, education and other services.

Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during Winter Response

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, availability of services and their accessibility will also be affected. In this context it is key that humanitarian actors adopt the necessary measures to ensure refugees and host communities are aware of their rights and existing services, while ensuring bi-directional communication channels are accessible and prepared to provide timely and updated information, as well as to handle sensitive complaints.

It is also key to ensure that all humanitarian actors are aware of their obligations when engaging with refugees and host communities, and also aware about where to refer survivors of GBV, including SEA, for care and support.

The Refugee Coordination Forum PSEA Network has prepared information materials to be used by humanitarian actors when delivering assistance to raise awareness on gratuity of humanitarian assistance, obligations of humanitarian workers and existing complaint and feedback channels. Any organization willing to receive this materials can write to mdachrcf@unhcr.org to request them, as well as to request information on ongoing PSEA trainings and awareness raising activities being implemented in which staff can participate.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Considerations for the Winter Response

- Maintaining a sense of connection is critical to mental health, and this will be more needed but challenging as the cold winter months arrive. Mobility will be reduced, and people will be increasingly cut off from their usual support networks. **Suggested Response:** In addition to setting up hotlines, phone trees and 'check-in' calls can be helpful to offer a sense of connection to those who need it during the cold winter months. These calls can be utilized to see how people are coping, provide information, and/or just let them know they are not alone. They can also be set up using peer support mechanisms, with peer support actors receiving training in PFA and supportive communication.
- With the arrival of winter, there is usually an increase in people affected by "Seasonal depression". Common complaints may include a persistent sad mood, loss of energy, changes in sleep patterns (insomnia or sleeping too much), weight gain/overeating, social withdrawal, etc. **Suggested Response:** To help people deal with seasonal mood changes, raise awareness about common signs and teach coping techniques such as grounding, mindfulness, deep breathing, etc. using self-help materials like *"Doing What Matters in Times of Stress"*. Encourage healthy lifestyle choices such as exercise, hot/nutritious foods, socializing, etc.
- With the colder weather, the sidewalks often become icy and slippery. Older people and those with disabilities face additional obstacles to mobility due to the fear of falling, and this may prevent them from seeking the help they need. **Suggested Response:** Ensure mobile outreach is aware of people with mobility issues and check in with them regularly. Provide support to get to necessary appointments - even if it is just arranging for someone to walk with them.
- Holidays can also be very stressful as they often serve as reminders of the people we have lost and/or are separated from. Holidays also serve as a grim reminder of just how difficult things have become. It is frustrating to not be able to afford to give gifts to loved ones at this time of year, and even more devastating when you are also unable to pay utility bills and/or face eviction. **Suggested Response:** Ensure extra emotional support is in place in the days leading up to the holidays - both in person and through remote options. Provide spaces where people can come together to be with others during the holidays. Teach positive coping skills. Ensure these options are also in place for those with mobility issues. Provide training to frontline workers and "gatekeepers" on suicide risk prevention/response, PFA, etc. Be prepared to refer for more specialized help if needed.



Photo: UNFPA Moldova

Winterization Cash Strategy

UNHCR in coordination with partners, including UNICEF and UNFPA, has been implementing MPCA programme since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis and reached more than 80,000 individuals. UNHCR currently finalized the verification exercise and identified that there are around 52,000 individuals/22,600 households (out of 80,000 individuals covered by cash assistance since March) currently present in the country.

By November (start of winter period), it is estimated that the total refugee population will be around 92,000 individuals out of which 52,000 will be in need of winter cash support. This number is likely to increase considering further displacement from Ukraine is likely to take place during winter season.

From the Government's side, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MoLSP) has been making efforts to strengthen the social protection schemes in Moldova to respond the increasing needs of its citizens and to mitigate the adverse impact of inflation, energy prices and economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. Two main programmes exist to cover the need of the vulnerable Moldovans: means-tested anti-poverty programme “Ajutor Social”, and the cold-session benefit “APRA” (Ajutorul pentru Perioada Rece a Anului). Moreover, the Energy Vulnerability Fund is being implemented to further support Moldovan households through subsidies to utility bills.

MoLSP reports that there are 250,000 households recorded in their social protection and assistance system (SAISS) and the total beneficiary of their winter support programme (APRA) is around 365,000 individuals/120,000 HHs. Under UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP joint project, 40,000 HHs will be targeted by WFP with UNICEF's joint funding. Based on these figures, it is estimated that 230,000 Moldovan individuals are in need of winter cash assistance to cover their increasing needs across the country.

The MoLSP is working on the development of a “Crisis Module” under the MoLSP information systems that will enable collection of the data on vulnerable Moldovan HHs across the country, verified at local/community level. The vulnerable HHs will be identified, and the list of beneficiaries will be validated by the social workers at the local level from each community. The cash partners who intend to target the vulnerable Moldovan HHs will be able to share their beneficiary list with the Ministry, and the Ministry will be able to cross-check the beneficiaries for de-duplication with APRA and shock responsiveness programme (targeting Moldovan families not hosting refugees with specific profiles) as well as among the referrals through this module. Additionally, MoLSP may explore the ways of sharing the beneficiary lists with the humanitarian actors who intend to target Moldovan households in need of assistance. This mechanism will ensure that the more vulnerable moldovan population living in areas affected by the refugee influx could be assisted during the cold period through the harmonized system. The MoLSP does not foresee a considerable gap for the refugee population by taking the UNHCR's MPCA programme's coverage and plans for to-up payments during winterization period to the refugee beneficiaries. The MoLSP therefore recommends partners to focus on Molodvan families hosting/not hosting refugees in need of assistance and invites CWG partners with resources to target Moldovan families by joining the “Crisis Module”.

Recommended Transfer Value for Winter Cash Support

The recommended transfer value for winter cash support is USD 36 (MDL 700) per household in line with the Government's winter support, namely APRA. The government of Moldova provides winter support assistance to vulnerable Moldovan families during November and March and CWG partners are recommended to provide assistance with this frequency as well to avoid any social tension among communities. Most of the partners agreed on using the recommended transfer value and the frequency (multi-installment covering 5 months) on the winter support cash assistance.

Recommended Cash and Monetized Activities

The following activities are recommended by the Cash WG:

- Cash assistance (in particular MPCA) is the preferred modality for winter support considering its nature to respect the dignity and independence of beneficiaries, and give them a sense of normality and ownership, allowing them to decide on their priorities.
- Provision of winter cash assistance to refugees and Moldovans (both hosting/not hosting refugees) to cover the additional needs related to winter, ease the burden in household economy, and to mitigate the risk of resorting to negative coping strategies.
- Voucher and NFI distributions might be considered for specific vulnerable groups (such as elderly, disabled population), living in remote areas, having mobility problems hindering access to cash assistance.

Challenges, Risks and Constraints

- Unpredictable spike in the energy prices may result in the insufficiency of the assistance provided.
- In principle, the CWG partner agreed on the transfer value (TV) and the implementation period for the winter cash assistance however, few partners would intend to implement a different transfer value based on their budget and TV calculations.
- Geographical targeting might be a challenge to coordinate all the cash activities at national level.
- Funding limitations to support government social protection systems to cover all the needs of the vulnerable population, in particular Moldovan families.
- The “Crisis module” is planned to be completed by October and will strengthen and complement the existent coordination mechanisms/efforts for de-duplication. Any delays in the development of the module may carry out risks of duplications.



Accommodation and Transportation (WASH and Food Security) - Sectoral Winterization Strategy

Response within the accommodation & transportation sector is tailored based on the following assumptions:

- Several programmes were already planned to cover RACs that host refugees before the start of the winter; however, should there be a need, winter contingency measures should be undertaken separately.
- A vast majority of refugees, especially those residing with the hosting HHs continue receiving cash assistance, emphasizing a need of the complementary and lifesaving nature of winterization response.
- In the areas most impacted by the refugee influx, vulnerable Moldovans should be also considered with targeted activities.
- There might be an increased dynamic of population movements due to various reasons (e.g. gas supply shortages, increased rental prices, weather conditions), which lead to a need of focusing more on individual-based assistance.
- According to the findings of the Rapid Winter Needs Assessment, Center Region and Chisinau in particular rely more on the electric heating, while North and South rely more on the wood and gas.
- In case of restrictions on the supply of gas, it is important to consider the heating on RACs and host community will rely on oil and/or electrical heaters with due considerations regarding the safety and capacity of electrical network.
- Additional food assistance to refugee in Moldova is likely to be required during winter season due to increased basic needs for refugees and vulnerable households of host communities, which will impose more risks on their overall ability to meet their food needs.

In terms of eventual challenges related to energy supply, the following considerations were taken:

- **Tented camps (transit site):** The tented camps at the borders need to be properly adequate to receive additional influx of refugees. The main need is to maintain the tents heated and to give the people proper items (clothing, etc.) to spend the night.
- **RAC (short to mid-term stay):** Through a technical assessment on RACs, there is a need to adequate the rooms for winter where people is being accommodated (windows, doors), fix existing heating system or find an insulation solution for the infrastructure.
- **Contingency RACs:** In the case of a major influx and the active RACs are at its full capacity, additional infrastructures need to be improved for winter and also be considered for the additional utility costs.
- **Utility Costs:** Due to the increase of the cost of utilities, larger populations will require financial support to cover those costs.

Additionally, some considerations were done on a community level:

- **Private housing:** The spaces need to be adequate for winter to comply the minimum standards, specially have a system to heat the rooms. The people will need also items to pass the winter (blankets, clothing, etc.). In the areas outside the center and Chisinau, there is a need to support the transportation of firewood.
- **Community centers:** Some community center that receives refugees are in need to have solutions during winter. Winter clothing is also needed for the people who arrives to the community centers.
- **NFI Distribution:** For NFI distribution activities it is important to work in close coordination with the protection sector to ensure activities reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups.

Sectoral Priority Response Activities and Standard Response Package

On the one hand, one of the priorities of the sector is to guarantee that new arrivals and beneficiaries already in the country (both RACs and host communities) have a safe and heated area for shelter, working in close collaboration with relevant sectors and ensuring centrality of protection on shelter response. On the other hand, regarding NFI distribution, one of the priorities for the sector is to distribute standard kits of winter NFI in reception centres at border areas, in RACs and in host communities. Therefore, sector priority activities are:

- Light repairs in RACs (insulation in rooms)
- Medium repairs in RACs (including insulation – bigger scale coverage)
- Distribution and prepositioning of winter appliances (heaters)
- Repair and maintenance of heating system to ensure hot water is available at RACs and WASH facilities
- Support for the payment of Utility Bills in RACs
- Cash for rent for the most vulnerable refugees
- Distribution and prepositioning of NFI for RACs (hygiene kits, winter clothing and bedding kits), reception centres and host communities (in-kind and vouchers)

RACs will be supported with proper insulation, repairs of heating systems, and support with the payment of utility bills to ensure full capacity is available to host refugees during the winter season. Personal NFIs (warm clothing, bedding, hygiene kit as a package) as well as household NFI such as electric and oil heaters will be provided mainly through cash modality and minimally through in-kind distribution. Moldovan families hosting refugees will be supported to meet increased utility bills during the winter months to cushion disruption of their livelihood. Household NFIs will also be prioritized for hosting families. Cash/voucher will be the preferred modality of delivery taking into consideration suppliers' capability and market.

To strengthen coordination around NFI prepositioning and distribution, ACTED and UNHCR will deploy the Virtual Humanitarian Aid Platform (VHAP) to support winterization efforts.

Food assistance interventions will include several modalities, depending on target groups. In RACs, the assistance will be continued to be provided in the form of hot meals (either via vouchers or catering service providers), while in host communities, it will include provision of food baskets and commodity vouchers. Schools and educational centers with refugees will also be provided with hot-meals in coordination with the Education Working Group..

The Government of Moldova has planned facilitating procurement of firewood for Moldovan households, for which it has launched the website <https://lemne.md>. However, the humanitarian actors are requested to support with logistical activities to store and distribute firewood in the North and South of Moldova.

Challenges, Risks and Constraints

- If the distribution of NFI packages is not harmonized among the population groups, this might lead to possible tensions between host communities and refugees..
- Cash, vouchers, and in-kind distribution should be properly coordinated to ensure that duplication of assistance or inappropriate distribution do not take place,
- Timeliness of response – repair activities should be finalized in late autumn.
- Coordination with the government is challenging, generating asymmetry of information and can have an impact in operations
- Logistics and distribution points for NFI in host communities must be coordinated with local actors, including Local Public Authorities and Local CSOs.
- There is still some level of uncertainty related to the distribution plans of various organization, which influences the coordination scenarios.
- Operationalization of utilities support is a challenge and a risk as the modality of transfer might impact the result of the activity.

Health Sector

Sectoral Winterization Strategy

Cold period of the year will increase needs of already vulnerable population groups: newborns and children under 5, pregnant and lactating women, women and girls in need of GBV case management, older people and people with chronic diseases.

The challenges of the winter period include:

- Rise in acute respiratory illnesses outbreaks, with increased transmission in the overcrowded residences and medical institutions;
- Disruptions in heating of medical institutions, especially in perinatal centers, with risk for the woman and the newborn health.
- Effects of disruptions in access to nutrition on immune response capacities.

Health sector response will be aiming to cover the following health needs:

- 1000 severe pneumonia cases and 5500 severe cases of influenza,
- 16 000 people in need of influenza vaccine,
- 1000 pregnant refugee women living in the host community and in the RACs,
- 3000 expected deliveries per month at the national level, including among refugee population.
- 1000 children 6-24 months in need of complementary food.

Sectoral Priority Response Activities and Standard Response Package

The following activities were identified as the priority for the most vulnerable populations during the winter season:

- Strengthening disease surveillance, prevention and case management for acute respiratory infections, as well as the continuation of provision of care for non-seasonal illnesses and conditions.
- Ensuring safe delivery of babies and access to high quality SRH services including health response to GBV during winter period.
- Ensuring appropriate nutrition is available for particularly vulnerable groups.

Health sector partners will aim to stockpile medical supplies used to manage respiratory tract diseases to enhance the capacities of the health providers to respond to the expected increased incidence of acute respiratory tract infections. The response will include procurement of pneumonia kits and influenza-specific treatment courses and distribution of the medical supplies to the hospitals. Also, health sector will ensure that additional seasonal influenza vaccines are procured by MoH and made available to cover the vulnerable groups of refugees.

Health sector will also work to enhance capacities of the healthcare institutions providing SRH and GBV services to address health risks related to low temperatures including increased respiratory diseases in perinatal centers. To that extend, partners will procure electric blankets for patients at perinatal centers level 1, 2, 3, operating room heating mattresses at perinatal centers level 2,3; NFI kits covering postnatal needs of mother and new born; blankets for hospitals; baby heating mattresses; PPE kits for perinatal centers.

There are some activities already implemented by the government and/or complementary projects:

- Strengthening the national disease surveillance system with focus on surveillance of acute respiratory infections or influenza like illness including COVID-19 (lab training, equipment, and supplies).
- Stockpiling of medical supplies at PHC level (peripheral drugs and antibiotics for children).
- Training of aid providers in the case detection and management of severe cases of acute respiratory infections, COVID-19 and TB.
- Language-appropriate risk communication and awareness campaigns including hygiene promotion messages within winter sectoral response (what to do if person has symptoms, premises of quarantine, self-isolation, social distancing).
- Procurement and distribution of PPE kits for the health workers and humanitarian actors in the field to reduce risk of transmission which could hamper field operations and add up to the increased seasonal morbidity and mortality.
- Energy-saving measures at health facilities.

Challenges, Risks and Constraints

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, it still influences the overall response in health sector. Due to seasonality, there might be a spike in COVID-19 cases that may overwhelm health system and resources.
- There is a reported hesitation of vaccination that resulting in low coverage and low utilization of the procured vaccine supplies.
- Lack of access or untimely access to health care resulting in higher than expected incidence and mortality rates.
- Electricity supply interruption.
- Disruption of services and transportation hindering timely access to life saving health care services including critical delivery cases resulting in higher than expected incidence and mortality rates.



Education Sector

Sectoral Winterization Strategy

Higher gas prices and heating costs will have an impact on utility bills in schools and in particular in non-formal learning centers supporting refugee children. Additional energy expenses would increase the living costs for teachers and operational costs for educational institutions, resulting in interruptions in timetables, shortened school hours or even temporary closures of the institutions. If conditions are not met to ensure a warm environment for teachers and learners during the winter, the quality of activities itself would be impacted even if the institutions remain open. In case schools and learning centers are closed during the winter, classes are likely to take place online whereas some refugee children are having difficulties accessing the Internet and lack the necessary devices (laptops, tablets etc.).

Sectoral Priority Response Activities and Standard Response Package

Provision of hot meals and snacks must be prioritized in preschools, primary schools and learning centers throughout the winter. Additionally, a winterization kit based on the identified needs of school-aged children, typically composed of warm clothing such as hats, gloves, socks, fleece and insulated water bottles would be distributed to those in need so they could continue to attend activities. While some activity schedules and plans may need to be adjusted flexibly during winter to promote energy efficiency, learning centers, especially those whose activities cannot take place online would be equipped with sufficient heaters and generators in advance. Additional needs in specific contexts would be identified by needs assessments wherever possible.

Challenges, Risks and Constraints

- Possibility of widespread and persistent heating shortages in key learning centers or safe spaces due to either the lack of supply or high energy costs.
- Ensuring efficiency in procuring the appropriate types of heaters to be installed in different learning facilities located in various types of buildings and settings.
- Identifying and mobilizing additional resources for teachers and psychologists who may work additional hours during winter to ensure key activities for refugee learners, such as catchup classes bridging programs and MHPSS.
- Strong coordination with other sectors and local authorities/ institutions planning winterization activities in preschools, schools and learning centers in order to avoid overlaps. Doing so would be especially important for activities targeting host communities where coordination tends to be more challenging than in RACs.
- Additional resources may need to be identified to support children with disabilities, children from the Roma community, and other children with specific needs.

Livelihoods and Inclusion

Sectoral Winterization Strategy

The Republic of Moldova has been facing a compound crisis of energy and food security, curtailed economic growth, growing inflation, limited institutional capacities and divisions in society, aggravated by the continuing socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the refugee crisis. In August 2022, [annual inflation had reached 34.29%](#), the [highest in Europe after Turkey](#). At this level of inflation, [UNDP estimated](#) that the number of people living in poverty with less than \$5.5 per day would reach 520,000 or 21% of the population. 71% of the country's population, or 1.8 million people, would be living either in poverty or at risk of it, with under \$13 per day.

A [study on energy poverty conducted by UNDP](#) identified more than 64% of the Moldovan households as energy poor by incomes, spending more than 10% of their income on energy. The situation is deteriorating, as prices continue to rise, pushing many in severe energy vulnerability during the winter season.

To ensure that both refugees and host communities in Moldova are coping with the upcoming shocks and uncertainties, humanitarian actions need to be coupled with interventions geared towards resilience-building and particularly interventions focused on provision of livelihoods opportunities, transitioning towards socio-economic inclusion of refugees into national systems and maintaining social cohesion in host communities.

This approach would respond to the Government's vision and plans to address the multiple crises affecting Moldova, where the refugee response needs have been anchored within a comprehensive strategy for resilience-building.

Sectoral Priority Response Activities and Standard Response Package

The Livelihoods and Inclusion sector response to the impact of the winter season is aimed at:

Providing refugees with necessary sustainable income to become self-reliant, while meeting immediate winter-related needs: This approach entails implementing programmes to stimulate employment for all, with particular focus on refugees, providing opportunities for skill development, engaging the private sector to create jobs for refugees and vulnerable people from host communities, and enabling self-employment of refugees through provision of assets (equipment, goods etc.), mentoring, coaching, business development strategy, etc. These actions are meant to improve the inclusion of refugees in the economic sector, reduce the financial burden on host communities, and contribute to their socio-economic development. Activities will focus on women heads of households, young women, rural women and girls, both local and refugees, considering their increased vulnerability during crises.

Strengthening national systems for social protection in coordination with relevant sectors to better respond to the vulnerable population in Moldova, including refugees: The Government's response to the winter period has been to set up social protection mechanisms that provide the most vulnerable households with needed support. These include the Energy Vulnerability Fund, and the financial assistance for the cold period of the year (APRA – *ajutor pentru perioada rece a anului*), in addition to other year-round social protection schemes. The Energy Vulnerability Fund provides for fair distribution of energy compensations to households in Moldova, based on clear eligibility and vulnerability criteria. To ensure that compensations are targeted and differentiated depending on the level of vulnerability of each household, the Government has developed an Integrated Information System for the Energy Vulnerability Fund that enables households to register for and access on-bill compensations. Working group members will continue to provide technical support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to implement and improve the social protection mechanisms as they are being rolled out and ensure the inclusion of refugee households in coordination with the Protection Sector. Furthermore, in line with the Government's priorities to address energy vulnerability and promote energy efficiency, the WG members will provide support to increasing energy efficiency among the refugee population and the host communities to contribute to lower energy consumption and reduced winter bills.

Strengthen local capacities to respond to the crisis: Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine and the arrival of first refugees in Moldova, local public authorities have stepped up to respond to the situation. An assessment of the LPAs' capacities in dealing with the refugee crisis, led by UNDP, in partnership with UNHCR and IOM, showed that LPAs have generally provided support in the form of food packages, clothes and hygiene products, meals/catering, and enrollment of refugee children in kindergartens and schools, amongst other. Nevertheless, support has been often ad-hoc and uncoordinated, without a clear strategy and response plan. In this context, and given the new difficulties of the winter season, the working group members' efforts will be directed towards supporting local authorities become more prepared and resilient to the current and potential future crises. Activities include providing support to local authorities to ensure dedicated human resources for responding to refugees' needs and participation in local coordination structures such as the Local Refugee Coordination Forums,, technical assistance and support to developing local standard operating procedures for responding to crisis in coordination with relevant sectors,, and enabling a more effective communication with refugees including with regards to employment opportunities in coordination with the AAP Taskforce.

Supporting social cohesion in host communities: As the energy and food crises continue and amplify during the winter, tensions within communities hosting refugees may escalate and new ones appear. It is thus important that these tensions are addressed and prevented through social cohesion programmes that increase understanding within communities, manage differences, and increase trust. Social cohesion will be strengthened through information and awareness building activities, social integration events, and facilitating collaboration and joint activities between refugees and the local population in close coordination with relevant sectors, including Protection. A mechanism for monitoring social tensions will be soon rolled out to identify potential tensions in society, including in host communities, and help address them in a timely manner.

Gender Considerations for the Winterization Response

Energy crisis and potentially cold weather will significantly impact the refugee women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, as well as hosting community in Moldova in the period of November 2022 – February 2023. They will particularly affect the most vulnerable groups (young women, GBV survivors, women in rural areas, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic diseases, LGBTQI, minorities including Roma, children from large families, unaccompanied children and pregnant girls, women and children heads of households) and will further exacerbate the pre-existing gender inequalities.

Sector-Specific Gender Considerations

Protection including Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Disability, Roma, Anti-Trafficking

- Strengthen community-based protection mechanisms, including women-led, to provide core services for survivors, including legal and psychosocial counseling, with a specific focus on women, girls, boys and at-risk groups.
- Provide community-based and/or mobile protection and mobile services and counselling, in case of disruption of transportation.
- Scale up inclusive awareness raising on available protection services (GBV, legal, MHPSS, child protection, PSEAH) among women and girls at the community level, specifically on community-based and mobile safe spaces for women and children.
- Strengthen prevention and response to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, especially among the most vulnerable groups (young women, older persons, persons with disability, persons with chronic diseases, LGBTQI and Roma). These groups are more likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms to cover the increasing living costs.
- Support the participation of vulnerable groups, especially women, women with children, etc. in Government social protection mechanisms.

Health and Nutrition

- Provide mobile services to reach rural areas with essential health services, especially sexual and reproductive services for women and girls, in case of winter-related disruption of transportation.
- Provide extra nutritional hot meals and drinks, especially for pregnant, lactating women and women with infants and small children, people with chronic diseases, older people and people with disabilities. Food restrictions (vegans, vegetarians, etc.) and intolerances (gluten, lactose, etc.) need to be taken into account and addressed.
- Scale-up distribution of information on MHPSS services, with the focus on women and girls.

Education

- Provide warm clothing and footwear of inclusive sizes for girls and boys, especially in rural areas.
- Provide school supplies for the most vulnerable girls and boys (with disabilities, with chronic diseases, Roma, from large families).
- Provide appropriate devices for online learning (tablets, laptops) and internet connection for the most vulnerable girls and boys (with disabilities, with chronic diseases, Roma, from large families).
- Provide extra nutritional hot meals and snacks, especially the most vulnerable girls and boys (with disabilities, with chronic diseases, Roma, from large families).

Livelihoods and Inclusion

To boost the resilience and coping capacities of vulnerable populations in winter:

- Scale up community based or online skills training opportunities, including digital, especially for women heads of households, young women, rural women and girls, both local and refugee.
- Promote and provide legal, safe, and sustainable livelihood opportunities, including cash for work, especially for women heads of households, young women, women residing in rural areas, women with disabilities, Roma women. Consider green initiatives to reduce the energy costs.
- Enable self-employment of refugees through provision of assets (equipment, goods etc.), mentoring, coaching, business development strategy, etc. especially for women heads of households, young women, rural women and girls.
- Scale up social integration events and social and professional support networks, especially for women and girls.

Accommodation and Transport including WASH and Food Security

- Strengthen awareness among refugee population, specifically women and children, on safe sheltering options, so that they do not have to rely on informal and unvetted sources of shelter, posing a potential security risk.
- Make sure that refugee men have equal access to refugee accommodation centers even if women and children may be prioritized over them in winter.
- Scale up adaptation of RACs to the needs of pregnant and lactating women, and women and girls during menstruation. Accommodation spaces in RACs need to have locks and privacy partitions that consider women and girl needs to change clothes. RACs need to be made more accessible for persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, with accessible and warm toilets, bathing facilities and menstrual hygiene spaces. In case of more intense use of RACs during winter, the insufficient level of adaptation of facilities may pose additional risks and exacerbate vulnerabilities.
- Enhance RACs safety, security and gender-responsiveness by considering providing sufficient lighting in public spaces and alert systems.
- Consider the specific needs of LGBTQI+ that may fall outside usual accommodation needs.
- Provide warm blankets and underwear, clothing and footwear of inclusive sizes, especially for pregnant, lactating women and women with infants and small children.
- Provide diapers for adults and plastic sheets, especially for older people, people with disabilities and chronic diseases.
- Establish and operate regional and/or community-based and/or mobile distribution points. Distribution points should operate in such a way as to avoid gender-specific access restrictions that affect access to services (exposure to GBV, menstruation, lack of information), because of poor lighting, lack of adequate and accessible toilets, lack of secluded and safe breastfeeding spaces, potential exposure to harassment and abuse. Ensure that the time and location of distributions, the routes to distribution sites are most appropriate and safe for the diverse groups in winter period, especially for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, older and sick people, persons with disabilities.

- Provide targeted support and distributions for the most vulnerable and marginalized persons who cannot reach the distribution sites such as women, girls, boys, older people, persons with disabilities, female-headed and child-headed households.
- Pay increased attention to Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse among logistics and supply staff, contractors and other staff, who may be in contact with beneficiaries. All logistics staff should keep the list of protection focal points up to date for immediate referral pathways in case of PSEAH and GBV incidents.

Cash

- Ensure cash modalities are informed by affected populations through consultations ensuring the equal participation of women, girls, men and boys.
- Increase the provision of cash assistance to address winter needs, especially targeting the most vulnerable women-headed and child-headed households, GBV survivors and women at risk.
- Scale up enrollment support for cash assistance for rural, older and Roma population, especially women.
- Address gender-specific barriers and risks associated with collecting and receiving cash to mitigate the protection risks for women, girls, people with restricted mobility or older persons.



**Inter-Agency Winterization Plan
October 2022 - March 2023
Moldova**



**Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation**