

## Cash Working Group meeting

Meeting Details	
Date	23 February 2023
Time	10.00 to 11.30
Co-Chair	Yigit Anil Gurer, CBI Officer, UNHCR
Reporting	Natalia Postaru, Associate Programme CBI Officer
Email	<a href="mailto:mdachcbi@unhcr.org">mdachcbi@unhcr.org</a>
Agenda	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector Updates by partners</li> <li>• Presentation on Cost-of-Living Assessment Result</li> <li>• CWG Activity Plan for 2023</li> <li>• AOB</li> </ul>	
Information collection and relevant links	
UNHCR Operational Data Portal Moldova - <a href="https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/MDA">https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/MDA</a> Moldova Cash Working Group - <a href="https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/318?sv=0&amp;geo=680">https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/318?sv=0&amp;geo=680</a> Cost of living assessment - <a href="https://www.reachresourcecentre.info/country/moldova/cycle/52558/#cycle-52558">https://www.reachresourcecentre.info/country/moldova/cycle/52558/#cycle-52558</a>	
Participants:	
Ana Palii - KIV - Pm Distrib – Solidarities International Eirini Aletra – Catholic Relief services Ibrahim Marte – IOM Sorina Guzun – IOM Andrij Dichtaruk – Caritas Czech Republic Ramesh Ghimire – International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) Andrei Girleanu – ADRA Grant Hilliev – ADRA Fadel Daoud – WFP Stella Lingeus – ACTED Orfan Shahada – Action Against Hunger Luca Igor – APSCF Hasan Almothana – PIN	Natalia Manea Tatiana Udrea – UN Women Andrei Hincu – CARE & SERA Romania BODRUG Alina – IOM Wassim BENROMDHANE – Djavid Paknehad – Charity Centre for Refugees Zinaida Adam – UNDP Wassim BENROMDHANE Emilia ERSOV - REACH Elena Chitic Elena Cernicova – Lalolalta NGO/Moldova Peace Initiatives Mariana Mariuta

Summary of discussions and agreements/action points

Agenda	Discussion
<p><b>Agenda Point</b></p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Sector Updates by partners</b></p>	<p>The meeting started with the introduction of the participants, with sharing the updates on the activities:</p> <p><b>UNHCR</b> – as of the 20th of February 2023, the Chisinau Cash Enrolment has in a new place at 32 Gheorghe Cașu Street (Sociology and Social Work Faculty building, Moldova State University, block 5. This information was spread, but if some refugees do not know about it, it will be great to share the new location address with them. Also, the verification exercises continue to take place every month.</p> <p><b>IOM</b> - activity in Transnistria together with ADRA, the Implementing Partner. IOM reached almost 2,300 individuals and approximately 1,500 households. Rental program assistance – achieved 341 households.</p> <p><b>ADRA</b> - registration for the other cases that are not eligible for the IOM programme, including people with limited mobility with mobile visits and permanent residence in Ukraine – around 420 people assisted in Transnistria.</p> <p><b>HelpAge</b> –reached 600 elderly people from 700 people targeting seven regions.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Point</b></p> <p><b>Presentation on Cost-of-Living Assessment Result</b></p> <p><i>Emilia Ersov, REACH</i></p>	<p>REACH presented the finding on population leaving changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>The context and rationale:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis which began in 2021 starkly exposed the economic vulnerabilities of Moldova, which had been classified by the World Bank as the 4th poorest country in Europe in 2021 by GDP per capita.</li> <li>- As Moldova relied heavily on imports from Ukraine and Russia for its food and energy needs, the escalation of hostilities since 24 February 2022 disrupted imports, which in turn led to increased prices and higher economic vulnerability of the country's population. Gas prices became increasingly volatile, almost doubling from December 2021 to December 2022. The soaring cost of gas triggered an increase in energy prices and led to a dramatic decrease in the population's accessibility to electricity. Consequently, the country's inflation rate reached an ultimate high of 34.6% in October 2022, four times higher than in October 2021 (8.8%).</li> <li>- <a href="#">As of 31 January 2023</a>, close to 8 million Ukrainian residents were displaced, with 755,368 crossing the border into Moldova and 108,824 staying in the country.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>General objective of the assessment:</u> to provide detailed information on the impact of cost-of-living changes on the livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms of both Moldovan and refugee populations, to better support the humanitarian aid sector's assistance planning for 2023. Research questions: (i) How have the current compounded crises influenced changes in Moldovans' and refugees' abilities to sustain their livelihoods and their consumption patterns; (ii) What strategies are Moldovans and refugees</li> </ul>



planning to adopt in preparation for winter; (iii) How have the current compounded crises influenced changes in Moldovans' perception of and behaviour towards refugee populations.

- Methodology: (i) semi-structured interview with Moldovan and refugee population; (ii) four districts identified based high levels of socioeconomic vulnerability prior to 2022; (iii) 24 were conducted, 12 from each population group.

- Main findings (more detail in the attached presentation):

- Both host community and refugee KIs reported feeling that the economic and energy crises had a considerable impact on the livelihoods of their communities, such as:
  - rising utility costs, particularly in winter, with no proportional increase in income;
  - reduced quality of life; stress caused by the inability to cover expenses, particularly for older or vulnerable people; (
  - iii) increased reliance on external financial support: Moldovans – on government support; and Refugees – on international organisations' support, for some this being their only source of income.
- Most KIs from both population groups reported limited to no job availability:
  - positions were already filled, were seasonal or event-based;
  - available jobs were low-paying;
  - no jobs were reportedly available to older people.
- Over half of the host community KIs noticed changes related to livelihood activities among Moldovans in their localities:
  - going to work outside the locality of residence or more people searching for work abroad;
  - foraging for or growing food;
  - engaging in casual work or in a second job;
  - registering for unemployment benefits.
- Three-quarters of the refugee KIs stated that they were unemployed, due to:
  - lack of employment opportunities;
  - having no one to care for their children while they are working;
  - a disability hampering their ability to find a job or work;
  - the language barrier.

- Conclusion:

Assessment findings suggest that:

- both Moldovan and refugee populations were affected by the compounded crises;
- increased prices for food and utility bills left their communities unable to cover expenses for basic needs and drastically lowered their quality of life;



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the perceived lack of job opportunities in their communities increased both populations’ reliance on external support;</li> <li>○ the scarcity of employment opportunities further enhanced the culture of labour migration that has been prevalent in Moldova since 2000;</li> <li>○ in light of these crises, the government, in collaboration with several INGOs, made a substantial effort in offering financial support<sup>13</sup>, with additional assistance targeted at vulnerable groups. Still, both host and refugee KIs mentioned growing concerns about being able to afford heating during the 2022-2023 winter season.</li> <li>○ as regards the interaction between the host community and the refugee population, the majority of KIs from both groups reported good and understanding relationships since the beginning of the arrival of refugees in the country</li> </ul> <p>Areas for further investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Further research on the labour market is needed to understand the skill deficiencies of the labour force, labour gaps and how these could potentially be filled by refugees.</li> <li>(ii) An assessment of the food security in the country and of the food supply chain functionality, availability, and of food prices would be useful to inform evidence-based cash and food distribution programmes implemented by humanitarian actors</li> </ul> <p>Questions:</p> <p>UNICEF shared the presentation by MoLSP on the national programme for childcare services under 3 years of age. MoLSP is trying to identify EUR 5 million to fund this programme, including the development of an online platform for alternative care services. See the following link: <a href="#">22.02.23 Programul Național pentru servicii de îngrijirea a copilului cu vârsta de până la 3 ani.pptx - Google Slides</a></p>
<p><b>CWG ToR and Activity Plan for 2023</b></p> <p><i>UNHCR</i></p>	<p>UNHCR presented the draft of the Terms of Reference for Cash Working Group in Moldova.</p> <p>CWG will be responsible for ensuring that the following functions are provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote streamlined efforts and early alignment with Government’s social protection schemes across the cash response.</li> <li>2. Ensure the overall cash response is coherent, avoids duplication, and finds opportunities to increase effectiveness, coordinating with sectors and protection to guarantee coherence and referrals.</li> <li>3. Provide effective information management on the delivery of cash assistance, across the response</li> <li>4. Promote use of streamlined mechanisms, standards, and tools across partners for harmonized, qualitative and accountable programming:</li> </ol>



5. Work jointly with cash partners as relevant, which may include supporting joint framework of design for cash, risk assessments, financial service provider mapping, coordinated monitoring and feedback mechanisms, e.g.:
6. Review capacity building requirements of CWG members and local actors, if needed.
7. Discuss and resolve urgent operational challenges arising.

The CWG will work in accordance with the following principles:

1. Resilience, rights and community-based approaches across all activities and programme design.
2. Adaptability and preparedness for the evolving context and available resources to ensure that programmes remain relevant and appropriately address needs.
3. Meaningful engagement, capacity-development, inclusiveness, and cooperation between all partners, including UN Agencies, international and national NGOs, and civil society.
4. Accountability to beneficiaries, the Government of Moldova, donors, and RRP partners, adhering to established humanitarian operating procedures.
5. Coordination with other sectors and consideration of cross-cutting issues such as protection risks, age, gender and diversity, social cohesion, and resilience to streamline the humanitarian response.
6. Impartiality and transparency in decision-making.
7. Foster the principle of do-no-harm across all interventions of CWG members.

Based on the agreed objectives, the partners discussed the timetable for the Cash Working Group's activities for 2023. The Terms of Reference and Action Plan were shared with partners for comments and input.