Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

GENDER BRIEF: LIVELIHOODS AND ACCESS TO WORK OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Ukraine Response Regional Gender Task Force, May 2023

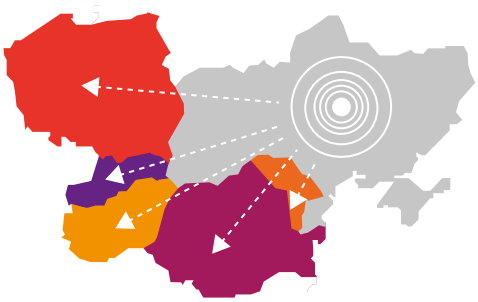
Led and developed by UN Women with the contributions of ILO, FAO and CARE International, this brief aims to provide an analysis of the access to employment and livelihoods of refugees from Ukraine and the gendered impacts of this access on their lives. These impacts are examined in the refugee-hosting countries neighboring Ukraine, namely Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia by building on primary and secondary data collection. As the topics of this brief largely extend on those covered in the Regional Gender Taskforce's gender analysis of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the same host countries are featured.[i] The situation of internally displaced persons in Ukraine is beyond the scope of this analysis given that it requires a separate exploration of the dynamics and challenges in Ukraine. Due to the rapid evolution of the situation of refugees from Ukraine, only developments until April 2023 are covered in this brief. Overall, this brief is intended for the use of decision-makers within the humanitarian response and development organizations, states, policymakers, private sector, and donors.

BACKGROUND

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, an estimated 13 million people in Ukraine have been forced to leave their homes, with over 5 million becoming internally displaced and over 8 million becoming refugees outside of Ukraine.[ii] In response, the European Union (EU) swiftly decided to grant EU-wide temporary protection to people arriving from Ukraine.[iii]

The **EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) (Directive 2001/55/EC)** enables EU Member States to move rapidly to offer protection and rights to people in need of immediate protection, and to avoid overwhelming national asylum systems in the event of mass arrivals of displaced persons. The EU's decision to grant temporary protection and the directive are considered the most appropriate instrument under the current exceptional circumstances.[iv] Equally exceptional is that as of 1 March 2023, the Government of the Republic of Moldova also granted temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine, despite not having acceded to the EU.[v] As per February 2023, **more than 4.8 million** refugees from Ukraine had registered for temporary protection schemes in Europe.[vi] The TPD initiative demonstrates the impact of successful cooperation, exchange of information, and harmonized rights among Member States.[vii]

PROFILE OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE AT A GLANCE



1: WOMEN AND CHILDREN MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

90% OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE ARE **WOMEN AND CHILDREN**[viii].

84% of refugees from Ukraine in **HUNGARY** are women and children.[ix]

83% of refugees from Ukraine in **MOLDOVA** are women and children.[x]

87% of refugees from Ukraine in **POLAND** are women and children.[xi]

77% of refugees from Ukraine in **ROMANIA** are women and children.[xii]

83% of refugees from Ukraine in **SLOVAKIA** are women and children.[xiii]

2: PROPORTION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Approximately **half** of refugees from Ukraine in neighboring EU countries are age 0-19.[xvi]

85% of adult refugees are women.[xv]

2.75 million refugees are of working age.[xvi]

3: EMPLOYMENT PROFILE OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE PRIOR TO LEAVING UKRAINE [xvii]

Approximately **63%** of respondents were previously employed.

The **majority** of respondents were working **full-time.**

Approximately **1 in 5** respondents had been **self-employed** or an **entrepreneur.**[xviii]

4: EDUCATION AND TRAINING BACKGROUND OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE ACCORDING TO THE UNHCR INTENTIONS SURVEY (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2022) [xix]

15% of women respondents had a background in **education.**

13% of women respondents have a background in **professional administrative services.**

8% of women respondents have a background in **health and social services.**

7% of women respondents have a background in **accommodation and food service.**

43% of women respondents have a **master's degree.**

20% of women refugees have completed a **technical or vocational training program.**

35% of male respondents have attained a **master's degree.**

17% of male respondents have completed a **technical or vocational training program.**[xx]

5: FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES OF WOMEN PRIOR TO THE INVASION OF UKRAINE[xxi]

In 2021, women accounted for **78%** of those **making or receiving digital payments.**

Account ownership amongst women aged 15 and above increased from **39%** to **81%**

in 2011 | in 2021

68% of Ukrainian women **owned a debit or credit card in 2021,** compared to **38%** **in 2011.**

Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion, women in Ukraine had a high level of financial inclusion and access to financial services at par with other countries in Europe.[xxii]

While these numbers are helpful to understand overall refugee movements, it is important to note that in the countries studied, **there is a crucial lack of timely, easily accessible, and continually updated data on displacements that is disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability and any other relevant intersectionality.** As shown in the rest of this brief, due to the intersection of multiple factors including gender, refugees who identify as women and girls face specific challenges and have specific needs. To effectively address these needs and challenges, context specific, intersectional, and gender disaggregated data on refugee flows is crucial. Similarly, disaggregated data on the conditions of refugees in host countries is integral to an effective response.

FINDINGS

The findings highlighted in the following sections are informed by a secondary data review and validation process from key informants.[1] Specifically, data on labor market access, employment-related challenges and opportunities, and capabilities and skills of refugees from Ukraine are explored from a gender perspective, one year after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion.

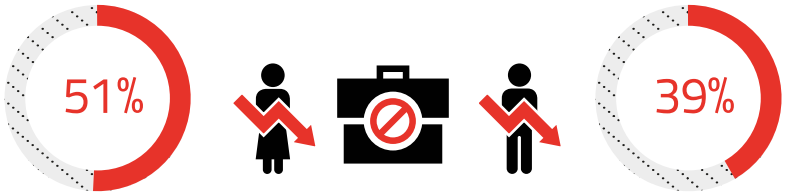
Professional qualifications and employment opportunities

While over a third of refugees from Ukraine are currently working, the majority are employed at a lower level than previously in Ukraine, with a **higher portion of women being underemployed than men.**[xxiii] According to a survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, refugees from Ukraine are currently employed below their level of education and skill sets.[xxiv] The survey indicates that underemployment was more prevalent among women than men, at 51 and 39 per cent of respondents, respectively.[xxv] For example, in Poland according to data from the Polish Ministry of Family and Social Policy, as of the end of April 2023, around half of the refugees worked in an occupation involving unskilled or semi-skilled work.[xxvi]

As discussed throughout this brief, this is connected to a multitude of factors. First, for regulated and unregulated work in **Hungary** and **Romania,** and regulated work in **Moldova** and **Slovakia,** it is necessary to have the professional qualification that allows one to work in a certain field verified as valid in Ukraine, or an alternative equivalent.[xxvii] These documentation barriers can encourage refugees to pursue unregulated or low-skilled work, in combination with other factors, such as child and other care responsibilities.[xxviii] As indicated in a Key Informant Interview (KII) with representatives of a Moldovan civil society organization (CSO), the requirement for documentation is particularly difficult given that many public service offices within Ukraine that provide such documents are no longer operating, and because prior to the invasion some refugees were fulfilling certain roles, such as company managers, without formal certification or contracts.[xxix] Moreover, refugees from Ukraine have reported **substantial difficulties having their professional qualifications recognized.**[xxx]

Another key dimension regarding employment highlighted by KIIs with Moldovan and Slovakian CSO representatives is that refugees are uncertain of how long they will remain in the host country.[xxxi] This not only limits their employability but also often leads them to seek work that is flexible in terms of commitment.[xxxii] This tends to be lower skilled jobs such as sales and seasonal work. Moreover, employers may be reluctant to employ refugees from Ukraine on a short-term basis and without the certainty of the duration of how long they will stay in the country.[xxxiii]

Proportion of women and men identifying as underemployed



[1] The key informants included representatives from Gender Center Moldova, the Center for Policy, Initiatives, and Research (PLATFORMA), and a civil society organization based in Slovakia that requested to remain anonymous.

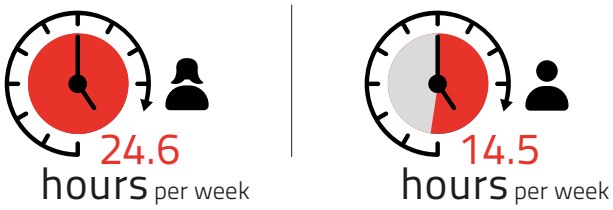
Despite efforts, language remains an obstacle

From the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CSOs, and governments in refugee hosting countries have made consistent efforts to offer language classes to refugees from Ukraine as part of the initiative to help refugees integrate into host societies. Nonetheless, language remains a significant barrier to employment by refugees from Ukraine. At the same time, the prevalence of language as a barrier is influenced by the time needed to learn a new language and the uncertainty many refugees from Ukraine face concerning how long they will remain in the host country, among other factors.

Language is the most prominently identified barrier to employment among refugees from Ukraine according to a recent UNHCR report.[xxxiv] Language was identified as a barrier to employment by 57 per cent of women and 67 per cent of men who completed the UNHCR Intentions Survey (August-September 2022) in **Romania** and 39 per cent of women respondents and 14 per cent of male respondents in **Moldova.**[xxxv] Likewise, language was cited as a barrier to employment by 53 per cent of women and 63 per cent of men in **Slovakia** and 44 per cent of women in **Poland.**[xxxvi] It proved to be the most prominent barrier identified by women and men in **Hungary** according to the most recent UNHCR and IOM Hungary Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), cited by 40 per cent of respondents.[xxxvii] KIIs with CSO representatives in Slovakia and Moldova indicate that knowing the official language of the host country, in addition to deciding to remain in the host country for a prolonged period, are key factors that enable refugees from Ukraine to find work.[xxxviii]

Inequity in care work for women

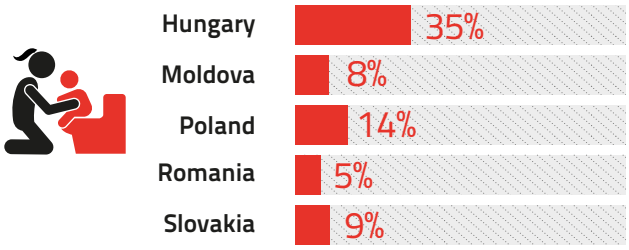
Hours per week spent on unpaid work



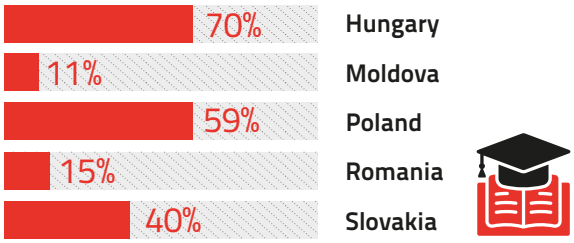
Even prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, women performed twice or almost three times as much unpaid care and domestic work, with women spending 24.6 hours per week on such work compared to men's 14.5 hours according to a UN Women and CARE report.[xxxix] In Ukraine, the volume of unpaid work, which includes care, domestic, and volunteer work has also increased for both men and women as social, medical, education, and childcare services are disrupted by the full-scale invasion.[xl] Increased care and domestic work, particularly for women, is likewise prominent among refugees who have left Ukraine. This is illustrated by the fact that according to the UNHCR Intention Survey (August-September 2022), since fleeing Ukraine, the percentage of women who have complete the survey and primarily identified as caretakers for dependents, unemployed, or engaged in other activities outside of formal employment have increased.[xli]

Inequity in unpaid care is a major barrier to the realization of economic justice and rights for women and girls. It limits the opportunity for women and girls to pursue paid work and education as well as political and community leadership, and can also negatively impact mental health.[xlii] Among women who completed the UNHCR Intentions Survey (August-September 2022) and identify as unemployed, lack of access to childcare is cited as a barrier to obtaining employment by 8 per cent of women in **Moldova,** 5 per cent of women in **Romania,** 14 per cent in **Poland,** and 9 per cent in **Slovakia.**[xliii] Meanwhile in the most recent MSNA from UNHCR and IOM, this lack of access was cited as a barrier by 35 per cent of women surveyed in **Hungary.**[xliv]

Proportion of women identifying that lack of access to childcare is a barrier to finding a job



Number of children enrolled in schools

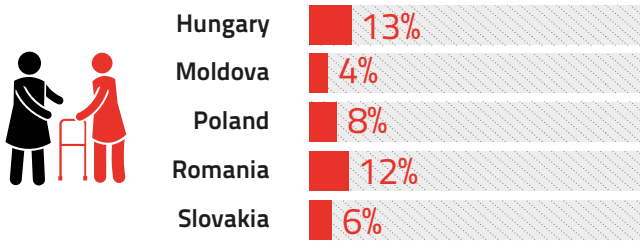


The way that inequitable care work hinders women refugees from pursuing employment are multifaceted. As cited by women refugees from Ukraine in **Hungary and Poland,** childcare, particularly for children with specific needs, can impose and compound psychological distress.[xlv] Accessing childcare for children can also be difficult if the child is below schooling age or is enrolled in remote schooling in Ukraine.[xlvi] The absence of childcare options was an issue in **Slovakia** prior to the arrival of refugees and has been exacerbated since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in turn posing another obstacle to employment for refugees with childcare obligations. Governments in the mentioned countries generally guarantee access to education to all refugee children. According to the UNHCR Intentions Survey (August-September 2022) 11 per cent of respondents in **Moldova,** 40 per cent in **Slovakia,** and 15 per cent in **Romania** have their children enrolled in schools.[xlvii] Meanwhile, 59 per cent of children in **Poland** and 7 out of 10 children in **Hungary** are enrolled in school.[xlix] Moreover, 75 per cent of respondents in **Moldova,** 84 per cent in **Slovakia** and 85 per cent in **Romania** indicated that children were enrolled in some form of remote education from Ukraine.[l] This means that for this time mothers may not be able to leave their children in a safe environment to follow their classes remotely, making the pursuit of employment increasingly difficult. This may further incentivize refugees from Ukraine to pursue flexible, part-time employment, which tends to be concentrated in lower skilled work.

Although there have been efforts by Ukrainians in collective accommodations to offer childcare among themselves, for example in **Slovakia,** these are not widespread enough to fully address in inequity in unpaid care work that women face.[li] For those providing care for children with disabilities, there are additional barriers. For example, in **Romania,** refugees from Ukraine can apply for specialized support for children with disabilities.[lii] However, the application and assessment processes are lengthy, which deters refugees hoping to return to Ukraine from applying.[liii]

The impact of childcare on women pursuing work is also complicated by societal expectations and gender-norms around motherhood and work. According to a 2022 UN Women report, 'good-mother stereotypes" constrain women to the home during their children's pre-school years, limiting their participation in the workforce.[liv] The report indicates that, 65 per cent of male respondents in Ukraine and other countries in the region agree that it is better for preschool children to have a mother that does not work. 55 per cent of women respondents agreed with this view. Moreover, recent labor force surveys support the finding that gender gaps in labor force participation tend to be larger when there are small children in the household.[lv] A study by UNHCR and REACH from August and September 2022, found that the top three most reported reasons by refugees from Ukraine in **Poland** for not working were that they were taking care of a child (24 per cent), that no work was available (22 per cent), and that respondents were on maternity leave (16 per cent).[lvi]

Number of people with disabilities in the household



Although less research is available focused primarily on the connection between inequity in care work and livelihoods in households with older people and people with disabilities, similar dependency dynamics may exist that hinder the ability of heads of women to pursue employment. According to UNCHR MSNAs, 4 per cent of family members surveyed in **Moldova,**[lvii] 6 per cent of respondents in **Slovakia,**[lviii] 13 per cent of respondents in **Hungary,**[lix] 8 per cent of household members in **Poland,**[lx] and 12 per cent of household members surveyed in **Romania** indicate that at least one person in the household has a disability;[lxi] people above the age of 60 tend to be a large part of this group.

Care work in households with people with disabilities and older people who require assistance may constitute a full-time responsibility. In turn, this can hinder care takers, frequently women, from pursuing paid employment. Additionally, in households with at least one person with a disability or an older person there may be extra care expenses that compound stress while at the same time hindering financial resilience.

Barriers on accessing livelihood and employment opportunities exacerbate protection and gender-based violence (GBV) risks

Lack of access to information on livelihoods opportunities, childcare support, and civil documentation in addition to language barriers among many other factors compound protection risks for refugees from Ukraine in neighboring countries. The pre-existing conditions such as unemployment, informal work, and gender pay gap in the neighboring countries prior to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine exacerbated barriers for refugees in identifying and sustaining safe and dignified livelihoods. This in turn increases the vulnerabilities of refugees from Ukraine, particularly women, to various forms of harm and abuse such as trafficking, labor exploitation, and gender-based violence including sexual exploitation. Some groups are more vulnerable to these risks than others, including but not limited to refugees from Ukraine without civil documentation, Roma communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, single women and women-headed households who do not have access to childcare and/or are caregivers for family members, (unaccompanied) children, people with disabilities, and those living in rural areas.[lxii]

According to the findings of the most recent MSNA conducted by UNHCR and IOM targeting **Hungary** in November 2022, lack **of access to information on labor opportunities and services** was cited as one of the main challenges by 49 per cent of respondents.[lxiii] Lack of information **limits refugees from Ukraine to a narrow range of low paid and informal work,** which in several instances were directly reported as exploitative and without a contract or social security.[lxiv] Moreover, because much of the information about work opportunities is accessed via social media platforms such as Facebook and Telegram, there is a lack of oversight concerning respect for labor regulations which puts refugees at additional risk for exploitative work.[lxv] Similarly in Romania and Moldova, there have been reports on exploitative work conditions where refugees from Ukraine were paid less and worked longer hours. The risks of labor exploitation are likewise connected to the language barrier, given that contracts are often not translated into Ukrainian, and for example in **Romania** many labor inspectors do not speak the same language as the refugees from Ukraine, making it difficult to report and identify abuses.[lxvi]

Lack of financial resources impacts the access refugees from Ukraine have to safe accommodation and food and heightens the risks of exploitation. According to a recent survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council, 68 per cent of refugees across **Poland, Romania, and Moldova** reported not being able to cover basic needs such as food, water, clothing, accommodation, and healthcare,[lxvii] a number that rises to 100 per cent for Roma from Ukraine in **Moldova.** In a situation where refugees are not able to meet their basic needs, labor exploitation and other forms of abuse have also been reported in **Hungary** and **Poland** in exchange for the provision of private accommodation.[lxviii] Meanwhile, for those staying in collective accommodation, various forms of exploitation and abuse have been reported including external surveillance, potentially harmful interventions, overcrowding, and a lack of continual access to housing centers among others.[lxix]

Government policies, including lack of recognition of Ukrainian diplomas may exacerbate existing challenges for refugees to cover their basic needs. To illustrate, in Slovakia, obstacles include having to obtain a license for work, which is a lengthy process.[lxx] Difficulties to engage in one's own business together with difficulties working in **Slovakia** can thus exacerbate difficulties refugees from Ukraine may face in covering essential items.

The barriers mentioned above can place refugees from Ukraine in vulnerable situations, particularly women, which have the potential to lead to negative coping mechanisms. **Women may be more likely to work in the informal sector, including exploitative forms of work such as domestic work, sex work, pornography,**[lxxi] **or trafficking.**[lxxii] Besides, there is a **lack of awareness of the GBV referral pathways** and the precarity of an already scarce number of pre-existing programs, cited by refugee women in **Hungary and Poland.**[lxxiii] Additionally, the accessibility of GBV information for Ukrainians of Roma origin, women and girls with disabilities, and those with low literacy is limited which further hinders women from accessing these services and risks prolonging their time in vulnerable positions.[lxxiv]

Roma communities face additional discrimination

Refugees from Ukraine already face multiple hurdles as they navigate their position as refugees in host countries. For refugees from minority groups in Ukraine, particularly Roma people, there are additional challenges. Discrimination towards Roma communities was already a prevalent concern in host countries such as **Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.** Therefore, Roma people from Ukraine face the challenges associated not only with being a refugee but also with being part of a marginalized community, such as **lack of documentation and low levels of education.**

Prior to the Russian full-scale invasion many Roma people in Ukraine already lacked proper citizenship and residence documentation.[lxxv] This is connected to and compounded by the fact that according to data from 2022, approximately 10 to 20 per cent of the estimated 400,000 Roma people living in Ukraine were stateless or at risk of statelessness.[lxxvi] With lacking civil status documentation and low education levels, particularly among women, the full-scale invasion has further exacerbated existing discrimination; this includes Roma people's ability to secure employment. Both Roma women and men have experienced a reduction in income-generating activities, with some reporting continuous discrimination in the labor market because of their ethnic origin and the color of their skin.[lxxvii]

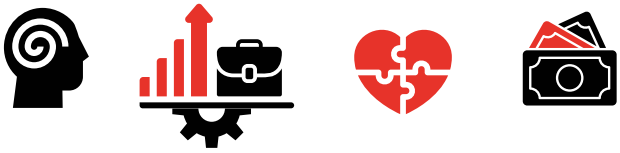
This discrimination hinders inclusion into host societies, which in turn complicates their ability to build a sustainable livelihood. To illustrate, in a recent UNHCR report, interviewees in collective accommodations noted that they had experienced being told there were no jobs available upon stating they were Roma.[lxxviii] To compound these challenges, lack of childcare access for women creates an additional obstacle for employment in **Moldova,**[lxxix] particularly of minority groups such as the **Roma** community who face higher barriers to attaining sources of income through livelihood integration.[lxxx] Given that in countries such as **Hungary** Roma refugees have also reported difficulties accessing support services, the additional livelihood barriers can compound stress.[lxxxi]

The barriers faced by Roma communities were also discussed by KIIs with representatives of CSOs in Slovakia and Moldova. Representatives of these organizations noted that cycles of generational poverty experienced by many Roma people make it particularly difficult to enter formal employment systems, in addition to challenges accessing work in terms of transportation and learning the host country language when they do not already speak it.[lxxxii] This generational poverty in turn also contributes to discrimination in entering host countries and access accommodation and employment. For example, a representative from a Moldovan CSO noted that when coordinating a program for Moldovan families to host refugees from Ukraine, some families were opposed to sheltering Roma individuals and families.[lxxxiii]

Moreover, ethnicity and its connection to broader socio-economic contexts can impose additional barriers regarding digital literacy and access to digital solutions to challenges faced by refugees from Ukraine.[lxxxiv] For instance, focus group discussions with Roma refugees in **Moldova** conducted as part of a recent UNHCR report indicated that many women are illiterate and/or do not own electronic devices.[lxxxv] Instead, the discussions indicate that **Roma individuals tend to get information from community mediators who are highly trusted.**[lxxxvi] This is particularly relevant given the extent to which the digital availability of resources has been a hallmark of the response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Financial assistance to enable access to and enhance livelihoods

Despite the available social and financial support and their economic engagement, women refugees from Ukraine have low financial resilience.[lxxxvii] Findings from research conducted in **Romania and Moldova** showed that most women refugees from Ukraine surveyed were **unprepared to respond to financial emergencies and are unable to pay their long-term expenses or rebuild their lives upon returning to Ukraine**.[lxxxviii] Given these challenges, one key factor enabling refugees from Ukraine to meet basic needs and access to livelihoods is the **cash or voucher assistance (CVA).**



The need for CVA was cited as a priority by 58 per cent of respondents in **Hungary.**[lxxxix] Refugee women in **Moldova** have also highlighted the need for cash assistance. Social benefits including cash assistance but also unemployment support and housing subsidies were relied on in combination with other income sources[2] by 77 per cent of women who completed the UNHCR Intentions Survey (August-September 2022) in **Slovakia,** 74 per cent in **Moldova,** 53 per cent in **Poland** and 36 per cent in **Romania.**[xc] It is the highest cited need among refugees in **Poland, Romania and Moldova** according to a recent NRC and Upinion report, however so far it remains out of reach for the majority.[xci] Whilst CVA reportedly exists in **Hungary,** according to a report by HIAS and VOICE in 2022, it is not clear how to access it and the study finds no record of financial assistance received from the Hungarian government.[xcii]

In addition to meeting basic needs, such as food, clothing, accommodation or transportation, CVA programs can also provide refugees with greater flexibility and control over their own lives. These programs not only assist refugees from Ukraine in meeting basic needs but are also a valuable investment that can contribute to the ability of refugees to establish decent livelihoods. This can help affected populations to feel **more empowered and self-reliant, directly impacting their mental health and well-being and reducing negative coping strategies.** CVA programs can also stimulate the economies of the Ukraine neighboring countries supporting refugees with investments in agriculture, grants to start or enhance enterprises self-employment in business, including in the digital sector.

[2] Other sources of income according the UNHCR Survey (August-September 2022) include savings, salary from employment, income from self-employment, pension, investments, savings, insurance, property, loans/credits, transfers from relatives and friends, and other sources not included above.

GOOD PRACTICES

Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia have adapted their laws or implemented legislation to grant labor market access to those registered with temporary protection status under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive, or even without the Temporary Residence status in **Moldova.**[xciii]

In **Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Poland,** refugees can obtain work without having a work permit.[xciv]

In **Poland,** refugees can access free consulting services on starting a business in a center (Diia.Business in Warsaw), an initiative implemented by an NGO with the support of the Ukrainian Government.[xcv]

Refugees from Ukraine are not required to have Temporary Protection Status or a work permit to gain legal work in **Romania** for the first 90 days of their stay.[xcvi]

In **Romania** the government provides legal **access to education** to all refugee children, even those without TPS.[xcvii] This means that, although other barriers such as language may prevent children from engaging in the Romanian education system, the option is available.

In **Moldova**, mobile teams led by local NGOs and supported by UNDP are providing women refugees, survivors and potential victims of GBV with legal, psychological and social counselling, as well as livelihood support such as support to attend vocational training, access the formal labor market or engage in self-employment activities.

The government of **Romania** has enabled refugees from Ukraine seeking to work in unregulated professions that do not have documents proving their professional qualifications and work experience to be hired based on an affidavit filed with their employer. This affidavit certifies that the individual meets the necessary professional requirements and has not committed any crimes that make them incompatible with engaging in this work in Romania.[xcviii]

Positive steps have been taken to promote digital solutions, as a wide range of **digital learning, digital skills, and language training modalities** have become increasingly available free of cost for refugees from Ukraine. One example is the Jobs for Ukraine platform that offers online free, self-paced learning of digital and technical skills for employment to refugees from Ukraine.[xcix]

In April 2022, the European Banking Authority **modified the financial regulations** allowing refugees from Ukraine to open basic bank accounts with fewer requirements of identification.[c] Most women in receiving countries were successfully able to open bank accounts.

The **International Finance Corporation's Digital Data Corridors** brings together credit information providers, financial institutions and industry experts to allow creating international credit histories, identity verification and make bank transaction data accessible electronically across borders.[ci] This allows refugees from Ukraine in host countries to get easier access to financial services.

This data exchange mechanism is now operational across several countries, including **Poland.**[cii]

In Poland, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia, UNHCR provided a monthly cash assistance program for refugees.

Whilst accountability lies within the public sector, the private sector plays a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of displaced individuals, particularly in the field of IT. Recognizing the employment gap in cloud technology, a private company launched an **online platform for the upskilling/reskilling of Ukrainian refugees.** Since October 2022, the program offers training and mentorship opportunities and connects graduates with over 40 employment partners worldwide to provide them with job opportunities.[ciii]

In **Moldova,** project Robota is offering legal counselling and protection of labor rights of refugees and host community members.[civ] Refugees can report any employment-related abuses on the online whistleblowing platform www.ida.md.[cv] The project also developed and disseminated a Guide on Labor Rights for Refugees.[cvi]

In **Slovakia,** the local NGO SME SPOLU, supported by UNHCR has launched IT courses specifically for women to build skills and learn more about core aspects of IT, such as working with diverse software programs, and in turn gain further employable skills to aid them in the job market.[cvii]

In **Moldova,** the National Employment Agency (NEA) and UNDP organized five job fairs, advertising over 3,500 vacancies. Over 2,000 people, including refugees from Ukraine, attended the job fairs. Private sector representatives, NEA, and UNDP were engaged in thematic discussions on opportunities and barriers to refugees' access to labor and decent employment.[cviii]

To respond to the limited childcare options in **Moldova,** a certified training program for individualized alternative care workers (nannies) was developed with UNDP support. The training is available for both Moldovans and refugees from Ukraine.[cix]

The **67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)** acknowledged the critical role of technology and innovation in achieving gender equality, which are relevant to the situation of refugees from Ukraine. The CSW67 agreed conclusions adopted by Member States provide a blueprint for governments, the private sector, civil society, and youth to promote the full and equal participation and leadership of women and girls in digital technologies and innovation processes that fulfill the human rights and needs of women and girls.[cx]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has forced millions of people to leave their homes, with roughly 8 million people becoming refugees outside of Ukraine.[cxi] The way that refugees from Ukraine have experienced this shift is largely affected by the gendered nature of the crisis and similarly gendered barriers that refugees face. This is particularly the case concerning the ability of refugees from Ukraine to access and build sustainable livelihoods. Based on the exploration of these barriers, it is possible to offer several recommendations on how neighboring host country governments, private sector actors, NGOs, CSOs, and international organizations[3] can help address these barriers to livelihoods moving forward.

Professional qualifications

1. Host country governments to continue and expand social assistance to refugees, while combining it with intensive language training, upskilling courses, and skills recognition to facilitate the transition into sustainable employment commensurate with a person's education and skills.
2. Host country governments and humanitarian actors to ensure access to job opportunities, language support, and an explanation of labor market processes. This information should be shared through key digital apps, as well as in transit centers and shelters.
3. Host country governments to ensure legal frameworks are conducive to part-time work. Specifically, governments should extend exempted categories of part-time workers to include individuals with outstanding child/dependent care needs and individuals actively enrolled in language courses or vocational training to prevent employers from being disincentivized from hiring them on a part-time basis.
4. Host country governments to offer simplified and expedited procedures for refugees from Ukraine to have their diplomas and other skill documentation recognized in host countries.
5. Host country governments and humanitarian actors to offer assistance to refugees in attaining digitized accredited skill qualifications and translating skill qualifications brought from Ukraine.
6. National Institutes of Employment and Vocational Training in host countries to dedicate resources to ensure a more efficient matching of the needs of companies and the skills of refugees from Ukraine.
7. Host country governments to increase engagement with the private sector to expand access to apprenticeship, internship and mentorship opportunities. For existing programs, businesses should adapt on-the-job training programs to include a weekly allotment of time for language training.
8. Humanitarian actors to integrate mental health and psychological support services into livelihood interventions for refugees from Ukraine. This can help them develop the skills and resilience needed to cope with emotional and psychological stressors that may impede their ability to work while also boosting their motivation, productivity, and job performance.

[3] In the recommendations NGOs, CSOs, and international organizations are broadly referred to as humanitarian actors.

Language opportunities

9 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to continue providing free language courses that teach the national host country languages and English.

10 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to offer language courses remotely to increase accessibility for those who may have care obligations that prevent them from attending courses in person or those who live in rural areas.

Providing care services and assistance

11 Host country governments to ensure regular access to care facilities for children, older people, people with disabilities, and those with long-term illnesses. With regards to childcare, particular attention should be paid to the facilities needed for children who are following Ukrainian schooling online so their primary care takers can pursue work.

12 Host country governments, humanitarian actors, and the private sector to promote collaboration that enables the further delivery of decent and well-equipped care services and that can therefore enhance the public and private provision of social care services.

13 Humanitarian actors to promote care solutions not only linked to attending activities offered for refugees from Ukraine, but which are regularly available and gender responsive. Where possible, these initiatives should be led by refugees from Ukraine themselves to support each other in offering care services based on existing networks and opportunities.

Protection and gender-based violence

14 The Ministry of Employment/Labor in host countries to establish appropriate safeguarding and protection measures including regular monitoring of high-risk sectors for labor exploitation. Measures to prevent and respond to trafficking should also be scaled up, including gender responsive information campaigns for refugees from Ukraine on risks and where to look for help.

15 Actors engaged in livelihood programming to include a gender analysis in their projects that focus on issues such as care obligations and gender-based violence. These actors should also cater to the specific needs and challenges faced by refugees from Ukraine, particularly women, Roma people, and LGBTQIA+ people.

16 Actors engaged in livelihood programming to integrate GBV risk mitigation in program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This will ensure GBV risks and concerns are addressed in advance, guaranteeing that program participants, particularly women and girls, are safer. This can in turn improve sector-specific outcomes.

17 Humanitarian actors working on GBV to train frontline livelihood service providers on GBV prevention and existing safe referral pathways. This will increase GBV survivors' timely access to lifesaving GBV services, reaching those in need who may not know about existing services or may not be able to access them.

18 Employers to provide contracts in languages that refugees from Ukraine can understand and ensure their awareness of labor rights in the host country and how to access them.

Minority communities

19 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to offer more targeted assistance to Roma communities to enhance their ability to pursue employment. These efforts should be coupled with initiatives aimed at mitigating the protection risks associated with early school dropout, marriage, and pregnancy.

20 Host country governments to promote social inclusion policies to tackle discrimination and foster social cohesion with host communities.

21 Humanitarian actors to enhance the delivery of information to Roma communities concerning how to access services and rights. To improve information delivery, humanitarian actors should also consider where and how Roma communities tend to access trusted information when disseminating this information.

22 Host country governments to eliminate the barriers Roma refugees face in obtaining status documentation.

23 Humanitarian actors to engage in consultations with Roma community members, particularly women and adolescent girls, to further research and understand their needs and how these can be incorporated into humanitarian programming.

Digital access

24 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to continue supporting women in improving their digital skills, including through trainings in areas such as financial management, digital entrepreneurship, computer literacy, coding, e-commerce, and access to markets.

25 Host governments and humanitarian actors to promote digital literacy and enhance the accessibility of services for refugees from Ukraine. These include, among others, the knowledge and technology required to receive digital cash transfers and e-governance services provided by the Ukrainian government to its citizens in refugee hosting countries.

26 Host country governments, donors, and private sector actors to promote digital opportunities for entrepreneurship and remote work, particularly for women refugees on the move and returning to Ukraine.

27 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to ensure that digital resources and services are inclusive and easily accessible to all refugees from Ukraine, regardless of their technical expertise or language abilities and including to those with disabilities.

Data and research needs

28 Those actors involved in data collection on refugees from Ukraine to ensure regular disaggregation and dissemination of data by sex, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and geographical area. This will enable intersectional data analysis to further understand the complex needs, barriers, and opportunities of refugees from Ukraine.

29 Specific efforts should be dedicated to understanding the needs of and barriers faced by Roma refugees.

30 Data collection efforts should pay specific attention to collecting reliable information on the gender of the head of household, for example by framing the question in a way that clarifies whether male husbands, partners, or other male family members in Ukraine should be considered the heads of household.

31 Those actors involved in data collection to systematically enhance data collection efforts and the monitoring of working conditions in sectors with high rates of informal and seasonal employment, such as agriculture and hospitality.

32 Host country governments to improve available statistics related to formal and informal employment of refugees from Ukraine that are holistic but also disaggregated by sector and sex. This can enable more accurate identification of trends and patterns and therefore enable relevant actors to better meet the needs of refugees from Ukraine.

33 Further data collection efforts should be dedicated to understanding the situation of male refugees from Ukraine. Specific areas for exploration include the situation of men who are not registered, their access to work and services, and how the presence of men influences household dynamics.

34 Those actors involved in data collection to fill key data gaps on the conditions of refugees from Ukraine including but not limited to:

a. Transportation situation and workplace accessibility.
b. The connection between documentation requirements and barriers to employment.
c. Resources available to learn host country languages and English.
d. Differences in terms of access to livelihood opportunities and needs between refugees living in collective versus private accommodation, and those living within versus far from urban areas.

35 Further research should be dedicated to understanding the needs of young refugees transitioning from education to employment and those not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Based on this, specific programs and policies should be implemented to help meet these needs, for example through training opportunities and social inclusion.

36 Those actors involved in data collection and analysis to further research the impacts of the social shift to single parent/female headed households where women carry the full burden of caring for household members, household management, and income generation.

Financial assistance

37 Donors and host country governments to provide and enable unconditional cash assistance for the most vulnerable women refugees from Ukraine including Roma, LGBTQIA+ women facing discrimination, women with disabilities, women with fewer economic resources, and sex workers.

38 Host country governments and humanitarian actors to facilitate financial inclusion of women refugees by making personal banking information accessible for refugees across borders.

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