



Otaci Local Coordination Meeting

Meeting Minutes - 06 June 2023

1. Meeting Details

Date	06 June 2023
Time	11:00 - 12:20
Chair	Alexandra Cuznetzova, UNHCR Field Assistant
Reporting	Hideaki Kojima, UNHCR Associate Field Officer
Email	cuznetov@unhcr.org , kojima@unhcr.org

2. Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Child protection cases at Otaci BCP
3. Activity updates
4. AoB

3. Information collection and relevant links

Moldova operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

Local Refugee Coordination operational data portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/search?>

4. Participants (Name, Position, Organization)

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| - Sean Sager, Protection Officer, UNHCR | - Faureanu Natalia, Coordinator, Blue Dot |
| - Alberto Tonon, Disability and Inclusion Specialist, UNHCR | - Mariana Grama, NRC |
| - Hideaki Kojima, Associate Field Officer, UNHCR | - Rostislav Covi, Counsellor, CDA |
| - Alexandra Cuznetzova, Field Assistant, UNHCR | - Preda Alexei, Bahtalo Ker |
| - Dmitrii Zavrotskii, Mayor, Otaci City | - Carillo Eugenio, PIN Moldova (online) |
| - Ecaterina Covtun, Base Manager, ACTED | - Danylo, DRC Moldova (online) |
| - Merjievski Serghei, Project Assistant, IOM | - Victor Levenco, IOM (online) |
| - Cojocar Nicolai, Social Assistant, UNFPA | - Margaryta Pavlenko, Monitor, Right to Protection (online) |
| - Cojocar Ion, Deputy Head, Otaci Border Police | - Voychik Svetlana, Monitor, Right to Protection (online) |

5. Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points



Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Alexandra Cuznetsova, UNHCR Field Assistant, cuznetov@unhcr.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR welcomed participants and asked all the participants to introduce themselves. • The mayor welcomed all participants to the meeting and shared as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Situation at the border remains unchanged despite the recent attack to Nova Kakhovka dam in Kherson, Ukraine. However, the attack might have provoked another internal displacement towards regions closer to Moldova. We must be ready for another increase of entries of Ukrainian refugees into Moldova. – The city hall is recently receiving several delegations of organizations and funds with new ideas of how to better support refugees and host communities in Otaci. In this sense, it is great to have this local coordination meeting to share information on what kind of activities are currently going on in the region. The city hall is ready for further cooperation with other entities to ensure assistance for refugees and host communities in Otaci. 	
<p>Child protection cases at Otaci BCP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BlueDot shared recent challenges related to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) crossing the border as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Most child protection cases happen at night when children try to cross the border by a cross-border train between Kiev and Chisinau. – In case of urgent need of child protection at the border such as entry denial, the child is supposed to be accompanied by a social worker from Ocnita Social Assistance department until the problem is solved. For example, in case of entry denial, the border police will call the social assistance department of Ocnita to send a social worker from Ocnita to Otaci. – However, social workers in Ocnita raion are generally not willing to respond due to various reasons and it is often the case that social workers are not reachable at night. – At the beginning of the emergency, there were 3 specialists from the social assistance department in charge of Otaci and the neighbouring villages of Valcinet and Calarasovca. Since last November, these social workers are not willing to assist cases in Otaci. Until April this year, there was always a social worker present 24/7 in Otaci, which made it easy to deal with child protection cases at the border. After the social worker left Otaci, no replacement has been made by Ocnita municipality. BlueDot has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the Social Assistance department of Ocnita raion to the coordination meeting to discuss child protection issues at the border.



	<p>previously contacted social workers in Donduseni raion, but was told that it would be impossible for them to assist cases happening in Ocnita raion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– BlueDot are open 24/7 and has the capacity to receive these child protection cases with a psychologist, a social worker and other specialists. However, the relevant national law stipulates that the social assistance department is the only authority entitled to deal with these cases and it is legally impossible for BlueDot to assist these denial cases. BlueDot can only assist children who successfully crossed the border and entered Moldova. BlueDot and Ave Copii are paying for fuel when social workers need to come from Ocnita to Otaci.– We need to ensure that social workers from the municipality will provide quality services constantly to children in need.– There were some cases where children were denied entry and sent back to Ukraine due to insufficient documentation. Although the border police contacted the social assistance department, social workers told the border police that it would take long time for parents of the children to get necessary documents for entry and that it would be better to send the children back to their family in Ukraine.– BlueDot is having constant discussions regarding this issue with UNICEF and Ave Copii.● Otaci Border Police supplemented the points made by BlueDot as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Border Police authority is expecting the increase of entries of Ukrainian refugees in response to the recent attack to the dam in Kherson.– The issue of UASC is considered high priority within Border Police because there is high risk of human trafficking and child abuse. Border Police is working to ensure that children can arrive in Moldova safely. Having said that, it is also its duty to monitor all the entries into Moldova and they cannot let people without necessary documents enter the country, following the relevant legal provisions.– As BlueDot mentioned, most child protection cases happen at night between 1:00 am to 4:00 am due to the schedule of cross-border trains, most passengers of which are refugees. When no one is available to accompany the children, a staff member of the border police will take the children to BlueDot office and stay with them overnight.	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Border Police also agrees that there should be someone 24/7 who has the authority to take care of these cases. It can be social workers or staff of an NGO.– It is understandable that social workers are not willing to come all the way to Otaci in the middle of the night, but this should be somehow solved immediately since this issue entails high risk of protection. One of the reasons could be the low salary and there may be some organizations which can financially support in this regard.	
Activity updates from participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNFPA reported that they provided assistance to 55 individuals during the last two weeks, mostly by psychological consultation and information provision. No specific challenge is observed.• CDA shared the following points:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 44 individuals were assisted during the last two weeks with legal consultation on how to apply for Temporary Protection (TP) or alternative options to stay legally in Moldova.– In the past three weeks, strict border control was made especially to third country nationals. They were asked more questions than usual and kept at the border for around 3 to 4 hours.– Border Police confirmed that there were some cases of irregular entry to Moldova. People who crossed the border illegally applied for asylum immediately after the entry.• Bahtalo Ker reported that the number of refugees using their laundry facility is around 3-4 people per week and the number is lower than usual. One of the reasons might be that the weather is getting better, and they don't necessarily need a washing machine or a drying machine.• BlueDot shared the following points:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 190 individuals (103 women, 40 men and 47 children) were received at BlueDot office during the past two weeks. There was one case of entry denial of UASC.– Some Ukrainian men were crossing the border illegally during the past weeks and BlueDot assisted them by explaining the asylum procedure and sharing information.– On the occasion of World Children's Day on June 1st, BlueDot organized a celebration for refugee children and children from Moldovan host communities in Otaci. 16	



children (10 refugee children and 6 Moldovan children) attended the event and received some snacks.

- **NRC** shared the following points:

- With the financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, NRC will open a north community centre in Ocnita. The centre will support both Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan host communities residing not only in Ocnita raion but also other six northern regions (Briceni, Donduseni, Drochia, Sorooca, Riscani and Balti). The centre will be open from 9:00 to 17:00 on weekdays, but with the possibility of operating after 17:00 or on weekends if necessary. Various services are provided including information provision, legal assistance, social projects, and distribution of goods. People In Need (PIN) and ACTED will also be present in the centre and PIN will set up a child-friendly space which operates from 14:00 to 17:00 on weekdays. The opening ceremony of the centre will be held tomorrow (7 June 2023) at 14:00, where MoUs will be signed between NRC and public authorities. All the participants to the coordination meeting are invited.
- NRC has been present in Ocnita since 14 April 2023. People gradually started to come to NRC for assistance and 135 individuals from refugee communities and host communities (including Roma people) are registered, of which 15 received assistance.
- NRC is expecting more requests for legal assistance after the end of the emergency law. To prepare for that, NRC organized sessions on 25 and 26 May 2023 to for legal assistance and information campaign related to the latest legal change, how to submit a TP application, how to collect necessary documents for TP application, and so on. NRC also reached out to 387 individuals over the phone to provide legal information. Another information session is planned in Balti in June.
- NRC has been conducting several needs assessment regarding food, finance, medical assistance, WASH, and livelihood. Out of these assessments, distribution of hygiene kits and other goods for children and the elderly in Ocnita.
- Discussions with companies in the free economic zone in Balti are ongoing with an objective of providing employment opportunities and vocational training to refugees living in the north. The mayor of Sorooca shared with NRC that there would soon be another free economic zone.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– A national law stipulates that residence permits for foreigners based on employment can only be issued if the applicant can proof his/her salary of more than 11,000 MDL, which is very high compared to the average salary in Moldova.– An international economic forum is planned in Ocnita to attract investors. NRC developed a platform to encourage employment of refugees together with the National Employment Agency. There are more Roma people registered in the employment pool than Ukrainian refugees.• ACTED shared the following points:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– During the past two weeks, ACTED transported 110 individuals to Chisinau, 91 to the IGM office in Balti and 8 to RACs, and conducted 2 mobile teams with UNHCR and the other partners.– 81 snack kits and 9 SIM cards were distributed during the past two weeks.– ACTED is receiving many questions regarding free flights from Moldova, medical insurance, procedural requirements of pets (required documents or mandatory vaccinations), and so on.• IOM reported that 26 individuals were transported to Iasi and 96 individuals received first-aid medical assistance at OBS. Based on the agreement made during the last coordination meeting, IOM is now providing medical assistance at OBS not only to refugees but also to vulnerable people from host communities.• Right to Protection (R2P) shared the following points:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– There is no major change or update in their activity. People coming from other parts of Ukraine are generally well informed about services available in Moldova and where to go in Moldova and onwards. In case where people do not know where to go after crossing the border, R2P is informing them of services provided by the partners in Moldova.– R2P observed several cases of entry denial by Moldovan border police and these cases were already reported to UNHCR.– As a result of the recent attack to Nova Kakhovka dam in Kherson, Vinnytsia Oblast is showing its readiness to accept IDPs from the affected regions and wants people and partners in Moldova to be ready for the increase of refugees.	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There were some legal cases related to Russian citizens. Ukraine is currently not issuing any visa to Russian citizens. Russians with a Ukrainian residence permit will not be denied entry but will be thoroughly interviewed about their purpose of entry. Moreover, citizens with Moldovan/Russian double nationality are not allowed to enter Ukraine. • People In Need (PIN) shared the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – PIN is conducting protection activities in partnership with three CSOs in Briceni, Ocnita, Donduseni and Edinet. These activities include on-site psychological support and MHPSS group sessions for social cohesion between refugees and Moldovan society. – As of 30 April 2023, PIN provided MHPSS activities to 138 individuals and reached out to 68 individuals during mobile visits in 5 localities bordering Ukraine. – PIN opens a child-friendly space in the NRC North Community Center. There will be 3 facilitators organizing social emotional learning curriculum for Ukrainian and Moldovan children every day after school hours. The plan is to welcome 40 to 60 children per week. 	
Update from UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR shared the recent updates as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UNHCR, together with CDA and ACTED, conducted a mobile team visit and information session in Briceni on 24 May 2023. – After the long period of negotiation, UNHCR started a mobile team visit in Ocnita region, and the first visit was conducted in Valcinet on 31 May 2023. Another visit is planned to the Calarasovca village this week. 	

6. Details of the Next Meeting	
Date	20 June 2023
Time	11:00 - 12:00
Venue	Otaci Mayor Office