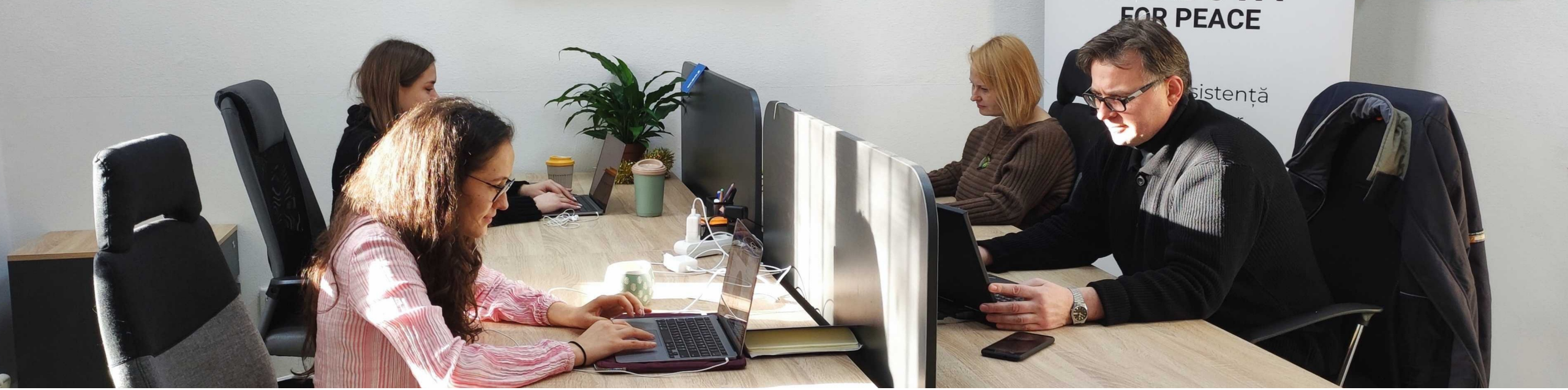


Refugee and Local Community Feedback and Recommendations for the Response

INFO UNIT, LAOLALTA NGO, MOLDOVA FOR PEACE
March 2023

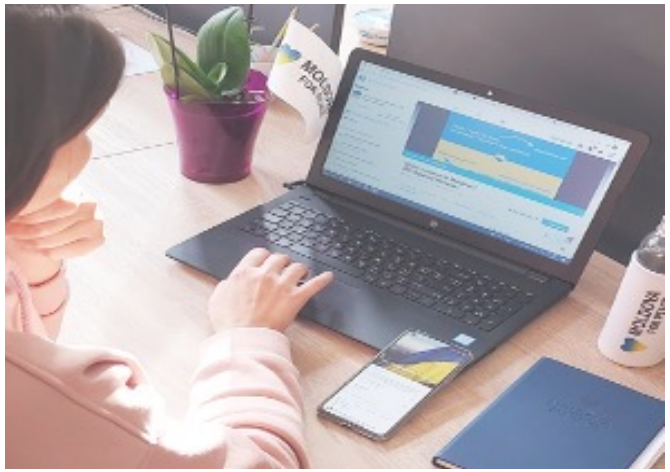
Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

MOLDOVA FOR PEACE

LAOLALTA

About the report



This report presents an analysis of refugees' feedback shared via online social media sources. Monitoring includes 25 Telegram, 18 Facebook, 13 Viber and 13 online mass media sources. In March 2023 Info Unit has collected 1074 feedbacks in more than 35 online channels.

Rumours spread quickly among the community and can have serious consequences. Rumour tracking allows to know what people are saying and address misinformation and disinformation.

The monitoring is focused on the refugees' feedback which could help to identify gaps or deficiencies in humanitarian aid provision mechanisms.

This report is part of the Accountability to Affected People mechanisms of the Refugee Coordination Forum in Moldova.

No artificial intelligence used

Data are collected manually for a deeper understanding of the context

No personal data collected

Info Unit does not collect any personal data all the feedback being analyzed anonymously

Context analysis

Feedback and tensions are collected with indication of the context in which they were shared

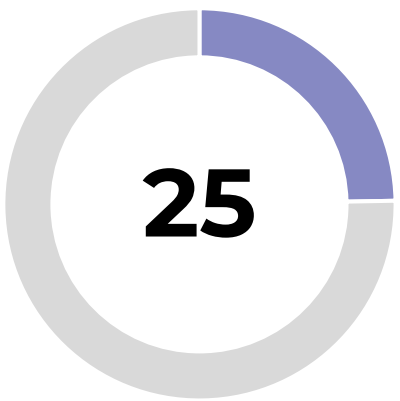
Quantitative analysis and categorization

Feedbacks are grouped depending on the assistance or services. Tensions are categorized depending on the topics discussed

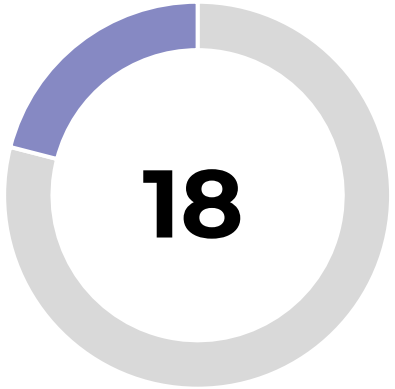
Our process

Feedback to the community
7
1
Feedback collection
Reporting
6
RECOMMENDATIONS
2
Context analysis
Data analysis
5
3
Categorization
4
Filling in the log

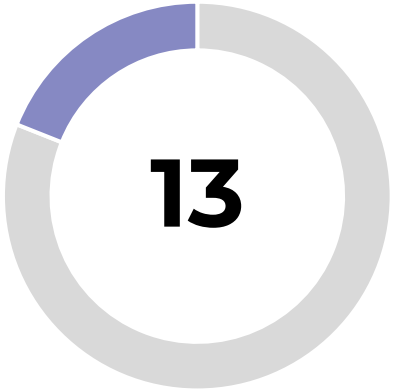
Refugee & Host Community Feedback Sources 2023



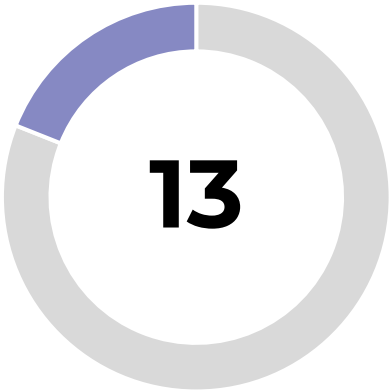
Telegram groups and channels



Facebook groups and pages



Viber groups



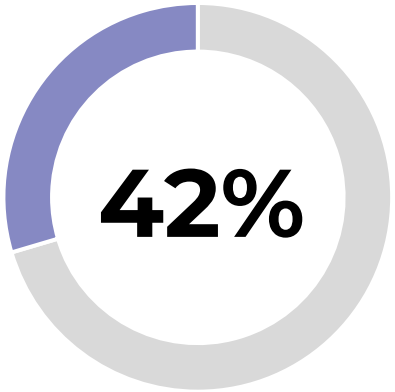
Online mass media

250 000+

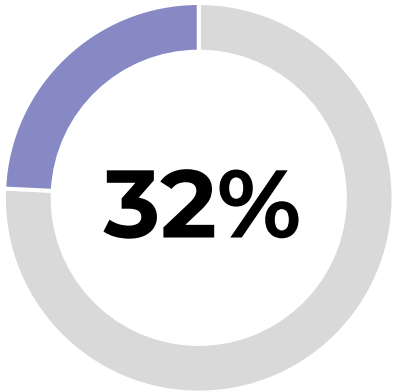
refugee and local community reached

What people were talking about

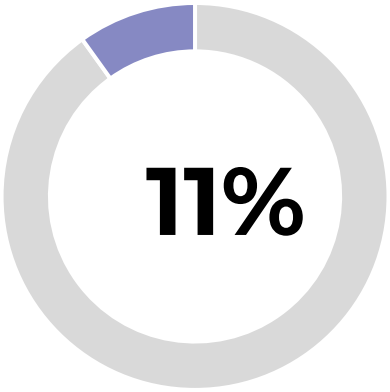
March 2023: top categories (out of 734 feedbacks collected)



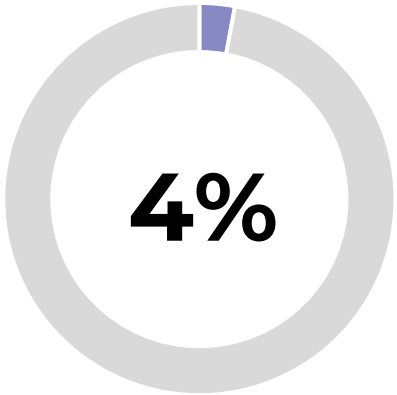
Legal status



Cash Assistance



Border crossing rules



Humanitarian aid

Note: the remaining data (11%) for the other feedback categories were insignificant and therefore excluded from the analysis

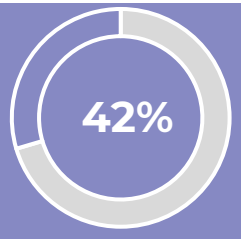
The most discussed topics
March 2023

42% Legal status	**Temporary protection**	Concerns related to the implementation
32% Cash Assistance	**UNHCR Cash hotline and linkage with legal status**	Concerns related to UNHCR cash hotline and the continuation of payments depending on the status applied
11% Border crossing rules	**Documents required for the Ukrainian cars to remain in Moldova**	Different perceptions on the documents required for the Ukrainian cars to remain in Moldova

Feedback analysis

March 2023 and the first quarter of 2023

Legal Status
March 2023



Temporary protection (TP): the context

Lack of information at the first stage of TP implementation has led to rumors fostering disinformation and misinformation.

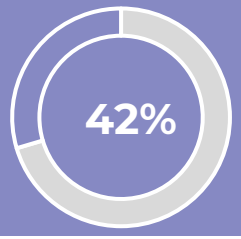
To mitigate the situation Info Unit is collaborating with Dopomoga, National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova, Robota and other actors including the AAP TF.

A Quick Assessment on the Implementation of the TP in Moldova showed key findings and resulted in public recommendations.

- Some of the TP concerns were related to the actual situation in Moldova towns and villages with no Inspectorate General of Migration (IGM) offices. Persons with disabilities or reduced mobilities might not have access to the registration procedures.
- One of the options to proof the residency is to call the property owner to join the IGM registration appointment. This has not been welcomed by property owners who don't want to declare the rent agreement being afraid of fines from the tax authority.

In March 2023 refugees were more interested in obtaining the legal status in Moldova (65%) than in the first two months of the year (15%): percentage from the overall feedback within this category.

Legal Status
March 2023



Beneficiaries' feedback

More than 55% of the comments within this category were related to the documents required for Temporary Protection registration and challenges in the implementation.

Proof of residency

- 75% refugees' feedback within this category were related to problems with obtaining the proof of residency.
- 12% refugees' feedback within this category were related to perceptions of TP as a paid-for status as in many cases the proof of residence required notarization under a certain fee.
- 15% refugees' feedback within this category were related to problems with obtaining proof of residence from refugee accommodation centres and Primarias of different regions.

No mobile teams

- 7% of refugees' feedback within this category were related to concerns about the lack of mobile teams.

Refusals

7% of refugees' feedback within this category were concerns expressed by mixed nationalities families about their status.

There is a general fear of being denied TP for not having required documents.

Concerns about refugees without no status

More than 45% of the local and refugee community feedback withing this category were concerns on what will happen if refugees don't secure a legal status.

Access to healthcare: emergency is still available however from March 2023 access to primary healthcare is only for refugees who received the TP or any other related status.

Recommendations

Inform correctly refugees and the local community

Dissemination of accurate and truthful information shall help to understand legal issues related with TP and other statuses.

Authorities should provide more detailed and structured information to the community and ensure it is consistent across all channels.

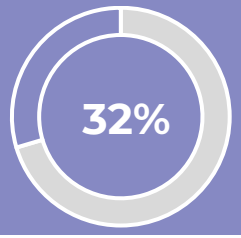
Refer special cases to competent lawyers providing consultation free of charge

People can be referred to CDA or Robota project. The lawyers shall help to resolve difficult situations free of charge.

Double citizenship: informing about the rights and obligations

Double citizenship and other cases like unaccompanied children require more efforts on clarification.

Cash Assistance
March 2023



Beneficiaries' feedback

Cash Assistance remains one of the most discussed category in the refugee community.

65% of refugees' feedback within this category showed that this support is indispensable for Ukrainian refugees who live in Moldova permitting them to pay out the rent and utilities.

More than 75% of refugees' feedback within this category were concerns on the continuation of UNHCR Cash Assistance program after the approval of temporary protection.

Unsolved individual cases and lack of clear answers from the cash hotlines reported led to rumors on the misuse of humanitarian funds.

Complaints within this category: excerpt

- UNHCR Cash hotline work: "operators provide different data each time", "do not help to solve individual cases", "do not answer repeated calls"
- Deficiencies in UNHCR cash transfer system: "SMS was received but no money transferred".
- Verification: beneficiaries report that the verification can be done randomly by a mobile team checking the place of living in Moldova, by phone or at registration centers.
- UNHCR online kobo form: UNHCR feedback mechanisms are reported as not helping to resolve individual cases.

In March 2023, only 7% refugees' feedback within this category were comments that cash assistance was used by refugees living in other countries who come to Moldova only for verification. At the beginning of the year this figure went up to 15%.

Recommendations

Cash hotline staff training

Human factor or use of different answer provision mechanisms may affect the situation and undermine trust in targeted cash provision process.

Training of the cash hotline operators and random checks of the working process may help to improve the situation and earn the beneficiaries' trust.

Direct communication with refugees

At least 35 respondents openly suggested that a direct discussion with UNHCR cash representatives can help to understand the situation and resolve individual cases.

Inform the beneficiaries on the results of the feedback mechanism

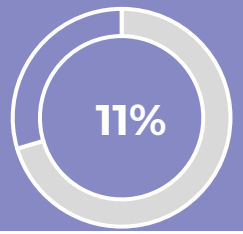
Reporting the results of the case solution shall help to raise trust in the efficiency of online complaint mechanism and to ease the existing tensions stopping rumours.

Update UNHCR website with clear rules for verification and cash distribution process

The assessment showed that beneficiaries do not understand the frequency of payments and the process of verifications.

It is crucial to inform on the existing mechanisms as lack of information or inaccurate information from different sources may lead to rumors on the misuse of humanitarian funds.

Border Crossing
March 2023



Beneficiaries' feedback

In the first quarter of the year quite a lot of concerns related to border crossing rules have been observed.

The legal duration of stay in Moldova of Ukrainian cars and road tax rules highly discussed in January and February 2023 have decreased in March 2023.

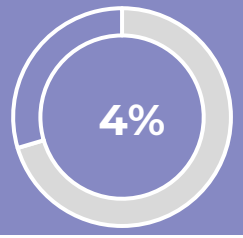
85% refugees' feedback within this category showed that there is a general confusion of relating the TP term to the duration of stay of Ukrainian cars and the mandatory road tax (vignette).

A lot of questions have been raised on the general Moldova border crossing rules and the required documents as well as on the rules for transporting pets.

Recommendations

- To inform about clear rules regarding the duration of stay of the Ukrainian cars in Moldova and the vignette in the light on the TP on the official IGM website.
- To publish clear rules regarding documents required for border crossing and the rules for transporting pets on the official Border Police website in Russian language.
- To place Informative posters or visual materials on the refugees' rights and obligations at the border crossing points.

Humanitarian Aid
March 2023



Beneficiaries' feedback

In January and February 2023, a lot of concerns have been raised on the continuity of the humanitarian aid programs in Moldova. The news on the upcoming TP has led to perceptions that humanitarian assistance shall be ceased in March 2023.

Some refugees have resorted to selling humanitarian aid on local markets in exchange for cash to meet their various needs (to purchase medicines, fruits and vegetables or to pay the rent) - at least 15 cases reported from January to February 2023.

- In the first quarter of 2023, 15% of beneficiaries' comments within this category were related to deficiencies observed in aid provision mechanisms and the work of the personnel involved.
- In late February 2023 refugees were concerned that their negative comments about the work of humanitarian organizations could lead to closure of aid programs.
- In the first quarter of 2023 refugees have reported lack or limited availability of food and NFIs distribution in small cities and villages

Recommendations

- Target and coordinate the humanitarian aid distribution to cover all the regions. Improve the feedback mechanisms
- Ensure a transparent and clear distribution process of humanitarian aid.
- Distribute humanitarian aid for the newly-arrived refugees and vulnerable beneficiaries to pave the way to social and legal integration of refugees.

Winterization: Other Cash Programs

March 2023 and the first quarter of 2023

Other Cash Programs*

Winterization: the context

In March 2023 rumors related to Cash Programs constituted less than 3%. However the situation observed in the first quarter of 2023 (**11%**) have shown main concerns and gaps related to a significant number of small cash programs launched by different organizations for winterization purposes.

Feedback collected from January to February helped to reveal the main problems related to the cash provision mechanisms.

Key problems reported

At least 30% feedback within this category included difficulties in understanding general rules of different organizations providing cash.

During the first quarter of 2023, 25% of refugees (from the overall feedback percentage within this category) shared they received cash assistance from at least 3 organizations, while other 30% complained they received none.

Unclear rules and misinformation including scam in different social media groups have undermined trust in humanitarian organizations.

More than 7% refugees (from the overall feedback percentage within this category) shared their thoughts that humanitarian organization were just "laundering money and distributing funds allocated for themselves".

Most of winterization programs have been seen as unclear and not covering all the regions.

Recommendations

Provide accurate information to refugees and local community on programs available:

We can help! infounit@laolalta.md

Info Unit is moderating one of the biggest social media groups launched by "Moldova for Peace" at the beginning of the war in Ukraine "Ajutor Ucraineni in Moldova" and more than 25+ other channels, groups and pages in Facebook, Viber and Telegram.

**This category is different from the category Cash Assistance, i.e. the feedback mentioned in this section refer to winterization cash programs*

Tensions between refugee and local community

The most discussed topics in March 2023

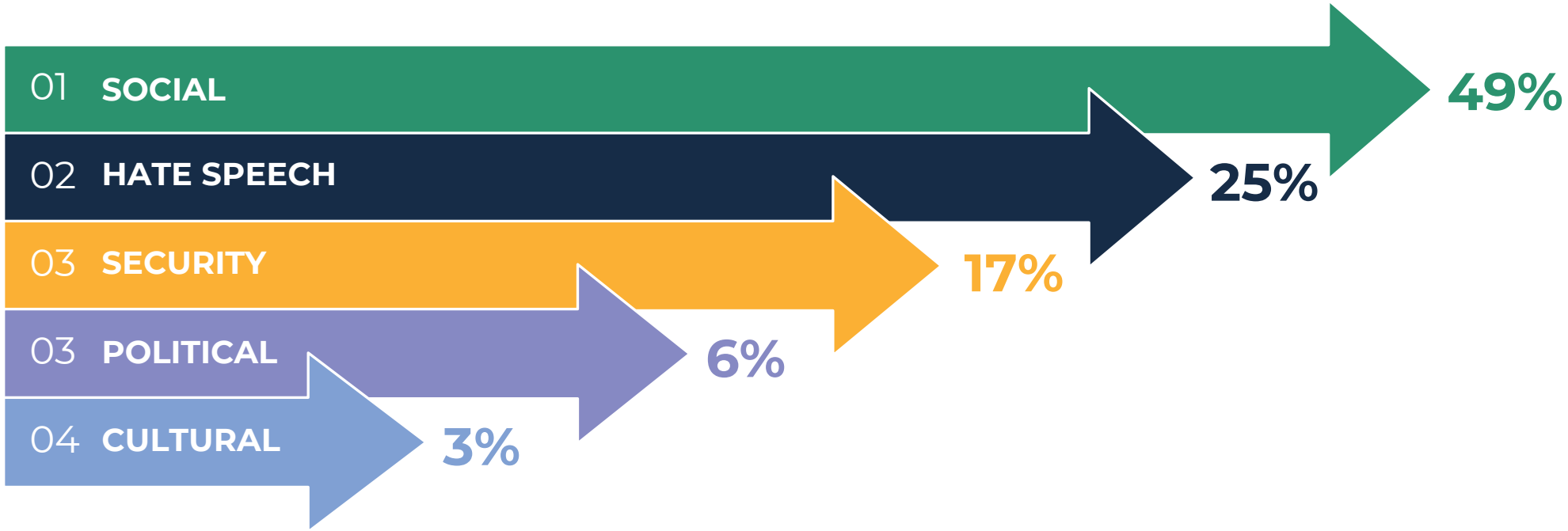
Social tensions and hate speech have been one of the biggest categories observed in March 2023. Info Unit reports only on negative feedbacks related directly to the refugee community.

Negative feedbacks are observed from both sides. Refugees from Ukraine are not satisfied with Moldovans and vice versa.

Social cohesion programs involving both refugee and local community shall help to ease the tensions.

Tensions between refugee and local community

MARCH 2023 (out of 340 feedback collected)



Feedback on Tensions
March 2023

In March 2023 one of the predominant tension trends were related to social aspects. Practically the same tensions trends have been observed during the first quarter of the year.

Some Moldovans are concerned about the influx of Ukrainian refugees and worried that the country shall become more Slavic. They also expressed frustration about having to learn Ukrainian to communicate with the “newcomers”.

Hate speech

Hate speech is present in many channels. There are also politicians and decision-makers promoting hate speech.

This phenomenon is observed from both communities.

Political tensions

The host community is bringing up past conflicts and accusing the Ukrainians of supporting separatist movements.

Social tensions

Some members of the host community feel that refugees are receiving unfair benefits they are not entitled to. Perceptions of refugees as a burden on the local economy and job market as well as an unfair distribution of the resources have been also predominant.

Some locals feel that refugees are taking advantage of the situation by collecting benefits and then returning home with the money, without contributing to the local economy.

Some are outraged that refugees continue to receive the cash assistance from the UN believing that this money coms from their taxes.

Security tensions

There are chats and groups where the local community names refugees as spies or even terrorists. This is generally caused by the fear that refugees may be used by Ukraine to destabilize the situation in Moldova.

Recommendations

Providing verified information to refugees and local community remains crucial

Continuous assessment of tensions between communities observed in the first quarter of 2023 showed that mainly disinformation contributes to tensioning the relations between communities

Participation of local community in focus groups and events

Opinions expressed by the local community are often neglected.

Open discussions can contribute to mutual understanding of problems the local and refugee community are facing and pave the way to collaboration fostering social cohesion.

Programs in regions

Community centers and different activities are predominantly located in big cities.

In small cities and villages there are practically no opportunities created for social cohesion.

Equal opportunities for Ukrainian and Moldovan children

Assessment showed that quite many programs do not allow participation of Moldovan children in free events, workshops and educational opportunities organized for Ukrainians.

Local community perceives it as unequal opportunities the tension being fostered by economic and energetic crisis in the Republic of Moldova.

Mass Media involvement

More information about the response in Moldova is required: about organizations providing help, implication of refugees and local community in humanitarian aid processes.

Positive storytelling about both refugees and local community as well as about community leaders shall contribute to social cohesion.

Info Unit is a part of Laolalta - one of the NGOs entering Moldova for Peace Civil Initiative.

Info Unit has been doing rumor tracking since the end of July 2022 as a part of Accountability to the Affected People Task Force (hereinafter AAP TF). In 2022 Info Unit has issued 5 Monthly and 1 Quarterly Rumor Tracking Bulletins.

Info Unit team provides answers to refugees via online social media, monitors one of the biggest refugee help group in Moldova Ajutor UA in Moldova: almost 100 000 members.

Continuous community engagement and accountability activities help to understand the ongoing situation related to refugee response in Moldova and identify gaps, deficiencies, misinformation and understand tensions between communities. Feedback collected offer evidence to decision makers, promote community-based approach and a more efficient response. Furthermore, answers go back to the community to fight mis- and disinformation.

AAP TF member

Info Unit monthly presents updated data on refugee and local community feedback and provides recommendations based on detailed and comparative analysis

TP working group member

Info Unit is a part of TP group helping to inform refugees and local community

Refugee Coordination Forum member

Laolalta is an active member of the Refugee Coordination Forum. Info Unit participates in sector and working groups including Cash.

Round table discussions

Info Unit is a part of discussions on refugee response along with the governmental entities, international and national NGOs

INFO UNIT 2022

Results in figures: July to December 31, 2022

46 486
Moderated/monitored posts

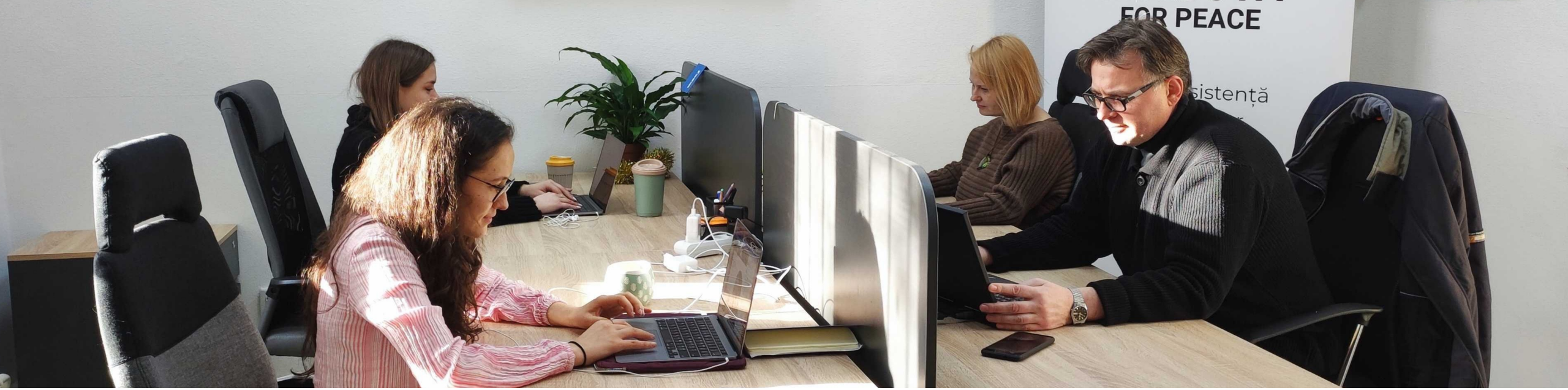
11 356
Answers to refugees online

791
Informational posts

250 000+
Refugee and local community reached

20+
Channels tracked

7
Collaborations entered



Thank You

Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

MOLDOVA FOR PEACE

LAOLALTA

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