The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had a substantial effect on Moldova, with an influx of more than 889,000 individuals crossing into the country since February 2022. As of July 2023, Moldova hosts a significant population of displaced individuals, including over 109,000 Ukrainian refugees and nearly 7,600 third country nationals. Approximately 10% of refugees in Moldova are with disabilities, and 22% of refugee households have at least one family member with specific needs, such as disability or serious medical condition.

The Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted in September 2022 by REACH in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) and Host Communities across Moldova, found that among the households surveyed, 19% of household reported having at least one person with difficulties seeing, 5% hearing, 7% walking or climbing steps, and 4% difficulties caring for themselves.

"I arrived in Moldova by myself in April 2022, as my whole family stayed in Ukraine. The staff of Motivation has supported me over the last year, emotionally comforting me through the most challenging times and providing me with a laptop to take online Social Media Management courses to help me find a job. They have also accompanied me to various interviews; I am confident that I will find a job soon."
(Refugee Woman with disability, 28 years old, Cojușna)
Forced displacement can create or exacerbate disabilities, placing persons with disabilities among the most at-risk and disproportionately affected groups in these contexts. Among the subgroups, older refugees, women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. This briefing note provides an overview of the situation of refugees with disabilities in Moldova, their needs and challenges they face, as well as the current efforts undertaken by humanitarian stakeholders part of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) to address these challenges.

In January 2023, ACTED conducted an assessment* in RACs which revealed that 12% of the population residing in the RACs has a disability increase to 22% if considered also people with serious medical conditions. This percentage significantly increased to 61% among residents aged 60 and above.

Forced displacement can create or exacerbate disabilities, placing persons with disabilities among the most at-risk and disproportionately affected groups in these contexts. Among the subgroups, older refugees, women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. This briefing note provides an overview of the situation of refugees with disabilities in Moldova, their needs and challenges they face, as well as the current efforts undertaken by humanitarian stakeholders part of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) to address these challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Washington Group Questions - REACH MSNA</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-17</th>
<th>18-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing, even if wearing glasses</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing, even if using hearing aid</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking or climbing steps</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering or Concentrating</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-caring such as washing or dressing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating, i.e understand or being understood</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Disaggregation by type of functional limitation and age groups based on the Washington Group Questions, REACH MSNA 2022

This briefing note aims to provide an overview of the situation of refugees with disability in Moldova and the barriers they face and needs they have, as well as the current efforts being made by humanitarian stakeholders to address these challenges.
"We are very proud of the fact that our Ministry, with the support of UNHCR, has become more accessible for men and women with disabilities, something which should have been a normality, but unfortunately was not. As the Minister for Labour and Social Protection, as the Minister leading the disability policy in Moldova, making our workplace more accessible was a matter of principle since I could not ask other stakeholders to be accessible if the Ministry in charge of disability policy was not. Now, we are a bit more credible."

(Alexei Buzu, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection Moldova)
GAPS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES

The main gaps for 2023 identified Disability & Age Task Force members through different assessment and monitoring exercises (e.g. UNHCR Participatory Assessment, UNHCR Protection Monitoring, Keystone assessment on Needs for Refugees with Disability and other partner data) are:

- Lack of consistent **disaggregated data** by age, sex, and disability collected and properly analyzed by humanitarian actors.
- Lack of **inclusion** of persons with disabilities **in the labor market** with a tailored approach.
- Lack of **accessible accommodations** either in private accommodation or in RACs.
- Lack of **access to inclusive education** for children with disabilities online or in person.
- Insufficient **availability of medicine** and **diagnostic services** for people with chronical condition which can lead to disability if not treated.
- Lack of **rehabilitation services** such as physiotherapy and therapy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Lack of **qualitative assistive devices** to enhancing independence of persons with disabilities.
- Lack of accessible procedures and infrastructures for acquiring **legal status** (Temporary Protection, Asylum etc.) in Moldova.
- Lack of access to **specialized medical services** for refugees with disabilities with and without legal status in Moldova.

STORIES FORM REFUGEES

Human interest stories are part of the accountability system of humanitarian organizations to quality assess the work and the impact of the work of the organizations.

Yulia is a young refugee woman from Ukraine with a sever hearing impairment who arrived in Moldova in the first weeks after the start of the war. Yulia found a new home in the house of a Moldovan host family in the north of Moldova.

The mother of Yulia’s host family contacted Keystone Moldova and asked for help for Yulia, as she has been living without a hearing device for the past ten years. She informed Keystone that Yulia had the young Ukrainian woman has severe hearing disability and useds the only sign language to communicate.

With the help of the Keystone Moldova mobile team, Yulia underwent hearing tests and doctor consultations. In the end, she received a hearing aid adjusted to her needs, allowing her to hear was purchased for her. With her new hearing device, for the first time in a decade, Yulia is now able, the young woman was able to hear the voices of those around her, improving her life as a refugee in Moldova and facilitating her integration within host community.
The Task Force proved to be an excellent mechanism for advocacy and mainstreaming of disability in governmental programs and plans related to refugees’ support. It also helped national and international NGOs to build partnerships, to coordinate activities and to efficiently their resources in a more efficient way the resources for supporting refugees with disabilities.

(Ludmila Malcoci, co-chair of the Disability Task Force)

Maria and her husband Serghei and her daughter arrived in Moldova in March 2023. After an accident in Egypt Maria has suffered several injuries and different surgeries. By chance they found out about Motivation who was located next to the apartment where they are living in Chisinau. Thanks to Motivation and their outreach to identify refugees with disabilities and their needs, and with the support of the Association of Persons with Disabilities in Moldova and UNHCR they were able to receive a wheelchair after just two days since they arrived in Moldova. The assistive device was an essential tool to ensure Maria could move and be more independent for carry out her daily activities without requiring support from her husband and daughter.

Anatoli and his family put off leaving their home for a long time, until one evening they went out into the garden and heard shrapnel falling on the roofs of neighboring houses. That same night they packed our things into our emergency bags. They chose to come in Moldova because it’s the closest country, both geographically and spiritually for them. Since arriving in Moldova, in the village of Greblești, Anatoli, his wife and mother-in-law, both with different types of disabilities, are hoping to return home, except that every so often, after a period of quiet, the town of Mykolaiv gets shelled again. So, they decided to apply for temporary protection in the Republic of Moldova. The General Inspectorate for Migration has sent a mobile team to Greblești to ensure that refugees with locomotor limitations, including Anatoli, have access to Temporary Protection status.

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