



**Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting**  
Meeting Minutes – 16 November 2023

<b>Meeting subject:</b>	Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
<b>Time &amp; location:</b>	9 am – UNHCR Krakow Sub-Office
<b>Chaired by:</b>	UNHCR; Open Krakow Coalition
<b>Minutes prepared by:</b>	UNHCR
<b>Participants:</b>	Alight; All Hands and Hearts; Blue Dot Krakow / ZHP; Caritas Archidiecezji Krakowskiej; Fundacja Dobro Zawsze Wraca; Fundacja Jedność; Fundacja Vela; IB Polska; IOM; Save the Children; Stowarzyszenie Edukacji Krytycznej; UNHCR; UNICEF; Wolno Nam; Zustricz;
<b>Agenda:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction from the co-chairs</li><li>• UNHCR Representative in Poland Kevin Allen: strategic vision for 2024</li><li>• Updates from UA and refugee-led organizations</li><li>• 16 Days of Activism (UNHCR)</li><li>• AOB</li></ul>
<b>AGENDA POINT</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>Introduction and update on points from last meeting</b>	<p>Participants were welcomed to the 26th Małopolska Coordination Group (MCG) meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UNHCR introduced the Representative and the Assistant Representative for Operations of UNHCR in Poland. Participants subsequently introduced themselves and their organizations.</li></ul>

## Agenda point 1

The Representative greeted participants and introduced his dual role as UNHCR Representative and Refugee Coordinator for the Refugee Response Plan Appeal. He noted that the purpose of his mission to Krakow was to meet with both NGO and private sector partners to discuss potential areas of cooperation.

- The Representative shared information about UNHCR's strategic directions in 2024, focused around 3 key areas and in line with the 2024 Refugee Response Plan (RRP). These are: access to international protection and emergency preparedness; reaching out to the most vulnerable refugees and refugees in the shadows; inclusion – both social and economic.
- The Representative highlighted that his top priority as Refugee Coordinator is localization. In Kraków, there is a strong civil society and many local grassroots NGOs doing important work. As such, localization entails an emphasis on resource mobilization. This includes efforts with donors, the private sector, and the Razem NGO Forum to connect local NGOs with donors and explore ways in which they can gain direct funding. This also includes support for existing Polish foundations which support local actors— such as the Batory Foundation. In this vein, UNHCR is also directly focused on localization and 100% of UNHCR partnerships in 2024 will be with Polish and Ukrainian Organizations.
- The Representative noted that some partners are part of the current Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) appeal for 2023. He further noted that the 2024 appeal process is under way and that over 100 organizations had expressed interest. Most of these organizations are Polish or Ukrainian grassroots organizations and it is anticipated that 60-65% of RRP partners will be local organizations in 2024, which marks an increase from 2023.
- The Representative further shared that in 2023 a Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment took place to inform key areas for intervention. Key issues highlighted were jobs, economic inclusion, childcare, accommodation and the need for low income housing, access to healthcare, education.

The floor was opened to participants for questions.

- Jedność Foundation asked about education and integration.
- The Representative shared that meetings had been held at the central level regarding the exemption from attending school in person. UNHCR has advocated for the removal of this exemption after 1 year. However, the Ukrainian government has advocated for the right to attend Ukrainian schools. Compromises have been discussed, but this remains a priority issue for UNHCR and other concerned actors to raise with the new government.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A conversation took place on the intersection of education, integration, and mental health. Jedność Foundation emphasized that integration should take place step-by-step.</li> <li>• The Representative noted that many children continue to have MHPSS needs even if this is not readily evident. As such, funding for MHPSS programs will continue to be necessary. The Representative also noted that such initiatives aimed at investing in human capital can be framed as investments in reconstruction of Ukraine. This type of phrasing for proposals can make a difference to donors.</li> <li>• Zustricz noted that questions also remain about the continuation of MHPSS support for Ukrainians. Ukrainian psychologists will temporarily lose their right to practice unless certificates are nostrified. Advocacy for a quick solution to this problem is needed at the central level.</li> <li>• Kocham Dębniaki thanked the Representative for the words about reconstruction and noted the difficulty of advocating for groups not in emergency situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda point 2</b>	There were no updates provided under the given agenda point.
<b>Agenda point 3</b>	<p>UNHCR provided information about 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The annual event will take place from 25 November to 10 December. The theme for 2023 will be “Invest to Prevent Violence against Women &amp; Girls.” A document with 16 key messages to support partners in advocating and awareness raising had previously been shared with participants.</li> <li>• UNHCR noted that this is an important time to reflect on the situation of individuals in the shadows. Focus on GBV is important because these are issues faced not only by refugees, but also by individuals at risk of statelessness. In addition there may be new waves of refugees and new arrivals may not have access to the same services as past waves.</li> <li>• Partners were further invited to share their activities for 16 Days of Activism.</li> </ul>
<b>AOB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF noted that 20 of November will be International Children’s Day. Multiple monuments across Poland, including the Father Bernatek Bridge in Krakow, will light up blue and related events will take place.</li> </ul>

- Wolno Nam shared that VOICE Amplified will continue to carry out GBV trainings until the end of 2023.

The Representative asked participants for suggestions regarding priority advocacy issues to be raised with the new government.

- Stowarzyszenie Edukacji Krytycznej noted the issue accommodation. Increasing numbers of shelters in Wrocław are closing. The individuals leaving these shelters are looking for apartments. However, the situation is difficult as landlords ask for notarized statements from guarantors. Perhaps it would be possible to advocate for the support of local governments to provide the backing of these guarantees.
- Wolno Nam Foundation added that there are still refugees living in shelters, even if this number is decreasing. This group also includes individuals from other minorities, such as those who have crossed the border with Belarus. An ongoing concern is the stability of funding for shelter locations. While some individuals living in shelters work, others are unable to, and the uncertainty caused by funding instability is a large concern.
- Zustricz Foundation raised two themes. The first was that of retired individuals. This is a group in a difficult situation as they will not be able to work and will remain beneficiaries. The second was MHPSS and the creation of links between informal and formal support systems.
- Kocham Dębniaki Foundation noted the linkages between education and economic inclusion. The private sector can make changes to help women find employment. For example, childcare or flexible work hours. However, employers also expect employees to work for them for a certain amount of time. Refugee women are often reluctant agree to longer term work commitments as they would like to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. The same may be true in regard to placing children in the Polish education system. There may be a fear that if a child begins Polish schools, he or she will not want to return to Ukraine. As such, there should be advocacy for activities to support women moving past the limbo they find themselves in.

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status (as of )
1.				