

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Working Group Moldova

Meeting Details		
Date	12 April 2024	
Time	2:00 - 3:30 pm	
Chair	Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR Jana Nagnitschenko, UNFPA	
Reporting	UNHCR	
Email	bordin@unhcr.org nagnitschenko@unfpa.org	
Agenda		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction of members ➤ Presentation on findings from the Moldova GBV Safety Audit ➤ Presentation by the Council of Europe (CoE) on GBV activities in Moldova ➤ Update on Refugee Accommodation Centres (RAC) consolidation process ➤ Updates from members 	
Information collection and relevant links		
	<p>GBV SWG Google Drive</p> <p>Moldova: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Sector Working Group Data Portal</p> <p>GBV Referral Pathways</p>	
Participants		
1. Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR	7. Danilov Valeria, DRC	13. Svetlana Olari, CDA
2. Jana Nagnitschenko, UNFPA	8. Elena Castravet, IOM	14. Viorica Culeac, UN Women
3. Marina Belevac, MLSP	9. Fede Bagolin, We World	
4. Petru Lupu, UNHCR	10. Giulia di Porcia, WHO	
5. Ana Rimbu, Casa Marioarei	11. Ana Lungu, CoE	
6. Casey O'Neil, CWS	12. Martin Kunze, Youth One World	

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda Item	Discussion	Agreements/Actions
<p>Presentation on findings from the 2023 GBV Safety Audit in Moldova</p> <p>Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR Jana Nagnitschenko, UNFPA</p>	<p>In 2023, the GBV SWG conducted a second GBV safety audit to collect information on the risks related GBV, how these are affecting refugees and host community, what are the groups at higher risk and which measures should be taken by each sector to mitigate these risks.</p> <p>The purpose of the Safety Audit is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the identification of GBV risks without seeking evidence of incidents - Collect evidence on the perception of safety - Information that will help monitor the risks - Advocacy, programming adjustment, coordination, gaps, trends - Consultative process through different methodologies <p>39 focus group discussions (in line with an Age, Gender and Diversity approach), 14 key informant interviews with NGOs and authorities, 14 observational safety walks were conducted to identify risks.</p> <p>In total 24 settlements were conducted on right and left bank of Nistru at RACs, Host Community, Cash Enrolment Centres, Community Centres, Border Crossing Points, Bus and Train Stations. Refugees, Host Communities and Key informants were included in this exercise.</p> <p>The main findings on Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) are related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External visitors impact people’s privacy; access to RACs not controlled - Harassment by visitors - Men approaching RACs searching for women partners - Concealed areas avoided by women/girls - Some RACs had no information on SEA/GBV - No consistency in infrastructure to mitigate GBV risks across all RACs. 	<p>The GBV SWG is reaching out to all other sectors to conduct presentations on the findings from the 2023 GBV Safety Audit as well as on sector-specific recommendations.</p> <p>GBV SWG co-chairs to share link to the published safety audit.</p>



In terms of **private accommodation**, the main findings are related to:

- Concerns related to decrease in assistance
- Challenges to find apartment because of the high price of rents
- Sexual harassment from private landlords prior and during stay
- Offers from single men to exchange sex for accommodation
- Scams in rent

The **external factors that relate to safety and GBV risks** mentioned by a few people during the focus group discussions are related to:

- Insufficient lights in the streets
- Areas of bars where alcohol is consumed are avoided because of fear of harassment
- In some areas, Cash Enrolment Centres were not completely accessible and transportation was a challenge. Some concealed areas were also identified in some Cash Enrolment Centres.

Regarding the **Interactions with the host community**, risks that came up during the focus group discussions include:

- Sexual harassment in public spaces, including transportation and by taxi drivers. Sex workers were very particular about this.
- Perception that refugees receive more assistance and xenophobia
- Attacks, including physical assault, specifically against Roma refugees, who are disproportionately discriminated in Moldova.

On **Technology-facilitated GBV**:

- It's a widespread risk among refugees and Moldovans
- Both adult women and adolescent girls are at risk
- Unsolicited pictures are shared with women and girls, who are sexually harassed
- Leaked intimate pictures, which had severe impacts on mental health

On **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**, the data collected indicated the following:



- Some barriers, such as stigma and shame, prevent people from disclosing incidents and seeking support
- Affects both refugee and host community women
- Alcohol is identified as a major contributing factor to IPV
- Displacement-related changes in gender dynamics results in women becoming the breadwinners in the household, which affects relations of power and results in IPV
- There's a good understanding of the different types of violence and who is more affected by them by the women who participated in projects, which is a result of the work that has been done by organizations.

When talking about **access to services and support**, it was noted by the refugees and host community members that:

- There's a high trust in hospital and health services
- Police: persons with disabilities and refugees in general trust the police, but Roma women and sex workers feel there are barriers related to discrimination and potential blaming by the police
- Psychosocial support is available and used by the refugees in general. Persons in RACs seem to have greater access to it, and it's been seen by sex workers as an essential support
- Safe shelter services: there's a low awareness among refugees and host community women about the possibility of going to a safe shelter in case of GBV
- Hotlines/helplines: awareness varied among groups, but there's no consistency in it
- Awareness about services more through internet and social media, friends and NGOs

On the **barriers to services and support**:

- Online information is not accessible to older persons due to barriers related to technology
- Mental health support is stigmatized and people who seek it can be exposed



- Harmful gender and social norms continue to persist, such as violence against a woman by her husband being a sign of love
- Fear of harming the family's reputation by disclosing a GBV incident. This was especially mentioned by Roma women
- Written information excludes some individuals who do not know how to read or write, such as Roma women; information is not accessible for persons with disabilities
- Discrimination when accessing services was reported by Roma women and sex workers, who mentioned specific incidents
- Physical locations are not accessible for persons with disabilities
- Some service providers lack awareness about specialized services and the wide range of services available for survivors

The Safety Audit was also looked at groups at higher risk of GBV or disproportionately affected by displacement.

Findings related to risks that affect persons with disabilities:

- Persons with disabilities feel more susceptible to GBV
- Targeted by online fake information and less aware of online safety practices
- Accessibility to services can be constrained because of physical disabilities, including adaptability to visual and sensory impairment (written information and hotline)
- Persons with disabilities are more at risk of exploitation in the labour market
- No incidents of discrimination when accessing services mentioned during the focus group discussions
- Do not know to whom to report a service provider who violated their rights; they also reported fear of retaliation
- GBV service providers need to receive extra training on how to cater to the needs of people with disabilities.

Roma women:

- At higher risk of IPV and intra-family violence, including from their partners' families



- At risk of entering situations of exploitation and human trafficking
- Early marriage (13-14 years old) remains a concern, as well as school drop-out because of discrimination and bullying in schools
- Face challenges to access information about services and GBV in general as this is not adaptable to their needs
- Roma women are at higher risk of discrimination, bullying and harassment from service providers and some mentioned specific incidents

Adolescent girls:

- Experiences of online violence – including sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Safety concerns in the public spaces especially public transportation (bus, taxi)
- Some cases of domestic violence or lack of safety at home were mentioned
- Lack of trust in police and social service providers
- Fear of stigma and exposure, as well as lack of confidentiality, remain significant barriers in their access to information and services, increasing the risk of GBV
- Adolescent girls with disabilities and Roma adolescent girls face higher risks GBV
- Improved awareness of refugee adolescents on GBV services, less awareness for adolescents from host communities
- Mother/parents and friends are the persons they seek for when faced with an issue
- Social media groups, including platforms like Viber and Telegram are important source of information on GBV and services

Women who engage in the sale and exchange of sex, or sex workers:

- They are more in contact with persons who abuse alcohol and drugs and therefore at higher risk of GBV
- Experienced physical abuse, sexual violence from clients, online violence, harassment in public spaces
- Are not reporting incidents as sex work is illegal and they fear being arrested
- Support from local organizations on this has been life-saving

- Risks of GBV are increased by the isolation and mental health issues faced by sex workers due to the character of their work
- Networks of sex workers and friends are helpful resources.

The specific findings from the Transnistrian Region include:

- Online harassment highlighted by adolescent girls
- Safety concerns related to transportation (mainly taxis) both from the border and within public spaces, which was mentioned by adult women and adolescent girls
- General community mistrust in institutional services due to stigma, confidentiality and safety concerns, particularly towards law enforcement
- Local NGOs are the primary providers of social services for GBV survivors.
- Unequal coverage and availability of GBV services between Tiraspol and rural areas
- Long distances pose considerable obstacles to access GBV services, particularly for persons with disabilities
- Refugees and host community women lack awareness of GBV services

Sector-specific recommendations were provided to all sectors. For the **GBV sector**, these include:

- Conduct trainings on GBV risk mitigation with different actors to ensure it's integrated into other sectors
- Promote and disseminate GBV Referral Pathways widely to ensure actors are informed about all services available
- Continue coordination withing the GBV Sub-sector to ensure coverage of service and that gaps are addressed
- Work jointly with the Disability Task Force to ensure that information on GBV services is accessible to persons with disabilities
- Continue collaboration with the Child Protection SWG and Accountability to Affected People Task Force to enhance campaigns on technology-facilitated GBV and ensure wide dissemination of GBV information, in particular in the locations identified during the safety audit as lacking reliable GBV information

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the Child Protection SWG to address issues related to the overlap of IPV and violence against children - Work with the Health Sector to advocate for legal and procedural changes around mandatory reporting framework in Moldova. <p>Giulia di Porcia, WHO: Are there any findings during the focus group discussions or other data collection exercise about survivors avoiding seeking health services because of mandatory reporting?; The first finding related to external visitors limiting the privacy of people accommodated at RACs is an important finding in terms of the responsibility of the sectoral working groups and organizations conducting needs assessment as there's a need to coordinate and ensure visibility and information on PSEA and GBV is available and accessible, and that people living in the RACs are aware of the partners organizations entering the RACs; WHO has a mandate in terms of advocacy on PSEA, so for the gaps related to this, the PSEA Network is available to make our channels available to address these gaps.</p> <p>Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR: on mandatory reporting, it was mentioned mostly by NGOs. People who participated in the focus group discussions did not specifically mentioned mandatory reporting, but at the same time there was not full trust in service providers and one of the reasons is exposure and lack of confidentiality, which can be associated with mandatory reporting; On the external visitors at the centre, it is important that sectors' partners are coordinated to proactively take action to reduce the risks of GBV and take the practical measures to mitigate them. These aspects are included in the sector-specific recommendations in the GBV Safety Audit.</p>	
<p>Presentation by Ana Lungu, CoE, on GBV activities in Moldova</p>	<p>CoE has only one project that is focused on combating violence against women and domestic violence called <i>"Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova"</i>, which was a result of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by Moldova and started in 2022, although other previous projects prepared the basis to implement it. 2024 is the last year of this project, after which a</p>	<p>CoE share the pocketbook for police officers with the GBV SWG wen will be finalized.</p> <p>CoE and IOM to coordinate for the trainings for police officers.</p>



	<p>new action plan of the CoE for 2025 - 2028 will follow and with it a new phase of the project will be implemented.</p> <p>So far, 76,000 people received information on violence against women and domestic violence in line with the standards of the CoE; a grant was provided to the National Coalition for Life Without Violence through which 69 participants attended awareness raising sessions; and 600 professionals working in cases of violence against women and domestic violence were trained.</p> <p>Studies/programs and legislative changes were also conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Study on inter-institutional and inter-sectoral cooperation in the field of violence against women and domestic violence- Study on the dimension of violence against women and domestic violence- Support in the development of the National Programme to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Violence in the Family for 2023-2027- Guide and leaflet for social workers in supporting cases of violence against women and domestic violence cases- Publication, translation, dissemination of the recommendations of the first GREVIO report <p>Activities carried out in the months of January-April 2024 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Training for judges, prosecutors and criminal prosecution officers on investigating cases of technology-facilitated violence against women- Public discussion in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on raising awareness of technology-facilitated violence against women- Study on the international protection of women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers victims of violence against women and family violence- From next week, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, with the support of the CoE, will start the cascade trainings for social workers based on the Guide for social workers for the purpose of prevention, protection and intervention in cases of violence against women and domestic violence.	<p>CoE and UN Women to coordinate on data collection activities.</p> <p>CoE to share invitation to launch of study on international protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers survivors of GBV.</p>
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	<p>Activities planned for April-December 2024 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the capacity of the National Agency to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Family Violence - Round table on the discussion and estimation of the needs for the creation of a national data collection system - Trainings and practical workshops for the officials of the General Inspectorate for Migration and the Border Police - Visit to Spain to study the context and response there - Pocket guide on violence against women and domestic violence for police officers. This guide is yet to be finalized and distributed - Awareness raising materials for women and girls in different languages - Awareness activities regarding violence against women and domestic violence during the 16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, to take place in November and December 2024. <p>The current project will finish at the end of 2024, and within the 2025-2028 action plan of the CoE for Moldova, seven general objectives and activities were defined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing the capacity of National Agency to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Family Violence and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection staff - Training of law enforcement, professionals in the field of health, the judicial system, as well as to professionals in the field of migration and asylum - Sensitization/awareness activities related to the rights of marginalized groups - Creation of a pool of trainers and standardized methodological approach for trainings of policemen and prosecutors in cases of sexual violence - Consolidation of specialized support services for women - Preventive intervention programs for aggressors - Improvement and implementation of the regulatory/legal framework in accordance with the Istanbul Convention <p>Giulia di Porcia, WHO: On the law enforcement training planned, IOM has a module on it, so it would be interesting to be in contact with them.</p>	
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	<p>Ana Lungu, CoE: CoE approached several organizations, including UNFPA, but not IOM, so this will be discussed with them to avoid duplicating the trainings.</p> <p>Viorica Culeac, UN Women: In collaboration with the NGO Women’s Law Center and with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, UN Women supported designing the curriculum for supporting cases of violence against women for police officers, so there’s a need for UN Women and CoE to connect on this subject. The integrated services for survivors of sexual violence, which was launched last year in Ungheni, will be piloted the next two years together with NGO La Strada.</p> <p>Ana Lungu, CoE: CoE is looking for partners to implement the support services for survivors and we will contact you on that.</p>	
<p>Update on Refugee Accommodation Centres (RAC) consolidation process</p> <p>Vanessa Bodin, UNHCR</p>	<p>RACs which were closed as part of the consolidation process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ungheni, closed as of 15 March - Cahul, closed as of 25 March - Carpineni, closed as of 15 March) - Hotel Balti, in the process of closure <p>The following referrals were made for the people accommodated at these RACs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most individuals referred for rental assistance and are renting privately - Individuals with specific needs relocated to other RACs - Individuals relocated to live with host families - Some left Moldova and either returned to Ukraine (some temporarily) or travelled forward to another country, such as Germany. 	<p>GBV SWG co-chairs to share more detailed information with the members when the minutes are circulated.</p>
<p>Updates from GBV SWG members</p>	<p>Viorica Culeac, UN Women: UN Women is supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on the government decision on safe shelters and minimum standards. In the beginning of 2024, UN Women and UNHCR trained social workers to implement the statistical form to collect data on services provided. A new indicator on refugee beneficiaries was included and this data is currently being collected through UNHCR’s Kobo forms.</p>	<p>Youth One World to share invite for meeting on gender and the refugee response to the GBV SWG co-chairs for further circulation.</p> <p>Youth One World and UN Women to coordinate on activities related to gender and refugee response.</p>



Martin Kunze, Youth One World: Youth One World is preparing a meeting on gender and refugee response to discuss the gender dimensions of displacement along with the implementing partner Don Bosco Foundation that will take place on 22 and 23 of April. The meeting will be open to NGOs who may be interested and who are also working on the refugee response. Youth One World will share the programme once it is finalized.

Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR: UN Women is the lead agency on gender in the refugee response and they have recently published a report on gender in the Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) exercise and several other reports on gender and the refugee response. This is relevant information that could help you and the GBV SWG also recommends coordination on the subject to ensure organizations are aligned.