

Inter-Agency Winterization Planning Process

Guidance for Partners when Submitting Winter Activities

Refugee Coordination Forum - Moldova

IMPORTANT

Based on the information provided below, RCF Partners are requested to submit their winter projects, complete with (1) activities, (2) targets, and (3) funding requirements, through the Activity Info Platform by **26 of July** through the [Winterization 2024-2026 Activity Planning Form](#). In case your organization does not have access to activity info, please contact mdachim@unhcr.org to request access.

Activities and targets should be aligned with information shared in this document. After partners submit their data, Inter-Agency sector leads will review these submissions together with partners to identify any duplications or gaps. This process aims to facilitate improved coordination and collaboration among partners. Additionally, the review will offer a clearer understanding of funding requirements, including both available resources and funding needs. These insights will be summarized in a winterization appeal scheduled to be published in mid-August.

The number of refugee households in need of winter assistance stands at 15,700, totaling 33,150 individuals., and 9,933 host community households, or 29,800 individuals.

Introduction

This document provides guidance to partners of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) for submitting winter activities as part of the Inter-Agency Winter Response. Below, partners will find a summary of needs, planning figures, prioritized activities by sector, and resources to assist them in submitting winter activities through Activity Info.

By submitting planned and ongoing activities via the Activity Info Platform, partners contribute to a joint analysis of existing capacities, territorial and population coverage, gaps, and funding (both availability and requirements).

Partners are expected to submit information about their winter activities by Friday, July 26. This will be followed by a review of the activities by sector leads, who will consult with partners to identify duplications, gaps, and opportunities for better coordination. Once sectors provide a final overview of the response from their respective partners, the information will be consolidated into the 2024/2025 Winter Strategy. This

consolidated document will include the information previously shared, along with funding requirements for each sector.

Background

Since February 24, 2022, the Republic of Moldova has recorded a total of 1,092,546 arrivals from Ukraine, part of a broader crisis involving 6.2 million Ukrainian refugees globally. By mid-May, the number of Ukrainian refugees residing in Moldova had increased to 120,548. As of June 4, 49,227 refugees had been granted temporary protection (TP) status.

The winter period presents heightened vulnerabilities for both refugees and Moldovan citizens due to increased living costs, primarily from additional heating expenses. Harsh weather can further restrict access to services and community life for certain groups, especially older persons, individuals with disabilities, and single-headed households with high dependency ratios.

According to UNHCR's Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) of Multipurpose Cash Assistance (Round 9, March 2024), substantial needs persist among the refugee population despite ongoing humanitarian efforts. Only 16% of refugees could fully meet their basic needs with cash support during the winter months, while around 13% could meet less than half of their basic needs, underscoring the continuing requirement for humanitarian support.

The 2023 MSNA findings indicate that the income situation for refugee households has not changed significantly, as the vast majority of those in the labor force have secured sources of income. This keeps the findings from the past winterization PDM exercise valid—winter assistance covers approximately 71% of the average refugee household income. Comparing findings from both assessments, without humanitarian support, the average income for these households is approximately 2,052 MDL, roughly half of Moldova's minimum wage.

The latest PDM results indicate an increase in refugees' engagement in the labor market. However, this increase has not reached the expected level, and many refugees still rely on financial assistance programs. According to UNHCR's household vulnerability assessment survey, the prevalent income sources (excluding UNHCR cash assistance) are as follows: 33% have no income, 25% receive pensions from Ukraine, 17% have casual/temporary employment, 12% receive remittances, 7% have regular employment, 5% receive social protection benefits from Ukraine, and 1% receive financial assistance from other partners.

Data from UNHCR's 9th round PDM reveals that 43% of refugees employed at least one livelihood coping strategy in the 30 days preceding the survey. The most commonly reported coping mechanism was using savings to cover basic needs. Generally, utility bills were among the top expenditures from the received cash (64%).

Based on the findings of the household vulnerability assessment for targeting, using the scorecard methodology, the combination of extensive household vulnerabilities, residence in primarily rural areas, and large dependency on firewood or coal constitutes 10% of the overall refugee caseload.

Winter Response Planning Parameters

The following parameters will guide the planning and submission of winter activities by RCF partners, as well as the overall coordination of the winter response across RCF sectors:

- 1. Markets in Moldova are functional and accessible**, and refugees and host communities can access necessary goods and services. It also enables cash-based interventions, which are often more cost-effective and dignifying than in-kind assistance.
- 2. Cash-based interventions shall be prioritized** to allow refugees to meet their winter needs. This approach is flexible, efficient, and empowers the beneficiaries.
- 3. Non-Food Items (NFIs) should only be considered as a last resort measure** when other options are not feasible or appropriate, including difficulties to access local markets and/or challenges to obtain certain goods, such as solid fuel.
- 4. Support for the host community during winter is essential for maintaining social cohesion** and mitigating the overall socio-economic impact of the winter season. Winterization assistance for Moldovan households should complement the aid package provided by the government and must be closely coordinated with relevant government counterparts. RCF partners shall prioritize and support the inclusion of vulnerable host community members on existing government winter response and must not create parallel systems.
- 5. Inclusion of Refugees in Government Winterization Support Programmes:** RCF partners will actively advocate for and support the inclusion of refugees in national winterization support programmes at national, regional and municipal level. Those eligible for existing government support shall be supported to access them, while ensuring that those with humanitarian needs - but not falling under the government criteria or whose needs are not covered by government response - can be supported by humanitarian aid aligned with government support.

Government Winter Support

During the previous winter season, the Government of Moldova has implemented support measures to alleviate the impact of rising energy costs on vulnerable

populations. The Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF), established in 2022 with international support, is a cornerstone of these efforts. The fund provides direct financial compensations on energy bills for natural gas, thermal, and electrical energy, as well as monetary payments for households using wood or coal for heating. In the 2022-2023 season, around 895,000 households benefited from these compensations, significantly reducing energy poverty by 43% and covering up to 83% of natural gas costs and 59% of thermal energy costs for the most vulnerable families (UNDP).

During the 2023-2024 season, the EVRF continued to support vulnerable households, with over 740,000 applications received through the "Vulnerabilitatea Energetică" information system. The program categorizes households into different levels of energy vulnerability and allocates compensations accordingly.

To roll out the program, the government has established an online registration system, supplemented by support from social assistants and librarians for those without internet access. A dedicated call center provided additional assistance, ensuring that eligible households could apply for and receive the support. This comprehensive approach has helped mitigate the impact of energy price shocks and prevented many households from falling into deeper economic hardship during the winter months.

Considering its positive outcomes and significant impact on poverty levels, particularly seasonal poverty, it is anticipated that the EVRF will continue to be implemented in 2025. According to the proposed revised State Budget Law for 2024 (pending approval by the parliament), the total budget allocated to the EVRF is 2 billion MDL (approximately \$135 million USD). The details of the EVRF implementation for the upcoming winter season have not yet been defined by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

Access of Refugee to Social Assistance

According to the existing legal framework, access to social assistance programs for households with Temporary Protection Status is limited to families with children and unaccompanied children, focusing specifically on child-specific support (as outlined in Articles 21 and 22 of Government Decision No. 21/2023). Other categories of beneficiaries can access social assistance measures funded by international organizations, based on procedures and conditions jointly approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the competent authority for foreigners (i.e., the General Inspectorate for Migration, within the Ministry of Internal Affairs).

Article 14 of Law No. 274/2011 on the integration of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova states that beneficiaries of international protection, including refugees and those with humanitarian protection, have access to the public social insurance system and the national social assistance system under the same conditions as citizens of the Republic of Moldova. This law defines refugees as individuals formally recognized by the Government of Moldova through the national asylum system after submitting an

asylum request and receiving a formal determination of refugee status. Therefore, Ukrainian refugees with Temporary Protection Status are not included, as Article 2 explicitly excludes individuals holding temporary protection from the scope of this legislation.

While the winter response from Refugee Coordination Forum Partners should complement and support the Government's efforts, it is crucial to ensure that the winter needs of all refugees are adequately addressed. It is important to advocate for the inclusion of all refugees, regardless of their legal status, in winter social assistance programs, including those benefiting from temporary protection status. Despite the existing legal frameworks, TP holders were eligible to access the EVRF in the previous year. Advocating for a similar approach in the upcoming year is essential.

At the same time, partners' responses should align with the winter assistance provided by the Government through the EVRF, including winter cash support value.

2024/2025 Winter Response Figures

The number of refugee households in need of winter assistance stands at **15,700, totaling 33,150 individuals**. According to available data, these refugees primarily rely on humanitarian assistance as their main source of income and are resorting to at least one negative coping mechanism.

Considering the importance of including the affected host community in winter response efforts to maintain social cohesion and mitigate the overall socio-economic impact on communities hosting refugees, Inter-Agency Winter Response identifies **9,933 host community households, or 29,800 individuals**, in need of winter assistance.

Given that markets in Moldova are operational and accessible¹ to most of the population, cash is the preferred method of winter support. Organizations looking to implement winter cash interventions should coordinate their efforts through the Cash Working Group led by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and UNHCR. Moreover, for sector-specific support where cash is the chosen modality, coordination should occur within the respective sector, while ensuring the appropriate safeguards, including on PSEA.

In-kind distribution of winter goods should be limited to vulnerable individuals, due to protection considerations, and/or issues such as limited mobility or challenges accessing local markets. Based on current data, 6,900 refugees have vulnerabilities warranting such in-kind interventions.

¹ Reference documents: Cash Working Group Market Assessment, November 2023, Cash Working Group Market Monitoring Exercise, February 2024.

Support to the host community should be viewed through the lens of social cohesion, serving as a means to foster peaceful coexistence and maintain the overall solidarity that has characterized the refugee response in Moldova.

Prioritized Winter Activities

2024 Winterization Assistance in Moldova shall focus on supporting the most vulnerable individuals and households who are unable to meet their winterization needs. The reasons for this inability include:

- **Inaccessibility of Basic Winterization Means:** Many are unable to access basic winterization means due to socioeconomic vulnerabilities.
- **Lack of State Assistance:** Some are not receiving winterization-related assistance from the state.

As previously mentioned, the Refugee Coordination Forum and its partners will advocate for the inclusion of refugees in winterization-related state support, including initiatives like the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF). Assistance from humanitarian partners is designed to fill existing gaps in the state response, and, when necessary, to complement it. This alignment is based on the specific needs of the target groups and prioritized vulnerable populations.

Target Groups for 2024 Winter Response:

The prioritized target groups for the winter response are:

- **Refugee Households:** Those in Refugee Accommodation Centers (Accredited and Unaccredited) and those living in substandard houses, having humanitarian aid as the main source of income and adopting at least one negative coping mechanism.
- **Refugee-Hosting Households:** Specifically, those in substandard houses.
- **Vulnerable Host Community Households:** These are households living in areas hosting high numbers of refugees and whose expenditures on heating bills exceed 75% of their income. Additionally, these households have one or more members with at least one form of vulnerability, such as disabilities, chronic illnesses, or older individuals who are unable to care for themselves. These households also resort to coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs. From a refugee response perspective, these are the host community members mostly affected by the refugee influx.

As for vulnerable Moldovans affected by the refugee influx, the main priority will be to support the identification and referral of those individuals and households to available state support. Direct assistance to the most vulnerable Moldovan households shall be offered from a social cohesion perspective, prioritizing support for them to access existing government assistance.

Priority Profiles with Specific Needs:

Based on the findings from various winter-related assessments, including Protection Monitoring and Profiling, organizations shall prioritize the following profiles:

- People with disabilities.
- Individuals with chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions.
- Older people (60+).
- Roma refugees.
- Unaccompanied and separated children.
- Pregnant and lactating women.
- Survivors and persons at risk of GBV.
- Single parent households with more than 3 children and/or household members with additional vulnerabilities (older persons, individuals with chronic illness, pregnant and lactating women, etc.).
- Single women without children or family members in Moldova at risk of engaging in the sale and exchange of sex as a coping mechanism.

Winterization activities aim to improve preparedness for the cold season and are specifically related to providing life-saving assistance against cold weather, particularly in the areas of heating and related issues. As such, these activities should be classified as "winter-related", and usually cover a five-month period extending from November 2024 to March 2025. On the other hand, humanitarian interventions that are delivered irrespective of the season should not be classified in this manner.

Cash assistance will be prioritized according to existing criteria, such as access and proximity to functioning markets and the availability of essential winter items and services. The response package comprises a minimum set of relief activities and levels of access to services, designed to enable vulnerable groups to cope adequately with the cold season.

Below partners will find activities prioritized by relevant sectors for the upcoming winter response. These activities and related information shall guide partners when submitting their planned winter activities as part of the Inter-Agency Winter Response and shall also support sector leads and partners when reviewing winter activities.

CASH (Multipurpose Cash Assistance - MPCA)

Given the available data and well-functioning markets, CWG's primary sectoral response priority is the provision of cash assistance through the MPCA programs for individuals in need. MPCA respects the dignity and independence of individuals, empowering them to make choices aligned with their priorities, thereby fostering a sense of normalcy and ownership. Winter support interventions target 33,150 refugees and 29,800 affected host community members. The value of cash transfers must be coordinated with the government and aligned with the EVRF. For planning

purposes, partners should consider a value of 800 MDL per month per household from November 2024 to March 2025, totaling 4,000 MDL for the entire winter season.

Activity	Description of Activity	Location	Modality	People in Need of Winter Assistance
Winter Cash Support for Refugees	Provision of cash assistance to refugees for responding to the increasing needs related to winter and alleviate the protection risks.	Urban	MPCA	19,998
Winter Cash Support for Refugees	Provision of cash assistance to refugees for responding to the increasing needs related to winter and alleviate the protection risks.	Rural	MPCA	10,768
Winter Cash Support to Refugees	Provision of cash assistance to refugees for responding to the increasing needs related to winter and alleviate the protection risks.	Accredited RACs	MPCA	1,854
Winter Cash Support to Host Community	Provision of cash assistance to host community for responding to the increasing needs related to winter and alleviate the protection risks.	Urban	MPCA	16,986
Winter Cash Support to Host Community	Provision of cash assistance to host community for responding to the increasing needs related to winter and alleviate the protection risks.	Rural	MPCA	12,814

Basic Needs

The Basic Needs Working Group has structured its sectoral winter response activities into five primary pillars: Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs), private accommodation, community infrastructure, borders, and non-food items (NFIs). The planning is based on several key assumptions:

Reception and Accommodation Centers (RACs): This year by Mid-October, there will be approximately 24 RACs active in the country. The remaining operative RACs are those considered in better living conditions, therefore the improvements required will

be more minor repairs than the interventions from last year. The RAC consolidation strategy will continue during winter but the number of RACs will be a few considering that more people may arrive from Ukraine.

Shelter Interventions: Available data suggest that 3,940 HHs among refugees require shelter interventions. The socio-economic profiling indicates 68% of these are in urban settings and 32% in rural areas. Different regions have different heating needs; the Center Region and Chisinau primarily use electric heating, while the North and South are more reliant on wood and gas. Similarly, 9,933 host community households require shelter interventions, predominantly split between urban (43%) and rural (57%) areas.
Rental Assistance and small and mid-repairs: Some partners may provide additional financial support for utility bills during the winter months through the rental assistance program and partners implementing small and mid-repairs includes works to reduce the heating consumption and ensure that the living conditions will not be affected by the weather conditions.

Community Infrastructure: Some partners may provide additional financial support for utility bills during the winter months through the rental assistance program. Additionally, partners implementing small and mid-level repairs are working to reduce heating consumption and ensure that living conditions are not adversely affected by the weather.

Community infrastructure assessment 2023-2024 RRP winterization plan									
Region	City	Building	Window	Wall	Roof	Heating	Electric	USD Amount (1USD=17.89MDL)	Implementation 2023-2024
North	Balti	M.B.Children's Creation Centre	BAD	BAD	BAD	BAD	N/A	222.950,24	
North	Balti	Early Education Institution No.12	GOOD	BAD	GOOD	BAD	N/A	30.786,00	Skat Consulting Ltd
South	Causeni	Sports center of Causeni district	GOOD	GOOD	BAD	GOOD	N/A	12.343,45	Covered by Municipality
South	Comrat	Thermal insulation in kindergarten no 9, Comrat municipality	BAD	BAD	BAD	BAD	GOOD	107.058,78	UNHCR/IOM
North	Donduseni	"Ion Druță" Donduseni City Public Library	BAD	BAD	BAD	GOOD	BAD	126.454,69	IOM
North	Otaci	Otaci City Hall	OKAY	BAD	OKAY	GOOD	GOOD	44.591,28	UNHCR
North	Otaci	High School	BAD	BAD	GOOD	BAD	OKAY	446.034,72	
South	Palanca	Kindergarten "Ghiocel" from Palanca village	BAD	GOOD	GOOD	BAD	N/A	31.878,24	UNHCR
South	Palanca	Palanca Gymnasium	GOOD	GOOD	OKAY	BAD	N/A	227.632,37	
South	Stefan Voda	Centre for specialized assistance and temporary placement "TRUST".	BAD	GOOD	OKAY	GOOD	N/A	44.741,65	
Center	Ungheni	Ungheni Palace of Culture	BAD	BAD	GOOD	GOOD	N/A	340.417,81	
Center	Ungheni	The building that houses the kindergarten "Delia" and the Tourist Youth Station in Ungheni	OKAY	BAD	BAD	GOOD	N/A	319.301,13	
Total implemented 2023-2024								353.112,43	
TOTAL remaining for implementation 2024 - 2025								1.601.077,93	

Non-Food Items (NFIs): Market assessments confirm that 82% of essential NFIs are available in the market. The focus should be on less affordable items and regions with limited market capacity.

Policy Considerations: Strategies for RAC consolidation and developments in Temporary Protection could have financial implications on support programs.

Activity	Description of Activity	Location	Modality	People in Need of Winter Assistance
Shelter interventions: Improvement of collective sites (thermal insulation) for Refugees	Improvement of accredited RACs with thermal insulation and basic repairs and maintenance, payment of utility bills	Accred. RACs	DI	1,854
Shelter interventions: Improvement of mid, long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions for Refugees	Improvement to meet the needs of refugees in urban areas (basic repairs, insulation thermal comforts)	Urban	DI	5,410
Shelter interventions: Improvement of mid, long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions for Refugees	Improvement to meet the needs of refugees in rural areas (basic repairs, insulation thermal comforts)	Rural	DI	2,864
Shelter interventions: Improvement of mid, long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions for Host Community	Improvement of host, rental, or sustainable and affordable housing to meet the needs of host community members in urban areas (basic repairs, insulation thermal comforts)	Urban	DI	12,814
Shelter	Improvement of host, rental, or	Rural	DI	16,986

Activity	Description of Activity	Location	Modality	People in Need of Winter Assistance
interventions: Improvement of mid, long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions for Host Community	sustainable and affordable housing to meet the needs of host community members in rural areas (basic repairs, insulation thermal comforts)			
Shelter interventions: Support for the improvement of community infrastructure in host communities to refugee population and host community	Improvement of public community infrastructure for use by refugees and host communities ²	Urban	DI	23.200
NFIs distribution: winter NFI assistance for refugees	Distribution of NFIs for the most vulnerable population (no access to rental market)	Urban and Rural	In Kind ³	6,900
NFIs distribution: winter NFI assistance for host community	Distribution of NFIs including warm clothing for vulnerable Moldovans/hosting community	Rural	In Kind	10,680
NFIs distribution: firewood for host communities	Support with distribution of/ access to firewood to vulnerable host communities	Rural	In kind/ Voucher/ distribution support	16,986

² Among community infrastructures identified through consultations with Local Authorities, 12 facilities were prioritized according to needs, feasibility, and relevant to the purpose of winterization. A technical team consisting of engineers and architects from UNHCR, IOM, ACTED and DRC finished developing a guidance note and a technical assessment tool, and started technical assessment of the community facilities, which will be completed by early September. After the assessment, Bills of Quantities for each facility will be prepared according to the standard price of construction materials to have a rough estimation of costs needed for the infrastructural support.

³ The voucher distribution might not be a suitable modality for this response as the quantity of the clothing products are more limited in the market comparing to other items.

Winterization NFIs

Item	Quantity	Description
Jacket	1 (per individual)	Warm winter jacket for adult and children, 1 pc
Winter Coat	1 (per individual)	Warm coat for adult and children, 1 pc
Boots	1 (per individual)	Winter boots, 1 pair
Bed Linens	1 (per individual)	Bed linen set of 2 pcs
Pillow	1 (per individual)	Pillow and pillow case, 2 pcs
Blanket	1 (per individual)	Synthetic 1.5x2m, high/ medium thermal, 1 pc

For further information and support, please contact the RCF Inter-Agency Coordination Team at mdachrcf@unhcr.org.

Version	Date	Modifications
Version 01	June 28, 2024	N/A