

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT 2024

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on insights gathered from the Participatory Assessment conducted by UNHCR in Moldova in October 2024. The assessment was carried out in close collaboration with the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) partners, who played an essential role in revising the tool, data collection, and review process.

UNHCR extends its gratitude to the AAP partners, UNHCR partners, local authorities, civil society organizations, and donors who contributed to the success of this report. Above all, we acknowledge the unwavering resilience of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons in Moldova and remain committed to supporting their integration into society.

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[COVER PHOTOGRAPH:]

On International Children's Rights Day, children from Refugee Centres participated in educational and social activities, learning about their rights, inclusion, and the power of education in building a safer future.

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INTRODUCTION

As of 30 November 2024, the Republic of Moldova continues to provide safety and refuge to approximately **127,000** Ukrainian refugees who remain unable to return to their home country due to the ongoing war.

Among these refugees' population:

38% are women,

19% are men.

More than **40%** are children with:

20% are girls,

22% are boys.

Another important part of the population is composed of older refugees that accounting for:

17% of the refugee population and finally,

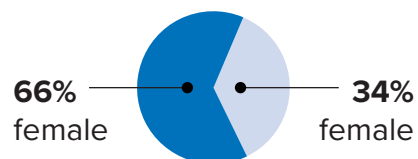
10% of the overall population is composed by people with disabilities.

Additionally, Moldova hosts **10,770** third-country nationals displaced from Ukraine and provides Temporary Protection to more than **64,000** individuals.

Moldova also hosts a growing number of asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and refugees from various regions, reflecting the country's enduring commitment to international protection and support for displaced populations. Despite confronting economic pressures, including persistent inflation, an energy crisis, and the socio-political complexities of its proximity to Ukraine, Moldova has shown exceptional solidarity and resilience in welcoming those affected by conflict.

Building on its dedication to actively engaging with forcibly displaced and stateless communities, UNHCR conducted the 2024 Participatory Assessment (PA) to gain current insights into the protection risks, needs, and experiences of these populations. This assessment focuses on gathering community perspectives, understanding evolving local capacities, and exploring solutions to address identified challenges. It involved in-person focus group discussions (FGDs) with a diverse group of people in need of international protection, representing women, men, children, and youth across various socio-demographic backgrounds.

A total of **298** individuals participated, including 51 from the left bank of the Dniestr river, ensuring the inclusion of experiences from both sides of the Dniester River. Among participants, **66%** were female and **34%** male, with discussions encompassing 15 rayons of Moldova, spanning urban and rural areas, Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs), the Temporary Accommodation Centre for asylum-seekers, private accommodation, and host families.



This 2024 Participatory Assessment aims to offer updated perspectives to guide UNHCR, Moldovan authorities, and humanitarian and development partners in improving support for displaced communities, improving integration pathways, and addressing any gaps to ensure that Moldova's remarkable response to displacement remains sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to community needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Participatory Assessment conducted by UNHCR in Moldova provides an updated analysis of the protection needs, challenges, and experiences of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and host communities. This assessment, carried out in collaboration with 16 UNHCR partners and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Task Force, gathers insights from **298** participants across 44 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in various urban and rural locations, including the left bank of the Dniestr river.

The report emphasizes the diverse experiences of different groups, including Ukrainian refugees, stateless persons, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, highlighting critical areas such as livelihoods, housing, healthcare, social services, and community cohesion. The 2024 findings underscore the evolving protection risks and gaps in services and recommend actions to improve the response to vulnerabilities.

Key findings show that housing costs, healthcare access, livelihood opportunities, access to education and social services remain primary concerns for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons.

While 2024 recommendations take in consideration what suggested in 2023, they place a stronger focus on targeted support for specific at-risk groups, such as the older persons, persons with disabilities, Roma refugees, and those without a regular legal status.

The 2024 recommendations build upon those made in 2023 by emphasizing:



Long-term accommodation solutions for refugees, including rental assistance and accessible housing.



A comprehensive approach to healthcare that addresses specialized care needs.



Stronger integration of vulnerable groups in education and employment opportunities, including vocational training and part-time employment for individuals with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities.



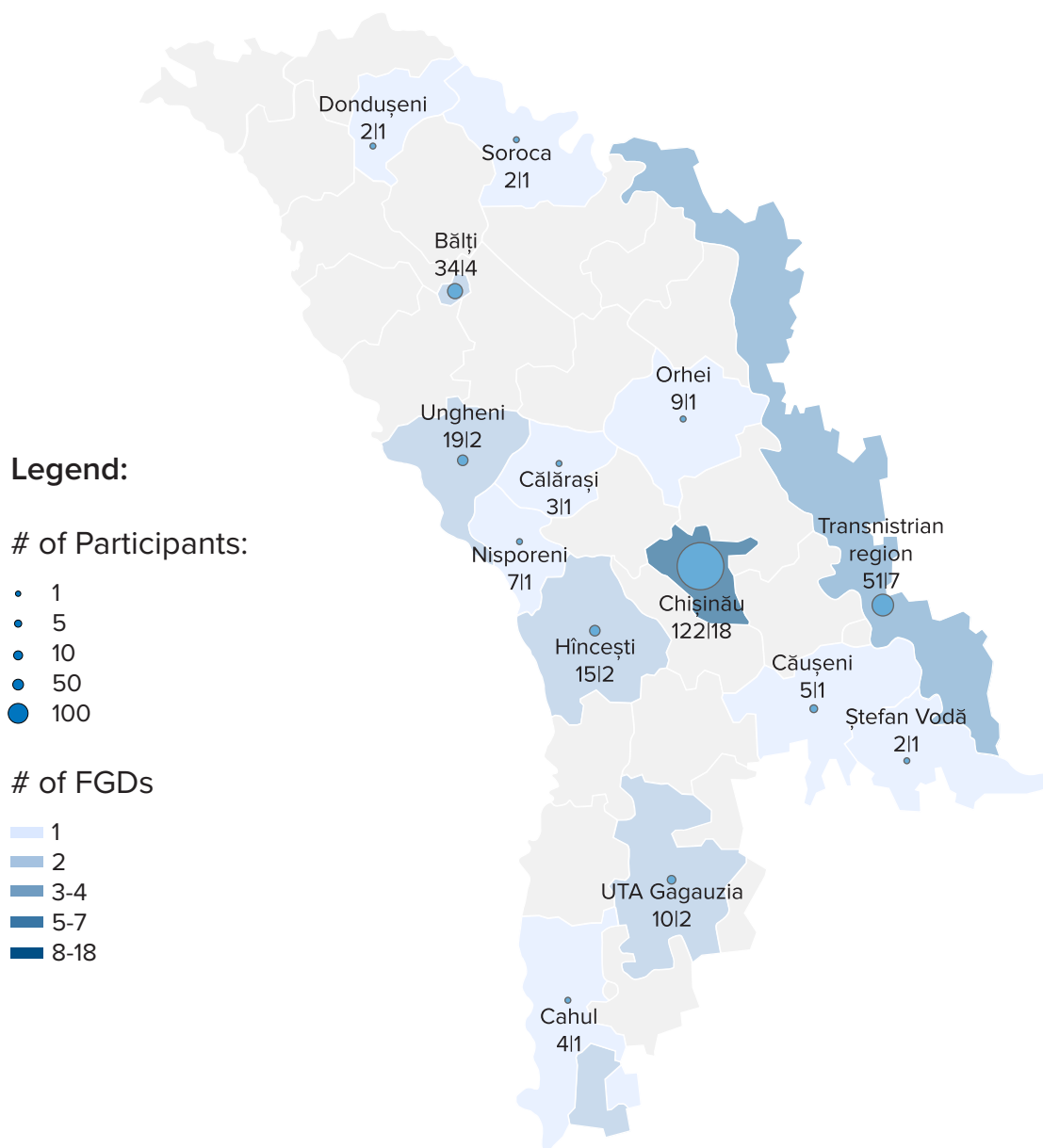
Enhanced community cohesion through cultural exchange programs and anti-xenophobia campaigns.

Despite significant progress, challenges remain in addressing economic vulnerabilities, legal status issues, and the lack of accessible information, particularly for marginalized groups including refugees living in the left bank of the Dniestr river. Moving forward, humanitarian partners and Moldovan authorities must focus on improving accessibility to services ensuring action are taken to be more effective in reaching at-risk groups.

METHODOLOGY

The Participatory Assessment 2024 conducted in Moldova aimed to understand the protection needs, service access, and living conditions of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and host communities. Focusing on the most vulnerable groups, the assessment identified critical gaps and challenges affecting these populations. Key areas of inquiry included housing, healthcare, social cohesion, and economic inclusion. Through community-focused discussions and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, the assessment provides a foundation to enhance integration pathways and address systemic barriers to support for displaced communities in Moldova.

Geographical Coverage



Participant Demographics

The assessment engaged a diverse group of participants, with demographics represented by pie charts showcasing gender distribution, age groups, and key profiles, including women, children, older persons, and refugees with disabilities.

Participants & Gender:

286
Total
Participants

35% Male 65% Female

Key Profiles:

- 49 Older Persons (60+)
- 17 Children
- 26 Refugees with Disabilities
- 21 Roma refugees
- 13 Moldovans

Other Groups: Refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons across various ages, genders, and disabilities.

Methodology Design

<p>Approach: UNHCR’s Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach</p>	<p>Languages Used: Romanian, Russian</p>
<p>Data Analysis: Focused on identifying common themes and concerns.</p>	<p>Inclusive Participation: Vulnerable groups (e.g., refugees with disabilities, older persons, children) actively engaged.</p>

Roles of Partners

The success of the Participatory Assessment was underpinned by the active involvement of 16 UNHCR partners and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Task Force. These partners played a pivotal role in identifying locations and participants, facilitating data collection, and contributing to the refinement of the assessment methodology. Their collaboration ensured a process that was inclusive and accessible, prioritizing the diverse needs of vulnerable groups. The joint efforts of these organizations fostered a comprehensive approach, leveraging local expertise and community engagement to deliver meaningful insights and actionable outcomes.



Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized, with all the FGDs ensured:

<p>Informed Consent: All participants were informed and consented to participation.</p>	<p>Confidentiality: Personal data and responses kept confidential and anonymized.</p>
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MAIN FINDINGS

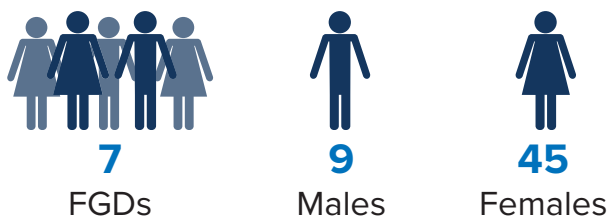
Ukrainian Adults (30-49)

2024. Celebration of International Day of the Ukrainian Shirt – Vyshyvanka in Chisinau, Moldova.

© UNHCR/ Eugenia Ciurca




Demographic Breakdown:



young children, stated that they were experiencing significant financial strain due to their inability to find appropriate work.

While some refugees were working remotely for Ukrainian companies, this was not sustainable in the long term due to the need to be in Ukraine.

Main Issues Identified:

 **Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:**

Refugees reported that their inability to speak Romanian was a major barrier to employment, especially in regions where Romanian is the dominant language. Many refugees also stated that they face restrictions to work due to their legal status, for example those without Moldovan residence permits cannot access jobs in certain sectors.

Employment opportunities were reported as scarce, especially in rural areas, and the low wages were seen as not enough to cover basic living costs. Many refugees, particularly women caring for

Many refugees, especially those with children or family members with specific needs, explained that they were dependent on financial assistance from UNHCR, IOM / ADRA, or other humanitarian organizations.

“Salaries are very small in Moldova, but if you have nothing, you go and work for any money.”

 **Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:**

Refugees reported positive interactions with the Moldovan community, particularly in urban areas like Chisinau and Ungheni, where there is a more established refugee population.

However, there were concerns about political tensions, especially in locations where refugees feared that the region’s unique political situation and the ongoing conflict could provoke negative attitudes towards them.

In some areas, refugees stated that they avoided openly sharing their Ukrainian identity to avoid potential conflicts, especially in regions with significant Russian influence.

“
It’s very difficult to find accommodation. The adverts say: ‘Refugees please do not bother’.”

Several participants reported being at risk of eviction after being forced to leave from refugee accommodation centers that were being closed by the government, or losing eligibility for financial assistance, in particular from UNHCR’s due to the application of more restrictive criteria in order to benefit from the increased targeting of its cash programme. Some refugees stated that they faced challenges negotiating rental contracts or dealing with landlords who were reluctant to rent to them. However, those living in rural areas or regions like the left bank of the Dniestr river have found housing to be more affordable.



Access to Housing:

Housing remains a significant issue for refugees, but appears to have worsened over the past year.

Many refugees rent accommodation, but rising rent prices have made it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing.

“
The main thing is not to stop cash payments.”



Refugee Suggestions for Improvement

- Increase initiatives that bring refugees and the local community together, such as cultural exchange programs or community activities, which would help strengthen trust and promote peaceful coexistence.
- Provide more opportunities for rental assistance and ensure that landlords are open to renting to refugees.



Youth (18-29)

The Day of the Ukrainian Shirt – Vyshyvanka brings together Ukrainians and Moldovans in Chisinau to celebrate tradition, resilience, and friendship. Organised by UNHCR partner the National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova, the event showcases the beauty of traditional embroidery as a symbol of cultural heritage and unity.

© UNHCR/ Eugenia Ciurca

Demographic Breakdown:



3

FGDs



4

Men



18

Women

Main Issues Identified:



Housing:

Housing remains a significant issue for young refugees, with many living with parents, renting apartments, or staying in dormitories.

The high cost of rent, particularly in Chisinau, often forces them to share housing with other families.

Despite being generally satisfied with their living conditions, participants stated that financial difficulties and housing instability are ongoing concerns.



Education:

The educational experiences of young refugees vary, with many continuing their studies in Ukrainian institutions. Among the respondents, eight (8) individuals had enrolled in Moldovan universities.

Although many refugees stated that they appreciated the quality of education offered in Moldova, a main challenge cited was language and limited access to Russian-language curricula, making it difficult to learn and integrate into the educational system.

In addition to formal education, refugees have access to vocational training programs in Moldova, offering skills that enhance their professional integration.



Employment, Livelihoods, and Access to Basic Needs:

Young refugees' access to employment is often challenged by language barriers and limited job opportunities. Many refugees reported that they rely on financial support from international organizations such as UNHCR. However, aid is often perceived as insufficient, and in some cases, refugees complained that support had been discontinued without a clear explanation of the change in cash programme requirements and why they were found ineligible.

“

I believe there should be more events and training for locals and Ukrainians to socialise and interact.

”

Language barriers, family responsibilities, and perceived discriminatory attitudes were also mentioned as limiting access to stable employment.

“

I want to do an internship here in marketing. I attempted to work as a chef, but since no one spoke Russian, I had to leave that job.

”



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Young refugees reported having generally experienced peaceful integration into the Moldovan community.

Many have made local friendships and participated in community events, contributing to a sense of unity and belonging.

“

There are always good people on the way who are ready to lend a helping hand and support, I am sincerely grateful to everyone.

”

However, participants did note some tensions, such as the reluctance of local Moldovans to speak Russian and negative perceptions about the financial support that refugees receive.



Refugee Suggestions for Improvement

- Continue supporting refugees with utility bills, particularly during the winter, to ease their financial burden.
- Provide financial assistance to partially cover rental costs for refugees facing housing instability.
- Organize intensive Romanian language courses annually to support refugees in their linguistic and academic integration.

- Develop accessible employment and internship programs in collaboration with educational institutions and local organizations to improve refugee access to the job market.
- Fund youth initiatives that organize community meetings, discussion clubs, and events to foster dialogue and strengthen the bond between refugees and locals.



Children and Teens (5-17)

UNHCR, together with partners INTERSOS and the Charity Centre for Refugees, participated in the Chisinau Big Hearts Marathon, promoting solidarity, resilience, and refugee inclusion through sport. The event highlighted the power of sports in bringing communities together, fostering social cohesion, and empowering displaced individuals to overcome challenges, stay active, and feel a sense of belonging in their host country.

© Courtesy of INTERSOS

Demographic Breakdown:



3

FGDs



10

Boys



12

Girls

Main Issues Identified:

The participants in the focus group were children and teenagers aged between 5 and 17 years old.

All participants had been living in Moldova since the beginning of the crisis, for approximately 2 to 2.5 years.

All the children participating in the FGDs were living with their families, which typically included their parents, siblings, and sometimes grandparents.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Many children who participated in the FGDs stated that they had made new friends in Moldova, both from the local Moldovan community and from other refugee families. These friendships have been an important part of their social integration and sense of belonging. The children spoke highly of their interactions with local Moldovan children, noting the warm welcome they had received.

They noted a sense of mutual respect and support that facilitated their integration into the new environment. Some children also said they enjoyed participating in local activities, like community events and school competitions.

While most experiences were positive, some participants reported isolated episodes of discrimination. For example, there were reports of aggressive behavior from residents in certain regions. One example was the burning of a car near a refugee accommodation centre with the word “AFARĂ!” (meaning “OUT!”) written on it, symbolizing hostility toward refugees.

“

I want to be treated normally, without judgement!

— a quote by an ethnic-Roma child

”



Education:

Most children who participated in the FDGs were attending Russian-language schools in Moldova. While many refugee children participating in the FDGs are learning Romanian, for some, it was reported as a difficult language to master. Roma children from Ukraine mentioned this in particular.

While some children noted that online schooling allowed them to continue their education while adapting to the challenging circumstances of displacement, several children shared on the other side, they face difficulties with online schooling, including lack of consistency in attending the virtual classes, due to other responsibilities, such as helping with household tasks or supporting younger siblings.

Others who studied online highlighted also the lack of interaction with peers and teachers in a traditional classroom setting.

Some refugee children reported being particularly active in non-classroom activities. One child participated in the “Teenagers Against Violence” campaign and other community-building projects. Another attended the SAFETEEN Summer School, which provided them with the opportunity to learn new skills and meet other youth, creating a network.

A few children attended extracurricular programs such as EduTech Labs, where they learned website creation and digital skills. They expressed excitement about these creative spaces, and several children noted that they appreciated the opportunity to learn new skills in a fun and interactive way.

In general, children expressed positive feelings about their teachers and the school environment.



Refugee Suggestions for Improvement

- Offer more Romanian language courses or support classes to help refugee children better integrate into the school system and daily life.
- Provide more extracurricular programs, like EduTech Labs or sports activities, that allow refugee children to explore interests beyond the classroom and provide opportunities to better integrate with Moldovan children and strengthen their friendships.
- Implement more anti-bullying programs and awareness campaigns in schools to promote better integration and acceptance of refugee children, particularly Roma children.



© Courtesy of Laolaltă

Demographic Breakdown:



7
FGDs



21
Males



28
Females

General Overview

The majority of older refugees who participated in the focus groups have been in Moldova since 2022, following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They mainly came from southern Ukraine and Kyiv. For some, their homes were destroyed due to shelling.

Despite difficult beginnings, they reported feeling safe in Moldova and expressed positive impressions of the country's hospitality.

Main Issues Identified:



Housing:

Housing costs were a concern for many participants, with some unable to afford their rents.

A few reported difficulties at the beginning with landlords refusing to rent to Ukrainians.

Participants residing in refugee accommodation centers noted that they received basic necessities, although a few complained of overcrowded conditions and poor living standards in some centers. They expressed satisfaction with the availability of food and basic services at the centres, and expressed appreciation for the organized activities that were provided, such as cultural events, language courses, and trips, which help keep them engaged and offer a sense of community.



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Many older refugees mentioned that the pension they receive from Ukraine is insufficient to cover living expenses, particularly due to rising costs in Moldova.

They explained that they remain dependent on UNHCR cash assistance. For this reason, they expressed concern about delayed UNHCR payments, which creates for them significant financial stress for them.

“

In the first year we were getting good assistance, it was very important for us, but now, no one comes to support us. I do not remember when I ate eggs last time, they are too expensive for me, I need to pay for utilities and medicines.

”



Healthcare:

Participants in the FGDs mentioned that they face significant healthcare challenges due to high costs, limited access to essential medical services, and inadequate support for chronic conditions.

While some basic treatments and medications were noted as available for free, especially after the extension of Temporary Protection (TP) in 2024, many refugees stated that they were unable to afford necessary healthcare, especially specialized care and rehabilitation, which is often only available through private services.

Some refugees reported struggling with navigating the healthcare system due to a lack of awareness about available services provided by the government.

They noted that NGOs like INTERSOS Moldova have been important in providing assistance, but that the resources of these organizations are limited.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Despite the initial warm reception that they received in Moldova, older refugees reported a lack of social integration due to limited interaction with local Moldovans.

Transportation was noted as a significant obstacle, affecting their ability to participate in community events. Public transportation is often limited, particularly in rural areas.

Older refugees noted that transportation is especially challenging for those who cannot afford costs of public transportation or who face difficulty traveling due to age or health conditions.



Access to information:

Many respondents rely on social networks such as Viber, Telegram, and WhatsApp to receive information about available services and support.

They participate in chat groups where they share and receive news, but they noted that not all information they received was timely or accurate, and sometimes it could be overwhelming to keep track of multiple sources.

Some older FGD participants noted that they were not very familiar with technology. Others struggled to keep up with information on social media or internet-based platforms and feel left out of critical updates, often falling behind and remaining uninformed about their rights and available services.

Participants proposed that information dissemination should be multifaceted, including physical outreach like community meetings, flyers, or telephone calls for those who may not have access to digital platforms or who are not as tech-savvy.

There were calls for social workers to play a more active role in informing refugees about available services. Participants mentioned that they did not know much about the role of social workers or what services they could provide. Some suggested that social workers should visit refugees regularly and provide direct assistance in signing up for services, making appointments, and ensuring they are informed about all available opportunities for support, especially regarding healthcare services and medications.

“

Life is frozen, we don't even know what day it is, what day of the week.

”



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Ensure timely payments and financial support from UNHCR and other cash assistance providers, particularly given rising prices and difficulties in covering basic living costs.
- Provide increased access to secondary health care services, and better support for chronic health conditions. Affordable medications should be more accessible to those in need.
- Ensure employment opportunities, especially for older refugees who face discrimination in the job market.

- Have social workers more actively involved in supporting refugees, particularly in identifying services and helping with appointments. Arrange for social workers to visit refugees regularly, at least once a month, to ensure they are informed about available services and assistance.
- Request public transportation improvements in terms of availability and accessibility, especially in rural areas, and for the recognition of pension cards for free travel.
- Provide cross generational activities between different age groups for networking and fighting social isolation.



Persons with chronic and serious medical condition

Due to the hospitalization of Alexander, a refugee from Zaporizhzhya, UNHCR staff went to the hospital to conduct his biometric registration and allow him to access the support programme.

© UNHCR/ Maciej Moskwa

Demographic Breakdown:



3

FGDs



2

Males



5

Females

Main Issues Identified:



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Participants reported that their main sources of income are UNHCR financial assistance and, for older refugees, pensions from Ukraine. Although UNHCR assistance has been critical in covering basic needs like food and accommodation, for some participants it is insufficient, particularly to cover costs

related to health services that are not covered by Temporary Protection, in particular secondary health care services.

“

The biggest concern are the parents with medical conditions, and the difficulties related to transporting them within the Republic of Moldova and abroad (Ukraine) to get their papers ready.

”

For those with chronic medical conditions, even if they are willing to work, it is difficult to find or maintain employment due to health conditions, particularly if the condition prevents them from working long hours or if the job is physically demanding. For these reasons, many participants said they were also looking for part-time employment.



Accommodation:

Some refugees in the FGDs were living in rented flats, while others were staying in refugee accommodation centers (RAC). For those in rented accommodation, the cost of rent was noted as a concern, especially for those without sufficient income from work or cash assistance. Some respondents suggested that they would like to stay in refugee accommodation centers due to the facilities and services provided, including in some cases medical care and social support and they are concerned about the RAC closure process.



Healthcare:

Older refugees with chronic conditions participating in the FGDs reported generally positive experiences with medical services. Those living in refugee accommodation centres noted that they received regular visits from INTERSOS Moldova doctors and some have been able to access free hospital care. However, there were concerns about limited availability of certain specialized care and specific medications.

Chronic conditions often require ongoing treatment, and many participants highlighted the high cost of medications. Despite access to some free or compensated medicines, participants noted that they still face difficulties in acquiring more expensive drugs. They also reported problems accessing medications for certain chronic conditions, particularly diabetes.

“

We always need medicines, which are expensive.

”

Some respondents said that they were registered with a family doctor, with a few mentioning that they struggled to receive proper care or frequent visits from the family doctor, especially in rural areas. Some other participants mentioned they struggled to register with a family doctor in particular in rural areas where there is less availability of health structures and family doctors.



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Make available more medications, particularly for those suffering from chronic conditions. Refugees suggested that there be more availability of free or subsidized drugs, especially for essential treatments.
- Create/strengthen a centralized platform where all information regarding services for refugees (e.g., healthcare, social support, NGOs services) can be accessed in one place. This would help refugees, particularly older people or those with limited internet access, stay informed about available resources.
- Given the challenges of caregiving and health conditions, make available more part-time job opportunities in refugees' local areas, allowing them to work while being close to their families and the support provided by refugee accommodation centers.



Persons with disabilities

Community events and activities create spaces where everyone, regardless of background, can connect, participate, and feel included. Through shared experiences, they foster understanding, strengthen social bonds, and ensure no one is left behind.

© Courtesy of INTERSOS

Demographic Breakdown:



3

FGDs with disabilities



7

Males with disabilities



19

Females with disabilities



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Most participants rely on UNHCR financial assistance and pensions/disability payments from Ukraine for their income. However, there were reports of financial difficulties, especially for those who had their Ukrainian pensions suspended due to not being able to travel to Ukraine for verification. Due to disabilities, many participants stated that they were unable to work, with a few mentioning receiving small amounts of financial support through NGO programs as a top-up to UNHCR financial support. They noted, however, that this was still not enough to cover basic living expenses.

Main Issues Identified:



Legal Status:

Participants raised the issue that bedridden individuals living in the left bank of the Dniestr river faced severe challenges in accessing Temporary Protection since they could not go to the General Inspectorate of Migration (IGM) centers on the Right Bank to complete the registration, and the IGM Mobile Team could not enter the left bank of the Dniestr river to carry out home visits. The issue has been ongoing since the beginning of the Temporary Protection legal regime.

Some participants highlighted the challenges due to costs and bureaucratic procedures to obtain the disability determination in Moldova and the lack of specific benefits, that come with it.



Housing:

Participants currently live in a mix of rented flats, accommodation with relatives, and placement in refugee accommodation centers (RACs). For many, housings was initially provided by family members but that they later moved out and into private accommodation. A major concern for them was lack of available funding to cover the cost of rent, with many refugee noting that rental assistance programs were generally not available for people with disabilities as ability to work was often a requirement.

“

In Moldova there are programs for renting housing, but here in Transnistria there are no such programs, no opportunities.

”

Many refugees also indicated that that they faced challenges in finding suitable accessible housing, in particular for those with physical disabilities.



Healthcare:

Access to medical care was generally reported as positive, but with some significant challenges. Participants noted difficulties in accessing secondary health care services, in particular rehabilitation services. Some refugees were referred to private clinics due to a lack of available treatments in public hospitals. The private clinics were often expensive, making it difficult for refugees with disabilities to access all the services that they needed. In addition, the availability of assistive devices was noted as limited and often not available.

While more medications were made available at subsidized prices, or provided free of charge, after the extension of the Temporary Protection in 2024, participants noted a lack of essential drugs within the list of compensated medicines, requiring them to purchase medications out of pocket.

In addition, people with disabilities reported that some of the medicines they were taking in Ukraine were not available in Moldova.

Participants noted that bedridden individuals faced severe challenges, as mobile medical teams from the right bank of the Nistru River could not reach them in the left bank of the Dniestr river and due to a general lack of availability of medical services on the Left Bank.



Access to information:

Refugees with disabilities stated that they received information primarily through social media groups (e.g., Viber and Telegram) and volunteers from humanitarian organizations. However, they noted a lack of awareness about available services, especially social assistance and health care.

It was reported in particular by refugees with sensorial disabilities, i.e., visual and hearing impaired, that information is not always accessible, such that they were not always aware of services provided by organizations. As a result, many felt isolated and anxious about their situation. Refugees with visual impairment raised concerns about the mode of communication, suggesting that there be more in-person outreach from humanitarian partners to those who may have challenges in accessing information.

“

A significant problem we face is the lack of information about the procedure for obtaining the degree of disability here in Moldova.

”



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Extend government programs and NGO support to the Left Bank of the Nistru River.
- For refugees with sensorial disabilities, provide more accessible information about available social assistance and healthcare options, share information in different ways and give particular attention to people with specific needs.
- Create more accessible housing options or support for adapting houses of persons with specific needs to ensure safe, accessible and comfortable living conditions. In addition, provide greater access to rental assistance programs, in particular in the left bank of the Dniestr river.

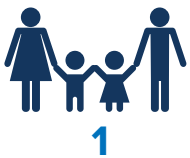


Caregivers of children with developmental disorders

October 4, 2024, Chisinau Big Hearts Marathon.

© Courtesy of INTERSOS

Demographic Breakdown:



1

FGDs

caregivers of children with disabilities



1

Males

caregivers of children with disabilities



5

Females

caregivers of children with disabilities



Legal Status:

None of the participants planned to return to Ukraine in the near future.

Most participants shared that obtaining disability determination for their children in the Republic of Moldova is a long and challenging process, primarily due to the numerous exams they had to pay for and the extended duration of the procedure. For that reason most of the participants gave up on the process.

Main Issues Identified:



Intentions:

While most of the participants came to Moldova around two years ago, one mother of two children shared that she had initially gone to Italy, where she had relatives, but later came to Moldova as she believes that specialized services for children with developmental disorders are more available and accessible in this country. Another family with two children initially tried to settle in Georgia, however found that the healthcare services were poor and also faced language barriers. They also relocated to Moldova.

“

We are thankful to Moldova for how we have been welcomed. Now we are trying to integrate and ensure our children's ability to thrive.

”



Access to social services:

Only two of the six families reported being able to obtain confirmation of their child's disability in Moldova, which is required to access disability benefits for children from the government.

The caregivers described the process as complicated, cumbersome and time consuming. They were also concerned about the level of expertise of the commission that takes the decision.

After obtaining Moldovan disability certificates, however, the families were able to access social allowances in Moldova.



Education:

In terms of education, FGD participants expressed concerns about the refusal of schools to enroll children with disabilities who require additional support during the education process. They mentioned that in Ukraine they benefitted from personal assistance at school service, while in Moldova school principals told them that such arrangements were not available and that one of the parents would need to be present if the child were enrolled.

As a result, most of the FGD participants with school-aged children with disabilities were pursuing online education.



Access to healthcare and specialized services:

With regards to rehabilitation, participants noted that such services were scarce in Moldova. For those services that are available, there are long waiting lists to access them and the cost is beyond what refugees can afford.

The caregivers expressed concern about the termination of humanitarian cash assistance programs, which helped cover rehabilitation expenses. Without these rehabilitation sessions, children with intellectual disabilities did not have good prospects for future improvements.

As mentioned by their parents, mothers do apply rehabilitation techniques at home, however this approach was not considered as effective as at the rehabilitation center.



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Participants shared serious concerns about their access to UNHCR financial assistance. Since the eligibility criteria

were tightened in the summer of 2024, some families with children with disabilities found themselves out of the programme. For them this support was vital, since due to taking care of children with disabilities they cannot get employed and this in turn has led to even further deterioration of their children's access to rehabilitation services.

One family mentioned that after cancellation of cash payments they had to move back in with a hosting Moldovan family.



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Simplify disability recognition process.
- Improve access to free specialized and rehabilitation services for refugee children.
- Equip schools to integrate children with disabilities and offer tutoring support.
- Ensure access to humanitarian cash assistance to all families where one or more children have a disability.



Organized by UNHCR partner the Charity Centre for Refugees, a summer camp brings together refugee children from different countries, providing a safe and joyful space for learning, friendship, and cultural exchange. Through shared activities, the camp fosters integration builds confidence, and helps children feel a sense of belonging in their new community.

© Courtesy of Charity Centre for Refugees



Ukrainian men who crossed the border irregularly

2024.06.17. Day at the Park on the occasion of World Refugee Day.

© UNHCR/ Prolmagine

General Overview

Ukrainian men fleeing conscription, conflict-related trauma, or threats to their safety face specific challenges. Unlike other refugees from Ukraine they often struggle with limited access to legal documentation, and restricted access to basic services. They usually fall through the cracks of the existing assistance programmes, however, many of them come to Moldova without any financial or other material resources. It's important to analyze their situation which is an intersection of legal status, societal perceptions, and human rights. Many of these individuals find themselves in a precarious legal limbo and their invisibility within humanitarian response can exacerbates their vulnerabilities.

Their initial impressions of Moldova were positive, as they noted the contrast to their lives in Ukraine, which has been shaped by the war. In general, the men expressed a sense of safety and calm in Moldova, something they had not experienced back home due to the frequent airstrikes, curfews, and constant fear of being conscripted into military service.

“

In Moldova, it is safe.

”



Intentions:

Due to financial constraints, many of the men see Moldova as a temporary stop before heading to a country in the EU, particularly to countries like Germany and Poland. Others mentioned a desire to move to the US. The men perceived the EU as offering better security, as well as job opportunities that they could not access in Moldova. Their main objective was to secure stable employment, improve their financial situation, and ensure a safe environment for their families. They did not foresee returning to Ukraine until the war ended and conditions were considered safe.

“

Our intention is to move toward Europe, as far away from the Ukrainian border as possible, where we hope to find jobs and reunite with our families.

”

Demographic Breakdown:



3

FGDs



24

Males

Main Issues Identified:

FGD participants had been in Moldova for varying periods, from as little as a few days to over a month.



Legal Status:

The majority of the men in the FGDs had pre-registered for temporary protection (TP) and were waiting their registration appointment with the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM). , Some individuals, however, faced difficulties due to their dual citizenship (e.g., Ukrainian and Bulgarian). One person was denied TP due to having dual citizenship, and is now seeking a residence permit.

Other men in the group, in particular those who had been apprehended by Moldovan Border Police at the border, had applied for asylum. Some FGD participants stated that they did not fully understand the differences between temporary protection (TP) and asylum, and were confused about how to apply for TP. In general, many said that they did not fully understand the legal implications of their irregular border crossing.

Some of the men who had managed to pre-register for TP said that they had encountered challenges in the documentation process. Others noted difficulties in getting a registration appointment with IGM.



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Most of the men in the FGDs reported that they were relying on savings that they had brought with them from Ukraine. While this was enough money for the short term, it was seen as insufficient for a longer-term stay in Moldova. None of the men had received cash assistance from UNHCR or any local programs because they believed that they were ineligible. They were aware of the assistance that was generally available to refugees from Ukraine but had found that single men were not typically eligible for such support.

Despite having the desire and need to work, the men's lack of legal status often made employers reluctant to hire them. The jobs they had been able to access were often informal.

Some men had taken day-labor jobs, which helped them to meet immediate needs but were low-paying and unstable.



Access to information:

The participants confirmed that they had easy access to information about their legal rights, the documentation process, and available services. Information was provided mainly through the Law Centre for Advocates (LCA/CDA) and social media, but also through official channels like the General Inspectorate for Migration and Border Police.

“

Thank you to CDA and UNHCR for the support and free assistance provided.

”

However, the men noted that information about legal procedures for asylum seekers and those crossing the border irregularly was sometimes unclear or difficult to access, which delayed their registration process and resulted in misunderstandings about their rights.



Access to Housing:

The men who participated in the FGDs were living in rented apartments or hostels. Given their financial situation, they often shared accommodations with others, helping them to reduce costs. The quality of housing varied, with some individuals mentioning living in old buildings in bad conditions and others finding more affordable housing in good shape.

Participants noted that rental prices in Moldova were notably higher than in

Ukraine, making it difficult for them to afford decent accommodation. One man compared the cost of renting a property in Moldova to the cost of a mortgage in Poland.

The participants also indicated that they were not informed about the Temporary Accommodation Center (TAC) in Chisinau, which provides housing for asylum-seekers and would have been a more affordable option for them.

One person reported who had sustained an injury while crossing the border was able to receive basic care in Moldova. Participants believed that medical services should be more accessible to individuals without legal status or in the process of obtaining TP, as some individuals faced urgent medical needs.



Access to Healthcare:

In general, participants noted that they had had limited access to healthcare due to their lack of legal status. This included those who were still in the registration process for TP.



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Increase access to free accommodation and material assistance for individuals who have crossed the border illegally and are without the financial means to support themselves while awaiting legal status.
- Improve the provision of information on employment rights and business opportunities for refugees in their situation.



UNHCR staff assist more than 200 refugees from Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine who arrived by bus at the Palanca crossing on Moldova's border with Ukraine on 23 April 2022. UNHCR, Moldovan officials and partner organisations provided support, information and transportation.

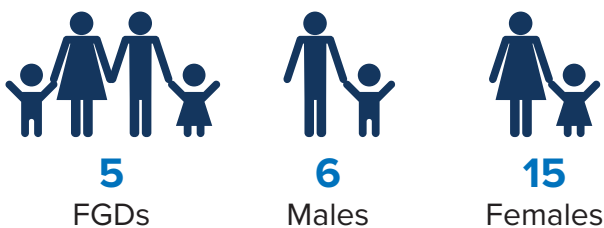
Ethnic Roma

Roma refugee children from Ukraine learning Romanian at the Testemitanu Refugee Accommodation Center in Chisinau, through classes provided by UNHCR partner Tarna Rom. These lessons foster inclusion, cultural exchange, and new opportunities for integration within their host community.

© UNHCR/ Eugenia Ciurca



Demographic Breakdown:



The focus groups with ethnic Roma refugees were organized and conducted in close collaboration with, and in the presence of, a Roma community mediator to ensure that participants felt safe and understood.

Main Issues Identified:



Intentions:

While many ethnic Roma refugees expressed the intention to return to Ukraine once it is safe and the war is finished, four participants across the FGDs expressed their desire to remain in Moldova permanently, while three participants planned to move on to other European countries. Similar to trends observed in 2022 and 2023, ethnic Roma refugees displayed an increasing openness to mobility and relocation.

“Moldova, God grant them health and happiness. This is the best country. It helped us a lot in a difficult moment.”



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Roma refugees reported facing financial challenges in Moldova, with many relying on financial assistance from UNHCR or other humanitarian partners. However, the recent decrease in aid has created a sense of insecurity. Some participants stated that they had informal jobs with low pay, between **300–500 MDL** per day, and that this is often insufficient to cover all expenses for the family.

“I want to send the kids to school, but where will I get the funds? We don't even have enough to eat.”

Limited employment opportunities, combined with language barriers and discrimination due to their ethnicity, make it challenging to find stable jobs.

“We want to work, we want courses, we want everything. But no one takes us. Are we the worst people?”

Even when vocational training programs were offered (e.g., for professions like hairdressing or bakery), many Roma refugees stated that they did not attend, either because of lack of interest or due to the perception that such jobs did not align with their needs or skills.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Participants in some locations mentioned a lack of interaction with the local

community. However, they did not report any serious conflicts or tensions. Most instances of discrimination reported by participants concerned access to employment and the labor market.

While some Roma refugees stated that they participate in local events organized by humanitarian actors, there was a general feeling that they are excluded from broader Moldovan society.



Access to Housing:

The majority of participants to the FGDs were living in private accommodations, often struggling with affordability. Some Roma refugees, especially those in large families, reported facing discrimination from landlords. One Roma participant, from a family with nine children, reported being refused rental of an apartment due to the family's ethnicity.

Roma refugees who were living in refugee accommodation centres (RACs) reported that the living conditions were good but there was a general sense of uncertainty about future housing options in case the RACs were closed by the government. This generated stress for the families.



Access to social services:

It was observed that FGD participants who were residing in RACs had a better awareness of and access to state-provided social services.

A significant challenge voiced by participants was the reduced availability of cash assistance from UNHCR as a result of its targeting exercise. Without this support, participants noted that they faced great difficulty in meeting their basic needs. The lack of financial assistance also exacerbated their challenges in finding housing.



Access to Education:

None of the participants had their children enrolled in Moldovan schools or kindergartens. The main obstacles that they cited in doing so were:

- Lack of financial resources for clothing, school supplies, fees, and snacks.
- In some rural areas, the absence of schools offering Russian-language instruction.

Some participants noted that their children occasionally attended online classes from Ukraine, although their attendance was irregular.



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Organize inclusive community events to foster closer relationships between Roma refugees and Moldovans and to reduce ethnic tensions.
- Develop support programs covering school supplies, uniforms, and fees for extracurricular activities to encourage parents to enroll their children in school. Provide Romanian language classes for both children and adults. Promote extracurricular activities to facilitate cultural exchange and friendships with Moldovan students.
- Implement conflict resolution programs to address ethnic discrimination and enhance community integration.
- Improve the capacity of Roma mediators to distribute information and ensure Roma refugees are well-informed about available services.
- Provide clear communication about the potential closure of RACs and help refugees secure alternative housing in advance.
- Offer vocational training tailored to Moldova's labor market.

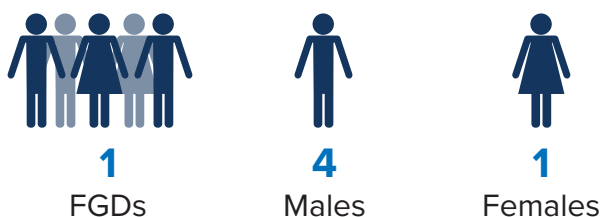
Stateless persons

Community centres serve as vibrant hubs where people from all backgrounds come together to engage in art, culture, and essential services. These spaces foster inclusion, creativity, and connection, strengthening social bonds and supporting community resilience.

© UNHCR/ Salahaldeen Abdulrahman



Demographic Breakdown:



Main Issues Identified:



Legal Status:

Participants reported challenges in obtaining legal status in Moldova. Four individuals were applicants for stateless status, while one had already obtained recognized stateless status.

The primary difficulties cited were a lack of awareness of legal requirement and procedures. To overcome these obstacles, participants benefited from legal assistance from the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) and the Law Center for Advocates (LCA/CDA).



Housing:

Housing was cited as a significant challenge for participants. The lack of a regular legal status for those in the process of applying for stateless status prevented them from securing formal lease agreements.

This, in turn, forced many to frequently change their living situations due to financial instability.



Employment, Livelihoods, and Access to Basic Needs:

Participants reported their reliance on informal employment to sustain themselves. While documentation as a stateless applicants did allow for official employment, participants noted that it did not permit opening a bank account, creating barriers to receiving salaries or engaging in formal economic activities. FGD participants also noted that they were not receiving any financial or material assistance from the state or NGOs.

“

People who work with individuals like us need to be professionals and empathetic.

”



Access to social services:

Participants expressed frustration with limited access to both medical and social services. While three participants were unaware of the types of assistance available to them or how to apply, two had some understanding but struggled with the application process. Those in the process of applying for stateless status reported that their lack of a stable legal status, and accompanying documentation, had led to frequent discrimination and neglect by service providers.



Access to information:

Participants highlighted challenges in accessing reliable information about their rights and available resources. Many did not know where to start or lacked financial resources to seek legal assistance. Additionally, one participant reported verbal discrimination against their child at school due to their lack of documentation, which undermined their sense of inclusion in society.



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Address systemic issues, such as the inability to open bank accounts, to enable formal employment.

- Develop state-supported housing programs tailored to the needs of stateless persons or individuals undergoing the statelessness determination procedure.
- Provide financial or material assistance to support basic needs for stateless individuals.
- Ensure that those applying for stateless status are provided with free or subsidized healthcare and clear guidance on accessing social services.
- Improve the availability of information on procedures to statelessness determination procedure and available services for those undergone this process.



Urban Spirit Family, a group of mural artists, joins young people from Moldova to transform a wall at the Dondușeni Community Center. As part of a regional project between UNHCR and Artolution, this collaboration uses art to inspire community participation, self-expression, and social cohesion.

© UNHCR/ Salahaldeen Abdulrahman

Demographic Breakdown:



4
FGDs



7
Males



4
Females

Main Issues Identified:



Legal Status:

LGBTIQ+ participants in the FGDs held different forms of legal status in Moldova,

including temporary protection, asylum and Moldovan citizenship.

Their experiences in obtaining their legal status highlighted the challenges of navigating legal procedures in a new country. One participant shared their experience of initially being denied entry at the airport without explanation, which caused significant uncertainty and stress.

The person stated that they were ultimately able to submit an application for asylum at the airport, with persistence and legal support.

For LGBTIQ+ participants with family ties to Moldova, such as Moldovan parents or grandparents, the process of acquiring a legal status in Moldova, including Moldovan citizenship, was easier to obtain.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

The process of integration in Moldova carried with it different experiences for FGD participants. LGBTIQ+ individuals highlighted the contrast between the openness they found in Chisinau and the conservatism of certain areas like the left bank of the Dniestr river and the south of Moldova.

Many participants described Chisinau as a space where they could openly express their identities, participate in activism event such as the Pride march, and connect with like-minded communities.

“

For the first time, I felt free to express who I truly am, without fear of judgment. It was liberating to participate in Pride and stand alongside others celebrating different identities.

”

Those living in or visiting more traditional areas experienced challenges, including a lack of visible support networks for LGBTIQ+ people and occasional hostility.



Housing:

LGBTIQ+ participants recounted that they had experienced discrimination during rental negotiations. They shared their experiences of posting a rental inquiry online, openly mentioning their LGBTIQ+ identity, and only receiving discriminatory comments that forced them to delete the post.

Due to this, many relied on their own networks to secure informal accommodation, which offered no legal or social protection.



Access to healthcare:

Participants found it difficult to locate some healthcare professionals familiar with or sensitive to LGBTIQ+ needs, in particular psychological support. One participant described their struggle to find a therapist who understood and accepted the participant's sexual orientation or gender identity.

“

I wanted psychological help, but many therapists were hesitant to work with someone like me. It made an already tough process even harder.

”

Organizations like Genderdoc-M, which advocates for the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals, were described as filling critical gaps, offering free HIV testing and other specialized services that participants found invaluable.



Safety:

Safety was an important concern for LGBTIQ+ individuals, particularly in public spaces. One participant described being the victim of a violent assault in Chisinau, where they were targeted for their LGBTIQ+ identity. Despite these challenges, participants expressed gratitude for the solidarity they had found with LGBTIQ+ groups in the country, which had provided them with emotional and practical support.

“

My job was a result of a friend's recommendation, but I know others who face prejudice when applying for work openly as LGBTIQ+.

”



Refugee suggestions for Improvement

- Expand LGBTIQ+ support and advocacy initiatives to rural and conservative regions, ensuring availability of resources for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers outside of Chisinau.

- Foster inclusive dialogue between local communities and LGBTIQ+ organizations to address misconceptions and promote mutual understanding.
- Implement sensitivity training for law enforcement to ensure proper handling of cases involving LGBTIQ+ individuals, including refugees and asylum-seekers.

- Ensure availability of MHPSS services for refugees and asylum-seekers by LGBTIQ+ friendly practitioners.
- Increase collaboration with NGOs to expand healthcare services tailored to LGBTIQ+ needs, including psychological support.
- Strengthen community-building initiatives to foster a sense of safety and belonging for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers.

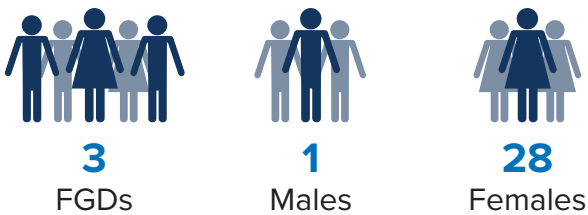


Host Communities

Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements meets refugees from Ukraine at the “Casa Marioarei” (Maria’s House), an accommodation centre in the Moldovan capital Chisinau in May. The centre, normally used as a shelter for women who have escaped gender-based violence, has been adapted to house refugees. There she met three young mothers who arrived from Ukraine with their children, left to right: Vitalia, Iana and Natalia.

© UNHCR/ Andrew McConnell

Demographic Breakdown:



financial and other forms of support, with some locals believing that refugee needs have been prioritized over those of Moldovan citizens. To better understand the views and situation of host community members, three FGDs were organized with Moldovan citizens.

General Overview

Host communities in Moldova have been largely supportive of refugees, offering shelter, food, and other forms of assistance. Many locals express a strong sense of solidarity and empathy toward refugees, particularly given the trauma of the war, shared historical experiences of hardship, close cultural ties, and the fear of war. However, there are also challenges, especially with regards to

Main Issues Identified:



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Moldovan FGD participants believed that the economic situation in Moldova had been greatly impacted by the refugee crisis. According to participants, many local families have felt the economic challenges of the country hosting refugees, particularly in terms of higher rent and living costs.

Some FGD participants also stated that employment opportunities had become more competitive, as refugees seek jobs and economic stability in Moldova. Given scarce job opportunities, participants expressed concerns that refugees may be willing to work for lower wages, making it more difficult for local workers to find employment with fair salaries.

“

My neighbor was fired and replaced with a refugee during his leave. The reason given by the employer was that for refugees is hard to find a job, but for him it will be easy

”

On the other hand, it was noted that some refugees have been able to open small businesses and have contributed to the local economy and job market. While there is some resentment over perceptions of preferential treatment for refugees, participants also highlighted the potential for refugees to contribute to the local economy if provided with support to integrate effectively.

“

The crises have contributed to the low economic state (low income) and that contributes to people having other priorities and interests.

”



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Despite the challenges, Moldovan participants recounted stories of refugees who had successfully integrated into the local community. It was noted that some refugees had found stable jobs, learned Romanian, and even started local businesses that employ both Moldovans and other refugees. These refugees were seen as role models for other displaced people.

However, participants stated that integration remains slow for many, especially for older refugees who are less likely to participate in community activities. There was also a perception among some locals that refugees were

reluctant to integrate, especially those who were waiting for the war to end, or who were seen as unwilling to adapt to the Moldovan way of life.

While there are positive interactions, instances of discrimination still exist, particularly when it comes to cultural differences and language barriers. Some locals stated that they felt that refugees had been given preferential treatment, leading to resentment and within the community.



Housing:

Participants noted particular concerns about housing prices. The initial influx of refugees was seen by many as causing an increase in demand for housing, leading to higher rental prices and making it more difficult for local families to afford to rent or buy apartments and homes. Participants stated that prices remain high, making accommodation unaffordable for local Moldovans. Several host community members participating in the FGDs expressed frustration with cash for rent programs viewed as benefiting refugees but not local Moldovans. The availability of affordable housing was noted as an ongoing concern, particularly in areas that have hosted high numbers of refugees.



Host Community members suggestions for Improvement

- Increase cultural exchanges and community activities that bring both refugees and locals together to improve integration of refugees.
- Strengthen trust between refugees and local populations through public awareness campaigns and educational programs aimed at reducing misinformation and prejudices.

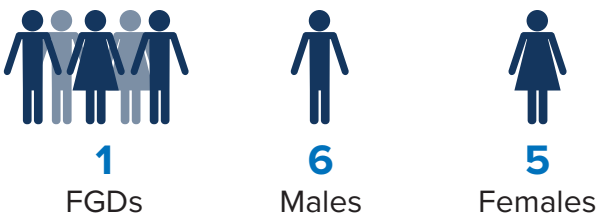


Non-Ukrainian Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Ten-year-old Alexandru attends saxophone lessons at Căușeni Community Center, passionately exploring his love for music. With each note he plays, he builds confidence, hones his skills, and finds joy in self-expression and connection with others.

© UNHCR/ Eugenia Ciurca

Demographic Breakdown:



Main Issues Identified:

Legal Status:

Many participants from this group reported facing challenges in obtaining legal status in Moldova, especially those with dual citizenship or other complications related to their nationality (e.g., Russian or Kyrgyz). This indicates a complex legal framework that may require clarification and more efficient processing, especially for those with multiple citizenships. There is also a demand for a faster process for granting asylum.

“Moldova is a peaceful and democratic country - we are comfortable here and we want to stay here.”

Healthcare:

Access to healthcare was another challenge, participants faced issues due to lack of medical insurance, with many that had to pay out of pocket for medical

treatments, which they felt was an unfair burden, especially as they were unable to work legally in Moldova.

Financial Assistance and Livelihood:

Financial support was mentioned as insufficient for covering basic needs. Many individuals were only provided a one-time financial aid of 2200 MDL, which was not enough for long-term sustenance. Additionally, some asylum seekers faced difficulties opening bank accounts due to their legal status, which limited their ability to receive payments or manage finances effectively.



Refugee Suggestions for Improvement:

- Simplify and speed up the asylum processes, with an emphasis on clarifying legal status procedures for those with dual or conflicting nationalities.
- Provide free medical insurance for asylum seekers to ensure they have access to healthcare services without financial hardship.
- Allow asylum seekers to open bank accounts and receive payments directly to ease financial management and reduce dependence on informal channels.

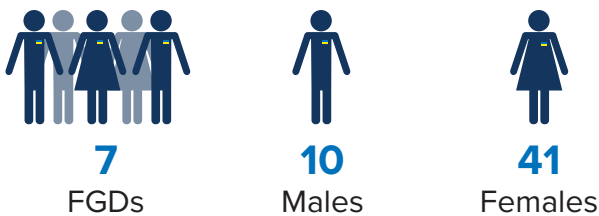
Ukrainian refugees residing in the left bank of the Dniestr river

A Ukrainian family poses for a photo during the open Day at the Park, part of Moldova's refugee response commemoration of World Refugee Day, celebrating resilience, inclusion, and the strength of displaced communities.

© UNHCR/ ProImagine



Demographic Breakdown:



Main Issues Identified:



Intentions:

Many refugee participants in the Left Bank FGDs stated they were open to long-term integration in Moldova, but faced significant barriers, including housing instability, low wages, and limited access to services. Some still hoped to return to Ukraine when the war ends, while others were considering relocation to other countries in Europe to look for better job opportunities.



Legal Status:

Participants of the FDGs in the region mostly had Temporary Protection (TP) status. While some faced challenges in obtaining it due to dual citizenship or lack of information, all believed that TP status was crucial for accessing financial assistance. However, refugee participants stated that they do not have the same

access to services in the left bank of the Dniestr river as do refugees on the right bank of the Nistru River.

As noted earlier, FGD participants noted that bedridden people have challenges to access to the Temporary Protection status because are not able to travel to the other side of Nistru river to go to the IGM office to complete the application and IGM mobile team cannot access the left bank of the Dniestr river.



Livelihood, Financial Situation, and Employment:

Left Bank participants noted employment opportunities in the left bank of the Dniestr river are limited, with many refugees struggling to find jobs that meet their financial needs.

Refugees reported that there is a general low average salary, often between \$150-\$200 per month for informal jobs, and that some refugees rely on financial assistance from organizations like IOM and UNHCR. However, as on the Right Bank, many participants reported that this assistance was insufficient to cover basic needs, especially with rising living costs.

A few refugees stated that they had been able to work part-time or online, while others had started small businesses.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence:

Participants expressed having had generally positive relations with the local population in the Left Bank. A few reported instances of discrimination or conflicts, with some refugees stating that they avoided openly discussing their place of origin due to the political sensitivities surrounding the region.

“

I try not to say I'm from Ukraine because a lot of people here have relatives in Russia.

”

“

My relatives say - you are traitors. You live in Russia.

”

Despite this, refugees expressed appreciation for the support they had received from locals and organizations operating in the territory. To participants, the local community had been welcoming, although some expressed concerns about political tensions and a sense of isolation among some refugees.



Access to Housing:

Accommodation was generally viewed as available, but with rising rental prices making it difficult to cover costs. Some refugees stated that they had faced eviction risks, particularly after being excluded from financial assistance programs due to increased targeting. Access to affordable housing in the region was noted as a major concern, as no humanitarian rental assistance programs were available for those living in the left bank of the Dniestr river.



Access to Healthcare:

Access to healthcare in the left bank of the Dniestr river was viewed as problematic, especially due to the shortage of specialized medical professionals and necessary equipment. While refugees noted that could receive primary health

care, they often needed to travel to Ukraine or other parts of Moldova for specific health services. They also noted issues with the availability of essential medications, stating that many refugees, particularly older refugees and those with disabilities, had trouble accessing specific medicines that they need.

“

We have 70% of pensioners with disabilities.

”



Access to information:

Left Bank participants noted a significant gap in the availability of reliable information for refugees in the left bank of the Dniestr river.

Many stated that they rely on social media, word of mouth, and local NGOs to stay informed about available services. Refugees living outside major cities or in rural areas face additional challenges in accessing timely and accurate information.



Refugee Suggestions for Improvement:

- Increase availability of rental assistance programs for refugees residing in the left bank of the Dniestr river.
- Expand access to healthcare, particularly specialized services, and better transportation for those with mobility issues.
- Improve dissemination of information through centralized platforms and community meetings, including information regarding accessing legal status in Moldova.
- Identify solution for bedridden people who cannot access legal status in Moldova due to the impossibility to travel to the left side of Nistru river.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an analysis of the recommendations from refugees in 2024, examining how they have developed in response to the gaps and priorities identified in 2023. It explores the transition from the suggestion outlined in 2023, which focused on respond to immediate needs, to more targeted interventions of 2024.

By comparing recommendations across both years, this chapter highlights the change toward addressing specific vulnerabilities, improving inclusivity, and implementing sustainable solutions in key areas such as:



healthcare



housing



education



livelihoods

This comparative review aims to provide insight into the progress made, while also identifying areas that continue to require attention to ensure the effective inclusion and support of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons in Moldova.



General Recommendations

The 2024 recommendations follow the 2023 ones integrating findings from the Participatory Assessment into practical support strategies.

While the 2023 focus was on improving refugees' participation in identifying their needs and suggest solutions, 2024 emphasizes in more practical action to be implemented, especially targeting the most marginalized and at-risk groups such as persons with disabilities and ethnic Roma, as well as those in left bank of the Dniestr river.



Basic Needs (Cash Assistance, Non-Food Items)

In 2024, recommendations highlight the need to be more targeted, focusing on specific vulnerabilities such as older refugees, children and adults with disabilities, and families with chronic medical conditions.

While 2023 highlighted the general provision of cash assistance and non-food items, especially for winter needs, the 2024 approach prioritizes tailored cash assistance support for vulnerable groups to support for essential expenses like heating and medications. This reflects a strategic response to resource constraints and rising living costs, with financial gaps for vulnerable families remain a challenge.



Accommodation

The 2024 recommendations change from the 2023 focus on immediate housing solutions, such as RAC capacity and addressing discrimination in the private housing market, to long-term strategies emphasizing sustainable solutions like affordable and adapted housing.

Rental assistance and the need for accessible housing solutions for persons with disabilities are priorities in 2024, reflecting progress toward more durable solutions despite ongoing challenges in urban rental markets.



Healthcare

The 2024 recommendations expand the 2023 focus on primary healthcare access and inclusion in the state medical insurance program. In 2024, suggestions try to address gaps in specialized care, medications for chronic conditions, and secondary health services, particularly for persons with disabilities such as rehabilitation services.

This progression highlights a deeper understanding of complex health needs identified during the participatory assessment in the refugee population, though significant lack of available services and barriers to affordable specialized care persist.



Social Services

The 2024 recommendations emphasize proactive engagement of social workers and tailored support for vulnerable families and persons with disabilities. This marks progress from the broader outreach focus of 2023, highlighting the effort to expand access to and the impact of social services, though further capacity building for local agencies continue to remain essential as in 2023.



Education

The 2024 recommendations continue to promote the initiatives suggested from 2023 by addressing the need to increase enrollment in Moldovan schools and support for Roma refugee children to better integrate in Moldovan schools, including through literacy and language support courses.

Anti-bullying campaigns and inclusive schooling programs were suggested, demonstrating a broader focus on marginalized groups and a commitment to improve the educational environment for all refugee children. Finally for 2024, a new recommendation is to increase after school activities, such as those offered through EduTech labs.



Employment and Livelihoods

In 2024, the recommendations shifted toward more specific interventions like part-time work, vocational training, and support in self-employment opportunities. This builds on 2023's broader focus on job matching and language support, reflecting the need to address employment barriers for refugees and ensuring access to sustainable livelihoods through the creation of a legal framework to support this process.



Legal Status and Access to Asylum

The 2024 recommendations go beyond the 2023 emphasis on stable legal status and clarity, addressing the needs of long terms solution, beyond March 2025 and the need to support those arrived irregularly in the country. This change indicates a stronger focus on addressing overlooked vulnerabilities.



Access to Information

The 2024 strategy expands on 2023's emphasis on improving information provision quality by adopting a multi-platform, including more in person approach, to ensure better inclusivity for groups with limited internet access or with sensorial and intellectual disabilities.

This progress demonstrates the need to reach broader audiences and in particular those most marginalized, while addressing information dissemination.



Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence

While 2023 focused on monitoring refugee and host communities' relations, the 2024 recommendations prioritize proactive measures such as cultural exchange programs, community events, and anti-xenophobia campaigns, including in the schools.

These efforts highlight a shift toward improving mutual understanding and reducing tensions, reflecting progress in community engagement, though discrimination in certain areas persists.



The MoldExpo centre in the Moldovan capital Chisinau has been adapted to accommodate refugees from Ukraine and includes a “Blue Dot” safe space, a support hub that provides protection services and information for refugees, with particular focus on children and the most vulnerable.