Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation | Moldova

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT 2025

QUARTER 2 - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In 2025, the Participatory Assessment transitioned from a periodic to an ongoing exercise, conducted in collaboration with UNHCR partners and members of the Accountability to Affected People Task Force. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with forcibly displaced persons of diverse gender, age, disability and other backgrounds are being held regularly throughout the country, including on the left bank of the Dniester River. *[1]* To ensure a timely and data-driven response to the needs and challenges of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, quarterly factsheets and an interactive dashboard have been developed and are continuously updated. *[2]*

Between April and June 2025, 20 FGDs were conducted with 126 participants, of whom 79% were women and 21% men. Eight FGDs involved adult refugees.*[3]* Three focused on persons with disabilities, two on youth aged 18 to 29, two on Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian asylum seekers, and one on stateless persons. Two discussions were held exclusively with Roma participants from both banks of the Dniester River. One FGD was conducted with caregivers of children with developmental disorders and another with non-Ukrainian refugee activists. Half of the FGDs were conducted in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) in the North and Center of Moldova, while the others involved participants living in private housing or hosted by local families, particularly on the left bank.*[4]*

KEY FINDINGS

Participants continued to express a desire to integrate into Moldovan society, consistent with the findings from Quarter 1. Quarter 2 discussions highlighted persistent structural barriers to integration, including language difficulties, limited accessibility to essential services and opportunities such as healthcare, education, employment, and information, and cultural disconnect. Refugees residing in RACs or rural regions, particularly in the North and South, reported fewer opportunities for integration due to limited access to Romanian language courses and community activities. While youth tended to adapt more easily, the other groups experienced greater isolation. Compared to Quarter 1, participants reported increased feelings of alienation, especially among Roma and stateless refugees, as well as Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian asylum seekers, who described limited opportunities for integration. *[5]* Adult participants renting private apartments in the central region reported better integration where community-based support such as access to Community Service Centers activities and volunteering opportunities were available.

[1] https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/age-gender-and-diversity-agd.

[2] Microsoft Power BI – Q1 Findings.

[3] Some Roma people were present in five FGDs and some older persons were present in 2 FGDs.

[4]eyJrIjoiZTY0NDg2MzYtYTFlZC00MGQwLWI3MDgtZDAyNjM5OTg1ZGVjIiwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBjLTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjh9

[5] It is possible that these differences reflect the perspectives of different individuals consulted in Quarter 2, rather than a shift in sentiment over time.

Legal challenges remained consistent during Quarter 2 among Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian asylum seekers and stateless persons. These were related to the short validity of asylum documents, which limited access to employment and healthcare. Some non-Ukrainian asylum seekers reported difficulties regularizing their stay despite having lived in Moldova for several years. Stateless persons, especially Roma and those born on the left bank of the Dniester River, continued to face barriers related to birth registration and the lack of Moldovan identity documents. These issues were more pronounced in rural areas and near the administrative territorial line.

Housing challenges deepened in Quarter 2. Across all profiles, many participants living in the South and North reported worsening affordability and insecurity in rental arrangements. Informal rentals were common, often without official contracts or protections, increasing the risk of eviction. Reports of eviction without notice became more frequent. Compared to Quarter 1, dissatisfaction with RAC relocations grew, along with complaints about poor infrastructure in RACs and high utility costs for those renting an apartment. Roma refugees and newly arrived asylum seekers relying on humanitarian support struggled to secure stable housing due to discrimination and limited financial resources.

Access to **healthcare** continued to vary significantly based on individuals' legal status and geographical location. Participants living in rural areas, including in rural RACs. reported limited access to family doctors and long travel distances to pharmacies and hospitals. Asylum seekers and stateless persons continued to be excluded from free healthcare or were required to pay for services. Reports of negative attitudes from medical staff became more frequent, especially toward Roma individuals and persons with disabilities. Transportation barriers, especially limited or unaffordable public transport connection between rural areas and RACs to urban centers, and insufficient support for chronic and mental health conditions were widely reported. Refugees in the North and on the left bank of the Dniester River experienced the greatest challenges accessing specialized care, while urban-based refugees reported better healthcare access overall.

Quarter 2 findings reinforced Quarter 1 observations that refugees across all profiles remained unclear about their entitlements and experienced limited engagement **with social workers**. Many participants expressed confusion regarding the types of social services available to them, eligibility criteria and how to access support. Participants consistently reported not receiving support or not knowing how to request it. New concerns emerged around inconsistencies in aid distribution. For example, confusion about voucher eligibility in the South led to mistrust and disputes. Adults and persons with disabilities in RACs continued to feel largely excluded from state social assistance. Roma and caregivers of children with development disorders faced the highest barriers. Roma individuals often had no contact with social workers and were unaware of available support, relying instead on community mediators; caregivers struggled with complex procedures and a lack of clear guidance on how to access benefits.

Reliance on **cash assistance** remained widespread across all groups. However, Quarter 2 discussions highlighted growing concerns about reduced assistance amounts and stress caused by verification procedures. These challenges were especially acute on the left bank of the Dniester River. Refugees reported missing verification appointments due to transportation issues, especially when required to travel to Chișinău compared to when the Community Service Center was operational in Orhei. As a result, some participants with disabilities resorted to coping strategies such as reducing food intake or skipping medication, particularly among those with chronic illnesses or dietary needs.

More adults reported that their children were attending local schools. However, language barriers and bullying persisted in the South of Moldovan both in rural and urban settings, in particular affecting Roma

children and children with developmental disorders. Inclusive **education** remained limited: some parents opted to keep their children enrolled in Ukrainian online schooling due to language difficulties and insufficient local support, particularly the absence of Romanian language classes and support teachers from Moldovan schools. Caregivers of children with developmental disorders highlighted the lack of extracurricular activities adapted to the children's needs, while youth participants noted insufficient vocational training opportunities.

Barriers to **employment** remained significant. As in Quarter 1, documentation issues (for asylum seekers), health conditions, language barriers, and caregiving responsibilities were the most common obstacles. Youth and men in urban areas occasionally found informal jobs, while older persons, ethnic Roma refugees, and caregivers struggled to find employment opportunities. The short validity of asylum documents remained a key limitation to access job opportunities for asylum seekers. Participants living in RACs requested accessible vocational training and support in finding employment opportunities that did not require proficiency in Romanian. Awareness of the existing employment inclusion programs increased, however access to them in rural areas remained limited.

> **An adult from rural area:** *"Salaries are very small in Moldova, but if you have nothing, you go and work for any money"*

The majority of participants obtained **information** primarily through social media sources like Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Viber groups. Representatives of NGOs and UN personnel were usually cited as trusted sources of information. Quarter 2 discussions revealed that many older persons, persons with disabilities, Roma, and stateless individuals felt increasingly excluded from accessing information due to limited access to devices and digital skills. This digital difficulty hindered their ability to stay informed. Although awareness of complaint mechanisms improved compared to Quarter 1, FGDs participants from various profiles voiced concerns about lack of response and follow-up on the feedback previously shared. Many participants reported submitting complaints, especially about cash verification, but never receiving a response. Youth participants specifically noted that the hotlines were unresponsive and unprofessional. Urban participants generally reported better access to accurate and timely information.

Although **coexistence** remained peaceful overall, deeper integration continued to be out of reach for many participants. Roma refugees reported the highest levels of discrimination, especially in schools and workplaces. Participation in community events remained limited across both quarters, though youth and adults in urban settings experienced greater interaction with host communities. RAC residents primarily engaged with other refugees, while those living in rented housing had more opportunities for informal interaction with the host community through shopping or local services. Compared to Quarter 1, Quarter 2 discussions highlighted increased psychological distress related to prolonged displacement and exclusion, with many participants describing the persistent feeling of being "permanent outsiders," particularly among stateless persons and long-term displaced individuals.

Celebrating Ukraine's traditions at **Ukrainian Day Event** organized by National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova

NEXT STEPS

- Ensure inclusive access to cash assistance for all eligible refugees, regardless of location or administrative changes.
- Raise awareness about job opportunities in rural areas, particularly in RACs.
- Reinforce feedback mechanisms and complaint systems to ensure refugees receive responses and follow-up on submitted concerns.
- Intervene through a Roma mediator to support referrals and facilitate solutions in the healthcare sector, particularly in cases of discrimination.
- Improve the accessibility and frequency of Romanian language to support integration.