

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE (UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION)

Republic of Moldova

7 March 2022

The conflict in Ukraine has created a regional humanitarian crisis. Over **1,5 million Ukrainians** have already fled their homes into neighbouring countries. **Moldova** is one of the main refugee-hosting countries and a transit country for onwards.

Some **230 thousand** Ukrainian refugees have entered Moldova since 24 February 2022, with a proportion continuing to Romania, Poland and other countries. Those entering **arrive distressed** and are **heavily affected psychosocially**.

For **updated refugee data**, check out the Ukraine Situation **refugee data portal here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>**. Coordination of interventions is shaping up, with Government, local actors, INGOs and UN Agencies.

KEY NUMBERS

82,762 Ukrainian refugees

are in Moldova since 24 February 2022 (7 March figure)

Women & children

89% of Ukrainian refugee arrivals are women and children (only Ukrainian)

Moldovan response

The Moldovan Government and the local population are showing extraordinary support and response, which are now

The situation in Moldova is evolving rapidly. This weekly update is to provide a first update to the inter-agency community, focusing on the **refugee** situation. However, there are also others who are severely affected by this crisis (third-country nationals for example).

UNHCR and partners are developing a **Refugee Response Plan**, which will form part of a Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation. This will be an update of the previously shared **4-pager RRRP Summary**.



Moldova experiencing an unprecedented refugee crisis

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Today at Palanca I saw thousands and thousands of people streaming across Ukraine's border crossing with Moldova.

Thousands of stories of separation, anguish, and loss.

A difficult day, but much respect for the many dedicated Moldovan officials and people helping the refugees.



Operational Context

The Government of Moldova has declared its readiness to receive tens of thousands of refugees from Ukraine and is cooperating with the UN, local and international organizations to respond to the unfolding crisis. The Government has set up a Crisis Management Centre under the Prime Minister's Office and a series of emergency accommodation centers are being established to support arrivals from Ukraine. Coordination is ongoing with partners (including new ones that are arriving), to ensure interventions are complementary to the response of the Government.

On 24 February 2022, the Government of Moldova closed its airspace and announced a State of Emergency, allowing the authorities to establish a special regime of entry and exit from the country; special measures for the protection of refugees, the protection of the population of the Republic of Moldova and of the country's institutions; and a special working regime for economic operators and public institutions.

Entries coming particularly from the southern and south-western parts of Ukraine, including the port city of Odessa. However, border crossings in the North are also seeing a high level of arrivals in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation is volatile and is changing rapidly. The majority of those coming in are women and children, while there are also some men coming through (elderly, single fathers or fathers of families of at least three children). There are also significant needs to support people with special needs (elderly, people with disabilities).

The High Commissioner for Refugees visited Moldova from 3 to 5 March, meeting incoming refugees the President, key Ministries and actors on the ground. He went to refugee-hosting accommodation centres at the southern border of Palanca and in Chişinău.



Refugee family arriving into Moldova © UNICEF Moldova

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- A Protection sector working group has been put together to coordinate ongoing efforts, led by UNHCR.
- ACTED is engaged in the transportation of refugees from the border and put in place 10 busses, in cooperation with other local NGOs and municipalities.
- INTERSOS shared a multisectoral needs assessment.
- UNFPA procured 3,000 dignity kits for women, girls and elderly people, of which 1,300 are ready to be delivered on Wednesday, 2 March.
- UN Women printed 34,000 informational leaflets (17,000 in Ukrainian, 10,000 in Russian, 7,000 in English) and they are being handed out at border crossings since 25 February. An additional 10,000 copies of the same leaflets are being printed in Ukrainian. This will support Government to disseminate crucial information (available support services, asylum-seeking process, etc.) to incoming refugees.
- UNHCR, in coordination with UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM is also preparing an additional 5,000 pieces of information materials.
- WHO delivered three speakers, including necessary accessories, to Palanca border crossing on 28 February to play pre-recorded information messages for refugees waiting in line.
- UNODC negotiated the re-programming of use of three rooms, originally intended for women who use drugs, to be used for women refugees with children. This provides safe accommodation for one woman and three children in Ribnita, one woman and two children in Balti and two women and six children in Anenii Noi, with the possibility to add two additional beds.
- UNAIDS mobilized their partners and identified an additional shelter to accommodate LGBTQI+ persons. The local community is in touch with Ukrainians to ensure they are safely assisted. The shelter can offer accommodation and support to six families/couples.
- UNDP supported the GBV center in Gagauzia (Chirsova) to accommodate 23 refugees, incl. 13 children.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- **Moldovan authorities are stretched to the limit and need urgent support.**
- Arrivals are increasing. Border sites seeing an increase of protection needs, as they await transportation to sites. Psychosocial support is a gap.
- Law Center for Advocates, a Moldovan NGO, states that waiting hours at the border in Palanca in the South can be over ten hours. Other challenges are cold weather and issues with documentation to cross.
- Support to government on social assistance mechanisms and targeting of assistance (likely via cash-based transfers)

- Protection, incl. GBV monitoring and referral support - requiring additional protection surge staff.
- Reports have come in of people waiting a few days as they could not get on busses to continue, as they brought pets. This situation is now being resolved.
- PSEA and gender mainstreaming needs to be fully embedded in response.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- Education sector working group is established and first meeting held, organized by UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and UNHCR on 4 March.
- Assessments ongoing.



HEALTH & NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- Several Health Sector meetings held, with participation of WHO, Ministry of Health and partners.
- WHO procured PPE and triage equipment for Palanca and Ocnita border crossing posts. The items were delivered on 25 February. This includes 300 pieces of hand disinfectant, 200 pieces of hand disinfectant Desderman Pure INT 11, 33,000 pairs of gloves, 50,000 face masks, 33,000 respirators, 50 non-contact infrared thermometers, 50 electronic tonometers, and 50 pulsometers.
- IOM provided food items to the General Inspectorate of Border Police.
- WFP and Action against Hunger mission arrived this week, FAO is on the ground and has a presence.
- UNHCR is providing personal hygiene sets at border crossings.
- UNHCR will provide support to ensure medical services, supplies have arrived.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Lack of humanitarian health supplies. As border crossings become more crowded, the risk of the spread of disease is increasing. WASH facilities are needed.
- Law Center for Advocates states that there are serious health concerns, also in the other border crossings beyond Palanca in the northern areas of Moldova. Disability support is needed.
- Support needed to inform refugees on available referral to the medical facilities that provide clinical management of rape and support for cases of sexual abuse.
- Support to the Ministry of Interior Affairs on medical triage and epidemiological surveillance (COVID, cVDPV2), also directly at transit centres.

- Supporting Government in the provision of emergency health-care services and psycho-social counselling.
- There is urgent need for family kits.
- Health supplies are needed for persons suffering from chronic diseases, including HIV/Aids.
- Government needs to be supported on readiness to roll out the vaccination programme for Polio and Measles (sufficient stock is available in Moldova).



SHELTER & NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- The Government has stepped in immensely to provide emergency shelter for incoming Ukrainian refugees. Local communities are mobilizing and supporting, and even local politicians are engaged in supporting the transportation of refugees.
- On 2 March, the first shipment of UNHCR-backed humanitarian aid supply to the authorities in Moldova arrived. One-quarter of the around 8,000 thermal blankets were immediately delivered to border crossing points in the South and handed out to refugee families with children and other vulnerable people. The remaining blankets are placed in temporary storage.
- More UNCHR aid supplies are on the way, including sleeping bags, more blankets, tents, hygiene and baby kits, solar lamps and other relief items.
- UNDP will contribute to the immediate response by supporting local communities and local public authorities (LPAs) in their humanitarian assistance efforts to ensure accommodation and basic needs for refugees coming from Ukraine. The Government will be supported to provide temporary accommodation / shelter across the country. As of 27 February, in partnership with LPAs and long-standing programme partners including EU and SDC, UNDP has identified 300 beds available in private accommodation, as well as food supplies, hygiene products for approximately 1 month. An additional 500 beds in public spaces (schools, kindergartens, etc.), necessary NFIs (mattresses, pillows, etc.), food supplies, and hygiene products are identified for a duration of 3 months.
- UNDP will further provide additional support to the triage centre at Palanca border crossing to cover urgent needs, especially for women and children. These items are 30 led lights for tents, 20 tent heaters (3kW), 20 gasoline/diesel heat pumps and one shower cabin to provide more secure conditions for women and girls.
- IOM procured 30 tent heaters (3kW) and 300 blankets on 28 February, which will be delivered.
- On 1 March, UNODC and UNAIDS delivered 120 blankets to Palanca border crossing, which were donated by the prison administration.
- The UN Women team mobilized their own resources and collected food items (including for pets), clothes and essential products for women and girls as well as 200 pens for staff and border police (as requested) and delivered those to the Palanca border crossing.

- UNHCR is procuring 2 62kWt generators for two Accommodation Centres, run by the Bureau of Migration and Asylum.
- UNHCR will further provide support to the creation of a reception / transit centre at the BMA accommodation centre. This includes 100m2 for 6 workstations, 6 computers/laptops, 6 multifunction printers, 6 mobile graphics stations, 6 office tables, 20 chairs, 1 metal detector.
- UNHCR will provide training to 40 staff at the accommodation centres.
- UNHCR will further support a mobile ICT support centre with 1 tent and 2 mobile generators (min. 30 kWt).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- As of yesterday, most refugees stay in hotels or rented accommodation, while prices to stay are increasing in the country. In addition, as of 6 March Govt of Moldova has established around 74 temporary accommodations, hosting nearly 5,000 individuals. Several of these centres are calling for an urgent upgrade of their infrastructures (such as access to water and sanitation). More temporary accommodation is being identified, as the existing ones are exhausting their hosting capacity (currently at 82%).
- There are urgent needs for equipment for the Triage Center in Palanca, including sleeping bags, single-use cutlery, phone chargers and Wi-Fi internet connection, heat pumps (8 additional pieces), and additional shower cabins (11 pieces).
- Furthermore, there are needs for emergency shelter kits, cash-based assistance for rent as well as diapers for elderly persons.
- Refurbishment and equipment for temporary placement centres and transportation services (to and from border crossing posts) are also urgently needed.
- There is urgent need for hygiene kits for children and babies.
- Wheelchairs are needed too for children and handicapped refugee arrivals.



LOGISTICS & SUPPLY

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and WFP coordinating logistics and supply, coordinating also with neighbouring countries to plan needs.
- On 4 March, additional humanitarian aid supplies provided by UNHCR arrived in Moldova, through airlift from the UAE. This includes 250 family tents, 2,500 synthetic sleeping mats, 1,000 plastic tarpaulins, 5,000 portable led solar lamps, 250 winterization kits. As well as 10,010 laundry soap, 10,008 pieces of toilet soap and 10,008 bottles of hair shampoo, 10,030 toothbrushes and 10,032 tubes of toothpaste, 1,500 baby care kits, 1500 baby care kits, 15,000 packs of female sanitary napkins, and 1,000 respiratory masks (FFP2).
- Five busses with goods arrived from Greece with core relief items, sent by UNHCR.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS**Achievements and Impact**

- As the RETS lead, UNHCR will conduct an assessment of partner IT and communication needs across key operational sites and border crossings starting 05 February.
- UNHCR has provided 20 computers/laptops to the Bureau of Migration and Asylum on 01 March. They are further procuring 20 multi-functional printers, 20 mobile graphics stations (+ software), 20 office tables, 40 seats, 40 sets of flashlights and rechargeable batteries, 100 TETRA radio stations, 20 desk lamps, 4 UV circulator, 5 units of minibus transport, 4 cameras. This equipment will be deployed to border crossings.

MULTIPURPOSE CASH**Achievements and Impact**

- The first Cash Working Group for Moldova met 1/3/2022 under the co-chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and UNHCR.
- CRS provided cash support to up to 100 refugees from Ukraine, accommodated in accommodation centers near the airport.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Large scale delivery of emergency cash grants to be vulnerable refugees from Ukraine is planned by UNHCR and other operational agencies. The response is being designed and systems are set up for rapid delivery.

NEXUS**Achievements and Impact**

- UNDP will conduct a rapid foresight socio-economic analysis of the impacts of the crisis on Moldova, taking into account all relevant risks. The analysis is backed by evidence and data generated from different sources and at different levels. This will fall under the work done by the UNCT (United Nations Country Team), led by the Resident Coordinator. Outcomes of the analysis will allow for the elaboration of rapid, mid- and long-term recovery responses to the socio-economic implication of the crisis.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Resilience and livelihood planning, also for Moldovan host population.

Working in partnership

As mentioned on the cover page, humanitarian partners are working together to develop an inter-agency **Refugee Response Plan**, in close partnership with the Government. Local expertise and local partners are a key cornerstone of the response, and a regular inter-agency coordination meeting has been set up on Mondays at 14h00. For more information, contact the Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (contact below).

With sectors being set up, a regular weekly inter-sector Refugee Coordination Forum meeting has been set each Monday from 14h00 – 15h30.

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