



Regional Inter-Agency CHILD PROTECTION Update

June 2022

CONTEXT

Population movements across borders in the first months of the conflict in Ukraine have made this situation the fastest refugee-growing emergency since World War II and continue to be unpredictable.

Based on government statistics and protection monitoring, children comprise over 40 per cent of persons displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, with reports of unaccompanied and separated children, including children evacuated or relocated from institutional care facilities in Ukraine, and children accompanied by adults of unknown kinship. Many children have been exposed to traumatic events and family separation during flight and require specialized child protection and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services.

REGIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SUB-WORKING GROUP

Considering the high number of children affected by the emergency, and the wide range of intersectional protection risks that they face, an agreement was reached among Regional Refugee Coordination Forum members on the need to establish a Regional Sub-Working Group focused on Child Protection, co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF, and working under the auspices and guidance of the Regional Protection Working Group (RPWG).

As the part of UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), Regional Sub-Working Group on Child Protection (CP SWG) was established on 26 April 2022 by UNHCR and UNICEF and provides technical and policy guidance and support to the Sub-Working Groups on Child Protection established at country level in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

Throughout the response, particular attention is given to the protection needs of unaccompanied and separated children, children with disabilities and other children with specific needs and at heightened risk.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The SWG CP has identified the following key tasks and responsibilities: protection analysis, data and information-sharing, joint protection response, technical advice, advocacy, inclusion in national systems and the nexus approach, accountability to affected populations (AAP) and gender and diversity.



Women and children arriving in Poland from Ukraine, @UNHCR, 2022



“Blue Dots”

UNHCR and UNICEF have been rolling out Blue Dot sites at border crossing points, transit hubs, and related locations in the region, to provide critical information and essential services to particularly vulnerable arrivals, including women and children. At this point, 31 Blue Dot sites are operational in the region: 12 in Poland, 10 in Romania, 7 in Moldova, 1 in Slovakia and 1 in Hungary. Additional sites in these countries will soon be established. Outside the region of countries that border Ukraine, Blue Dots are operational in Bulgaria and Italy.



Blue Dot psychologist Ana Zincov (left) consults a family fleeing the war in Ukraine at the Palanca border crossing in the Republic of Moldova, @UNICEF, 2022

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Hungary

The national CP SWG was established and held its first meeting on the 30th of March 2022. The Group has had five meetings since. As per the initially drafted Terms of Reference (ToR), both Child Protection and Education coordination were to be covered by this SWG, but the members have since decided that Education has come out as a distinct issue, resulting in the formation of separate SWGs for CP and Education. Both SWGs have been co-convened by UNHCR and UNICEF. The combined membership of the two SWGs counts 25 organizations and over 40 members.

The CP SWG has continuously sought to align with the national regulatory and policy framework relating to child protection, while featuring as a platform for relevant governmental and non-governmental actors to exchange information on child protection issues. It has since welcomed the representatives of the government's Children's Centre who presented on their work regarding vulnerable children in residential care, including unaccompanied refugee children.

Moldova

The CP SWG has met 11 times since its inception and is co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF. It counts over 40 members, inclusive of international and national NGOs, local government representatives and UN organizations.

The CP SWG in has developed and rolled out the CP referral pathways and trained over 600 frontline responders on child protection and child rights. Over 16,000 children (including in Blue Dots and through mobile teams countrywide) have been reached through child protection services in Moldova. More than 3,000 children have been provided with MHPSS.

The CP SWG has established a Committee on Safeguarding and has provided safeguarding training to managers of refugee accommodation centres. Capacity building assessment of the SWG has been undertaken and relevant training has been collectively rolled out.

Poland

The Child Protection Sub-Sector (CP SS) provides technical et al. guidance to support its members, and seeks to ensure effective, coherent and predictable interventions to support government efforts to respond to the child protection needs of refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern fleeing from Ukraine. The CP SS is co-chaired by UNHCR, UNICEF and a local NGO FDDS (Empowering Children Foundation).

Since the onset of the crisis, the CP SS trained 61 professionals on issues related to child protection, referral pathways, communication, and the Best Interest Procedure (BIP). The CP SS has also mapped and established the referral pathways for 14 cities in Poland.

Slovakia

The CP SWG, led by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) and co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR, acts as a platform for its 19 members to present updates, highlight child protection issues, establish partnerships and linkages to reduce duplication of interventions, manage available resources more effectively and achieve adherence to response standards. The CP SWG has been convened five times since its establishment.

Since the onset of the Ukraine emergency, MoLSAF has taken the lead in responding to the needs of children at risk, especially unaccompanied children who require temporary accommodation, legal guardians, or alternative care. Members of the CP SWG continue to provide technical support to the authorities and complementary assistance to persons of concern.

The SWG's discussions point to the continued need to address gaps in national legislation, especially concerning legal guardianship procedures and right to education, and to ensure that marginalized groups are not left behind.

Romania

The CP SWG has had eight meetings thus far and includes 60 members (Government representatives, the National Child Protection Authority, UN agencies, national NGOs and NGO associations). It is co-chaired by UNHCR, UNICEF and the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption (ANPDCA) and has developed and adopted its ToR. The CP SWG has instituted two sub-teams: a team for Capacity Building and a team for Cash and Child Protection.

The CP SWG network has thus far trained 215 government officials, NGO representatives and volunteers in the essentials of child protection.

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LINKS:

[Regional Child Protection Sub-Working Group - Ukraine Refugee Situation](#)