



REGIONAL UKRAINE REFUGEE RESPONSE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SUB-WORKING GROUP Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND

The vast majority of refugees fleeing Ukraine are women and children – some 90 per cent. From its onset, the gendered profile of Ukraine refugee crisis became evident, as most of refugees arriving were women-headed households, single women, adolescent girls, and elderly women. Further exacerbating the risks of gender-based violence (GBV), this crisis became a family separation crisis, as men aged 18-60 are banned from leaving the country under the martial law. The mass movement has been happening quickly and in large number (often referred to as fastest growing refugee crisis from the times of WWII), resulting in family separations and heightened protection risks, especially for women, girls and other categories of people with heightened protection needs on the move.

Gender-based violence is usually under-reported. Meanwhile, gender-based violence risks for women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), are heightened in the context of war and armed conflict, which would also apply to the current situation in Ukraine. For women and girls inside Ukraine and those on the move, the risks of gender-based violence are multiple and include conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), trafficking, intimate partners violence and other forms of violence. The risks for women and girls on the move are present at border crossing points, transit/collective and reception centres, in the context of private and informal transportation and accommodation arrangements in neighbouring countries. LGBTQI+ refugees and persons with disabilities also face heightened risks of gender-based violence during throughout the cycle of displacement.

Women Against Violence Europe (hereinafter referred to as: WAVE) Network.

Refugees, stateless persons, and third-country nationals, in particular women and girls fleeing Ukraine need **urgent action** to prevent gender-based violence and respond to its life-threatening consequences, as well as mitigate the GBV risks. Gender-based violence is a key life-threatening protection risk for refugee women and girls fleeing Ukraine and needs to be prioritized in the emergency response, both in Ukraine and the host countries. The national systems capacity to provide adequate GBV multisectoral response services and support, such as psychosocial support, safe shelter, and clinical care (including for management of rape), are under intense pressure to absorb the demand. Humanitarian organizations focus first and foremost on the safety and well-being of survivors, including by strengthening the access and the quality of GBV services (including health services, psycho-social support, legal assistance and security services aimed at improvement of all the four pillars of the response).

In March 2022, UNHCR and partners launched the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to promote and implement a comprehensive response to support efforts by five countries neighbouring Ukraine to protect and assist refugees coming from Ukraine. UNHCR leads and coordinates the implementation of the RRP in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. Within the framework of the RRP and building on existing country-level humanitarian coordination structures, an inter-agency Regional Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) chaired by UNHCR with participation from RRF members and other relevant actors has been established in Geneva to ensure efficient situational information management and support to country level coordination as required.

UNHCR has established and is co-leading GBV inter-agency coordination structures in Poland (with Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet (CPK) – Women’s Rights Center Foundation) and Moldova (with UNFPA), while in the other neighbouring countries, GBV is a standing agenda item of the national Protection Working Groups chaired by UNHCR in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In light of the high number of women and girls affected by the emergency, and the wide range of intersectional protection risks at stake, an agreement was reached among RCF members on the need to establish a Regional Sub-Working Group focused on Gender-Based Violence, co-chaired by UNHCR and WAVE, and working under the auspices and guidance of the Regional Protection Working Group. The Regional GBV SWG also has direct linkages with national GBV SWGs in the region.

GOAL

The Regional Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group (GBV SWG) is a coordination body with the objective to strengthen GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response in emergency settings. It aims to ensure coherent, coordinated, effective and quality GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response interventions through the mobilization of relevant government agencies, international organizations, UN Agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society networks, national refugee-led organizations, refugee women-led organizations.

The main goal is to ensure relevant and robust coordination mechanisms, including information management, timely and effective needs assessments, planning, prioritization, implementation, reporting and evaluation, under the overall umbrella of the Regional Protection Working Group.

It provides technical and policy guidance and support to the GBV SWGs established at country level in Poland and Moldova, and the national Protection Working Groups in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, and seeks to ensure effective, coherent and predictable interventions to support these countries Governments’ efforts to respond to the needs arising in the area of GBV. The GBV SWG ensures quality services are in place for multi-sectoral GBV response, GBV prevention is strengthened while supporting the integration of GBV risk mitigation interventions within other sectors in line with the IASC GBV Guidelines.

The GBV SWG members will adhere to standards set forth in the [Inter-agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergency programming](#) and the [IASC GBV Guidelines](#), [WHO ethical and safety recommendations](#), and the [interagency case management guidelines](#).

The GBV SWG will promote leadership of and direct engagement with refugee women and girls within the refugee response and promote membership and co-leadership of refugee-led and women-led organisations (RLOs and WLOs). It will ensure accountability to affected populations through consultative and participative approaches.

MAIN PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles for GBV coordination and programming ensure we meet our obligations as humanitarians to “Do No Harm”¹. The GBV guiding principles for GBV coordination and programming are: safety, respect, confidentiality and non-discrimination. Application of these principles at all times is mandatory. Programming and coordination adhere to the human rights-based and community-based approaches². Everyone directly or indirectly engaged with survivors

¹ A ‘do no harm’ approach involves taking all measures necessary to avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of the actions of humanitarian actors.

² Rights-based approach: A rights-based approach seeks to analyse and address the root causes of discrimination and inequality to ensure that everyone has the right to live with freedom and dignity, safe from violence, exploitation and abuse, in accordance with principles of human rights law. Community-based approach: A community-based approach ensures that affected populations are engaged actively as partners in developing strategies related to their protection and the provision of humanitarian assistance. This approach involves direct involvement of women, girls and other at-risk groups at all stages in the humanitarian response, to identify protection risks and solutions, and build on existing community-based protection mechanisms.

must ensure a *survivor-centred approach*, and the following Guiding Principles³.

Guiding principles for GBV coordination and programming:

- **Confidentiality:** No identifying information will be revealed in data resources, nor during discussions in coordination and other meetings, when reference is made to specific GBV cases. In GBV SWG meetings, GBV trends are discussed, however individual and/or specific cases should not be discussed in order to ensure confidentiality. Measures will be promoted and disseminated to ensure GBV actors abide to the principle of confidentiality. Survivors have the right to decide with whom they share information and informed consent must be obtained for service provision;
- **Safety:** all actors will prioritize the safety of the survivor, beneficiary, family, witnesses and service providers at all times. At coordination level, we will ensure coordination prioritizes the safety and security of GBV service providers, survivors and others accessing assistance;
- **Respect:** actions and responses of all actors will be guided by respect for the choices, wishes, rights and the dignity of the survivor;
- **Non-discrimination:** non-discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, religion, political views, sexual orientation, social or other status. The GBV SWG will promote tailored programming for groups at heightened risk of GBV while also ensuring GBV services are accessible for all across status, background, age and disability.

Survivor-centred approach: A survivor-centred approach means that all those who are engaged in GBV programming prioritize the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor. Essentially, a survivor centred approach applies the human rights-based approach to designing and developing programming that ensures that survivors' rights and needs are first and foremost.

The survivor centred approach aims to create a supportive environment in which the survivor's rights are respected and in which she/he is treated with dignity and respect. The approach helps to promote the survivor's recovery and ability to identify and express needs and wishes, as well as to reinforce her/his capacity to make decisions about possible interventions. Providers must have the resources and tools they need to ensure that such an approach is implemented.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Inform High-Level Humanitarian Strategic Decision-Making:** Prepare needs assessments and analysis of gaps to inform priorities and identify solutions, formulate priorities based on analysis of available data.
- **Plan and Implement Strategies:** Develop sector plans, objectives, indicators to support strategic response objectives, apply and adhere to common standards and guidelines, clarify funding needs, priorities and cluster contributions to humanitarian funding proposals; coordinate mainstreaming GBV in relevant regional strategies and response plans, develop GBV-related strategies and workplans.
- **Protection Analysis:** Provide strategic guidance and advice to the Regional Protection Working Group and country level SWG CP on courses of action related to GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response strategies, including development of messaging and analysis to support advocacy and resource mobilization for GBV in the region based on evidence and outcomes of protection monitoring.
- **Data and Information sharing:** Manage information to support decision making. Facilitate the flow of the relevant, appropriate and context specific information between country level SWG CP and other fora and promote consistency in co-ordination standards, information

³ GBV Minimum Standards, supra note 15, pp. xi; 2-9

management and capacity between national SWG GBVs and PWGs.

- **Joint protection response:** Ensure that the protection needs of women and girls, men and boys survivors of GBV and those at risk of GBV fleeing Ukraine are addressed through timely and coordinated action, in close collaboration with the Sub-Working Groups on GBV and Protection Working Groups at country level, as well as the Regional Sub-Working Group on Child Protection. Coordinate, identify and strengthen the GBV protection response in line with the agreed regional protection strategy, and ensure joint efforts in the needs/gaps analysis, joint recommendations for responses, working together within the RRP framework to ensure adequate funding, joint planning, joint information management and joint reporting.
- **Technical advice:** Mainstream GBV considerations into the regional wide response plan and the agreed regional protection strategy. Provide technical guidance and support on protection and assistance services to country level SWG GBV and PWG, as relevant. Promote standards, guidelines and promising practices on GBV across the region. Support the establishment of referral pathways and SOPs at the national or local level, as needed. Provide guidance on GBV safety assessments.
- **Support Robust Advocacy:** Strengthen regional advocacy with the aim to consolidate protection strategies with key stakeholders, in line with the agreed regional protection strategy. Identify advocacy gaps and develop appropriate advocacy messages and tools to engage relevant Governmental and other key stakeholders. Advocate for and coordinate resource mobilisation initiatives for the SWG GBV and its members. Promote GBV risk mitigation across other sectors, develop life-saving messages, key messages on GBV, briefing notes and talking points, advocacy strategy etc.
- **Mainstreaming measures to mitigate, prevent and respond to GBV:** Ensure and advocate for integration of appropriate GBV mainstreaming measures in the national systems, ensure capacity development and support to such national systems when needed. Strengthen linkages with other development initiatives on protection being undertaken by the Governments and other actors, particularly the women led organizations.
- **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP):** Ensure that AAP is at the centre of the humanitarian response through robust community-based complaints mechanisms to guarantee participation and inclusion, communication and transparency, feedback and response with an age, gender, and diversity approach. Coordinate, identify and strengthen the resilience of host communities, through support benefiting both host populations and refugees and through increasing the awareness of, and equitable access to services.
- **Gender and diversity:** In coordination with the Regional Gender Taskforce, ensure that analyses include assessments of impact and understanding of age, gender and diversity dynamics, so that any unintended negative effects that may increase the vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys with different backgrounds and profiles to protection risks be minimized or prevented; Ensure sectors consult [the IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#) to explore the scope of protection actions that will meaningfully engage women, girls, boys and men and promote a safe and dignified environment for protection and assistance programmes to all affected populations. Programming should adhere to the IASC [Age with Gender](#) (GAM) marker.

LINKAGE WITH OTHER REGIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES

The SWG GBV will be working under the auspices and guidance of the Regional Protection Working Group and will report back to the Regional Protection Working Group through its co-chairs.

The SWG GBV will work closely with the Regional Gender Task Force and the Sub-Working Group on Child Protection (CP) and the Regional Task Force on Anti-Trafficking, while collaborating as and when needed, with other Regional Sub-Working Groups.

MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRING

UNHCR as global lead on coordination in refugee setting is responsible for supporting the GBV Sub-Sector in line with the refugee coordination model.

The co-chairs will oversee the development, endorsement and implementation of the GBV Work Plan, ensure close and effective collaboration with other working groups and represent the group at the protection working group.

The co-chairs of the SWG GBV at country level in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, as well as the co-chairs of the Regional Gender Task Force, will be invited to attend the meetings of the regional SWG GBV and provide updates on a regular basis.

The SWG GBV is open to operational organizations implementing GBV programmes in the region currently or planning to be engaged in actual delivery of GBV services as part of their humanitarian response to the refugee crisis, as well as a selected number of strategic regional actors. The organizations wishing to join the SWG GBV should be adhering to GBV guiding principles. Members would include UN agencies and other international organizations, international and national NGOs and the civil society organizations, including and in particular those that are led by women and refugees. Member organizations should identify primary and alternate focal points who will regularly attend the SWG GBV meetings.

Roles of the members of Regional SWG GBV:

- Abide to international standards and guiding principles for ethical GBV programming;
- Appointing a focal point with GBV technical expertise and an alternate for attendance to meeting and managing communication from and to the group (e.g. data request, key advocacy messages). Existing members have the responsibilities to communicate to the GBV coordinators any change that may occur in relation to focal point and/or alternate.
- Planning with all other actors to avoid duplication and address gaps including geographical and programmatic gaps;
- Regularly attend meetings and share information about activities and the field challenges encountered;
- Actively participate in the tasks of the working group, including leading and or participating in specific activities of the coordination group and developing common tools and approaches. Participate in dedicated ad hoc taskforces;
- Focal points are expected to disseminate internally to their own organization coordination tools and guidance shared by the SWG including key tools as referral pathways.

The regional SWG GBV is co-chaired by UNHCR and WAVE.

MEETINGS AND PERIODICITY

The SWG GBV will convene in hybrid format (virtually and in-person) initially on a bi-weekly basis, every Monday from 15.00 to 16.00 CET. Ad hoc meetings may be called at short notice in case of critical issues with a regional dimension. Minutes of the meetings will be circulated among all members in a timely manner. Notetaking will rotate between the two co-chairs.

REVISION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These terms of reference guiding the structure and activities of the GBV SWG will be revised every six months and/or based on immediate needs as agreed by the members.

CONTACTS

Chair: UNHCR

Co-chair: WAVE