Ukraine Refugee Situation
Regional Gender Task Force (RGTF) Meeting
6 April 2022

Meeting Minutes

1. Introduction

UN Women co-chair opened the meeting by informing that the Regional Gender Task Force (RGTF) was established, and is co-chaired by UN Women and CARE International, to support the Regional Refugee Response Forum (RRRF) with a focus on relevant refugee hosting countries as part of the refugee response plan. As this is the first meeting of the RGTF, UN Women presented the draft RRRF structure to provide the main context. It was underlined that although RGTF was placed under the Accountability and Inclusion Working Group, due to its cross-cutting and intersectional nature, it has been agreed to negotiate with UNHCR to have it placed as a stand-alone RGTF under the forum.

CARE International co-chair welcomed the participants and explained that the RGTF is established based on extensive experience from similar structures that are operational in Asia Pacific (UN Women, CARE International and OCHA) and Arab States/Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (UN Women, CARE International and OCHA), which proved to be productive fora for collaboration between the I/NGOs and UN agencies to bring in regional networks and national structures together. These groups offer the opportunity to pool the limited and stretched resources for strategic and full engagement of all sectors for an effective gender-sensitive humanitarian response.

2. RGTF Terms of reference and Membership: Short presentation and discussion

UN Women presented the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the RGTF to the participants underlining the demand-driven support nature which aims to cover all sectors. It was requested that participants share their comments to re-shape the ToRs based on their expectations to reach impactful results before the next meeting. Additionally, participants were also asked if they were any recommendations for regional level women-led/women's rights organisations (WLOs/WROs) would like to serve as the third co-chair of the RGTF as well as propose any other regional organizations/networks to be members.

Nino Gora from Save the Children asked where gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation area falls under the presented structures and if the RGTF is planning any joint advocacy at country and/or regional levels. As Save the Children is operationalizing Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) and Girl-Friendly Spaces, it is critical to have a strong advocacy on these services. Ekram El-Huni from UN Women responded that once the scoping of the space for the ToRs was endorsed and a common agreement was reached, it would be possible to have joint advocacy activities both at regional and sub regional levels. Regarding GBV, a Regional GBV Sub-working Group will be established at the regional level under the Regional Protection Working Group (RPWG) to be co-chaired by UNHCR and another agency. Gabriela Alvarez Minte from UNFPA explained that there are plans to have GBV Specialist to be the liaison on GBV under the regional set up and the recruitment process is ongoing. She will provide update about the process during the next meeting. Sergii Lavruklin from UNHCR informed that RPWG was established and GBV is a standing agenda item in the RPWG.

3. Tour de Table: Presentation of the Participants and their expectations from the RGTF

- **OCHA (Ukraine):** Dana Yanine Baron Romero, Senior Gender Adviser is deployed in Ukraine.
- **WHO (Ukraine):** Darra Popova - Gender Equality and Human Rights Focal Point, Ukraine Country Office. WHO is planning various activities in Ukraine and therefore interested in having data to feed and shape these activities.
- **WHO** (Regional Office for Europe): Isabel Yordi, Gender Advisor. It is expected from the RGTF to identify ways to channel support that country offices need and also build/strengthen linkages between Ukraine, Moldova and Poland. Health clusters are working and active in the field. Therefore, it is important to embed gender perspectives within these clusters not only for service delivery but also acknowledging the needs of service providers.
- Galina Lesco **(Moldova):** GBV Consultant (reproductive and adolescent health)
- Milena Setva (Regional Office for Europe), UN Volunteer in Gender Equality and Human Rights Progarmme.
- **ILO (HQ, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia):** Elene Dedova engaged with Gender Equality and Diversity Branch. ILO is looking for entry points and accumulate information from the RGTF.
- **UN Women (Moldova):** Dominika Stojanoska - Moldova Country Office Representative and Co-chair of Gender Task Force (GTF) for Moldova. It is expected to have this RGTF as a platform for joint advocacy from country to regional level and vice versa in addition to exchanging information that is popping up at country level. Girl-Friendly Spaces is a great example that can be taken forward with the help of joint advocacy. It would also be welcome to have suggestions and ideas for Moldova to mainstreamgender in humanitarian action.
- **UN Women (ECA Regional Office):** Jo-Anne Bishop - Regional Planning and UN Coordination Specialist and part of the secretariat of Issue-based Coalition on Gender Equality (IBC-GE) together with Gabriela Alvarez Minte from UNFPA. The previous IBC-GE meeting with over 100 particiants from UN system had a clear ask on having a stand alone structure on gender equality under the RRRP. It is great to see that this ask is being materialized.
- **Action Aid (Poland):** Enrica Piras - Senior Emergency Manager. It is expected that this RGTF will serve as a platform to discuss regional and cross-border response especially related to human trafficking in addition to have joint advocacy both at country and regional levels.
- **Médecins du Monde (France):** Federica Villa – GBV in Humanitarian Settings Advisor. It is expected to understand the differences between the different platforms/structures established and agree on how to collaborate between these platfoms and their sub-working groups.
- **UNAIDS (EECA Regional Office):** Elena Kiryushina – Youth Focal point for Gender and Gender Rights and is currently working on some project proposals for Moldova Country Office through Luxemburg funding.
  Gary Jones – Senior Humanitarian Officer (EECA Regional Office) – It is expected to have HIV inclusive gender equality plans and actions which cover gender with all its diversity aspects.
- **UNFPA (ECA Regional Office):** Gabriela Alvarez Minte – Regional Gender Adviser
- **Save the Children (HQ):** Nina Gora – Global Head of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment covering Ukraine, Romania and Poland. It is expected to go beyond information sharing but more towards coordination. Moreover, there is an opportunity to shift the needle through gender equality targeted programming by joining forces and covering more ground if we know who is best to work in which area and take action accordingly. It is also expected from the donors who are participants of this forum push back on gender neutral interventions.
- **FAO (ECA Regional Office):** Anna Jenderedjian - Gender Mainstreaming and Social Protection Specialist. It is expected, within the mandate of FAO work, to have better coordinated efforts covering the aspects of linkages that this RGTF bring together in different areas of gender equality such as on food security or GBV.

- **ILGA (Europe):** Katrin Hugendubel - Advocacy Director for European and Central Asian Network of LGBTI Organizations. ILGA is working on inclusive gender equality with broader perspectives including broad definitions of gender. ILGA is also active in Ukraine and neighbouring countries for stronger advocacy on refugees and asylum policies together with the organizations on the ground.
- **IOM (Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia - Vienna)**: Heather Komenda - Senior Regional Migrant Protection and Assistance Specialist. In terms of expectation, IOM has large scale and multi-sectoral programmes in Ukraine and surrounding countries so this group will act as a resource platform. IOM intends to ensure that the recommendations, documents, etc that are issued by the RGTF be shared with the field colleagues.
- **Première Urgence (PU) International** (Ukraine and Poland) - Marie-Ange Goux, Protection and Gender Technical Adviser and Ukraine Durkeft Said Tahir, Protection and Gender Technical Adviser, Poland. PU has been active in Ukraine for quite some time and now re-shaping interventions with the main focus being on health, mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) with increasing concern on protection. The expectation from the RGTF is developing tools (eg. Safeguarding) and materials through small sub-groups that can be utilized by the field at a regional scale. PU is also active in Poland working with UNHCR under the Blue Dots support hubs set up providing MHPSS and protection support including case management, information sharing and cash assistance.
- **UNIDO (Vienna):** Nicolas Schmidt – Gender Office Administrator and Virpi Stucki, Chief Division of Rural Entrepreneurship, Job Creation and Human Security, Department of Agri-Business. It is important to know how this RGTF can address the humanitarian and development nexus. UNIDO's focus is very much on economic integration of women refugees and re-building the Ukrainian economy by creating jobs for women.
- **International Rescue Committee:** Nicole Constantine - Lead Technical Advisor in emergencies for Ukraine and Poland. It is expected from the RGTF to have meaningful advocacy efforts for women and girls that is driven from the ground up and having hands on support to the local women led organizations by using gender analysis and link these analyses to programming.
- **CORUS International (Poland):** Noshaba Zafar - Senior Technical Advisor, Gender-Based Violence. It is expected from the RGTF is to understand how influencial it will be in having targeted programmes on GE and accordingly, how it will ensure financing for the programmes by attracting donors.
- **WFP (Middle East and North Africa Regional Office:** Rimu Byadya – Regional Gender Adviser deployed to Poland. It is expected from the RGTF to map out information in terms of women's and LQBTI groups' needs in Ukraine for targeted cash and food asistance.
- **UNHCR (Regional Office in Europe):** Sergii Lavrukhin – Community-based Protection Officer. It is expected from the RGTF to be an indispensible and committed part of the Regional Protection Working Group rolled out under the RRRP.
- **UNICEF (Europe and Centra Asia Regional Office):** Sheeba Harma - Regional Gender Adviser. UNICEF is working on the ground at the frontline within nine countries. Blue Dots concept is co-led by UNICEF and UNHCR within which UNICEF provides cash assistance, child protection, social security, health, education and GBV releated support services. It is expected from the RGTF to learn exchange from each other in terms of having a common insight. This is a space where support is to be provided to organizations already in the field who are already running the operations for people in need. For example PSEA trainings can be enriched/expanded with GBV and safeguarding themes to have improvement at the ground level. Knowing the fact that there can be a second wave coming in terms of migration, it is important to integrate the lessons learned from the first wave especially on system strengthening. Additionally, there are a lot of guidelines documents etc. from different organizations,it is also important to reflect on how to combine, simplify and share these documents for the quick utilization of practitioners.

- **ACTED (Ukraine):** Zvitlana Zhavoronka - Gender Equality Advisor. It is expected from the RGTF to generate data which is missing mainly on labor markets, potential needs of the labor market for re-construction and also advocating for and strengthening the women to be part of the decision making and peace building.
- **Plan International (UK):** Keren Simons – Global Gender in Emergencies Technical Lead. Plan International is working with the partners on child and adolescent protection, education in emergencies focusing on girls' education and their needs/rights. It is important not to focus only GBV but the systemic and structural layers of gender equality. Sex and age disaggregated data is crucial for any kind of humanitarian reponse therefore it is expected from this RGTF to have gender eqaulity minimum standards with age and gender disaggregated data to feed all our steps.

4. Brief Presentations and discussion: Country level Gender Analyses

a. Moldova: Preliminary findings from the Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) – UN Women/IOM

UN Women Moldova's Representative Dominika Stojanoska presented the preliminary findings of the RGA of Ukrainian refugees and third-country nationals conducted with IOM based on CARE International's methodology. A second update was conducted after interviewing more than 4,500 refugees in several places within Moldova including two entry and two exit border crossings, three transit places and 10 accommodations (both temporary and private). Key figures and findings of the survey are:

- 81% of the participants were women whereas 19% were men.
- 24% of the participants were between 18-30 years old whereas 23% of them are above 60.
- 85% of women are travelling with at least one child (44% with one child and 34% with two children) under the age of 18.
- On average, every third refugee is travelling with at least one elderly person aged 60 and above.
- For every fourth refugee (25%), the main intended destination is the Republic of Moldova (with the intention to go back to Ukraine), followed by Germany (14%), Romania (11%), Poland (6%), Bulgaria (5%), Italy (3%), Turkey, Czech Republic and Israel (2% each) and other European countries.
- The first survey findings reflected the urgent needs included transportation, food, medical support and clothing. The numbers as well as the needs of the refugees' changed between the time span of the first and the second survey as the government response improved within the time frame and the needs differed.
- In Moldova, Ukrainians have a right to stay up to 90 days without having any asylum status. This special condition reflected in the second survey results as the respondents' urgent need appear to be a. information on legal status and procedures, b. employment support, c. learning opportunities like language courses, d. access to early learning facilities and e. access to formal education. Following these needs, there were challenges observed due to misinformation especially on the recognition of the diplomas for university acceptance and for employability.

Once the Moldova RGA is published, it will be shared broadly including with the membership.

Based on the above shared findings as well as the first-hand information from Moldova, it is expected from the task force to have sector representatives in the GTF both at country and regional levels. Both sector representatives and women organizations are pivotal for the refugee response. Therefore, it is equally critical to have women organizations actively engaged not only in the GTF but also in different task forces/sector group discussions (like cash, accommodation, education etc,) to ensure smooth exchange of information and timely interventions to the intersectional challenges. The Moldova GTF can serve as a safe space and a group for many intersection questions to raise. Therefore, Moldova

GTF should be a platform to raise the needs of all diverse group by keeping the intersectionality of gender.

Suggestions:

- Develop a practical, examples-based GiHA training and deliver it to the people working on the field. The RGTF members have extensive practical experience so it would serve the needs of the government representatives, national and international NGOs and focal points of the sector representatives. For example, gender in cash-based interventions or gender in WASH programmes can be modules of this training.

- A multi-sectoral need assessment is planned for Moldova as a joint initiative of UNICEF and UNHCR but will be implemented by REACH. UN Women has already offered support with methodology development to avoid a gender blind/neutral study by including sex disaggregated data as well as further gender equality analyses. It would help if this message were brought to the attention of the initiative leaders by the RGTF again.

- UN Women Moldova received a list of indicators on RRRP for all countries to review. Based on the preliminary check, it has been noted that both regional and country level plans lack age and sex disaggregated data. This is critical that RGTF members advocate together that gender specific indicators added into the response plans at all levels.

b. Poland: Rapid Gender Analysis Findings - Care International

Due to time limitation, the fuller presentation of the Rapid Gender Analysis findings for Poland was parked for the next meeting. CARE International co-chair Siobhán Foran gave a quick overview as follows:

- The RGA is based on observations from site visits to Medyka border crossing, Przemsyl train station, Korczowa Reception Centre, Krościenko border crossing as well as Warsaw train station and accommodation centres; conversations with organisers at these sites – both official and volunteers – and with refugees and Polish NGOs and CSOs conducted in the first week of March. The RGA also benefits from consolidating and triangulating information coming out from multiple reports and online coordination meetings.
- Given the incredible pace of the influx of refugees into Poland, some of the key findings are already out-of-date but CARE is confident that the recommendations remain highly relevant. RGAs are intended to be progressive and, just like the RGA for Ukraine, which is currently subject to review by UN Women and CARE using both primary and secondary data, CARE is already planning an updated RGA for Poland, which will also be based on primary and secondary data.

5. AOB

- Participants were asked to reach out the co-chairs of the meeting to add any agenda items that they would like to present during the next meetings.

- UN Women also asked about the possibility of having a space under the UNHCR RRRP Data Portal to place all relevant documents of the RGTF. UNHCR will provide an update on that for the next meeting.

Participants:

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30	ActionAid	Enrica Piras - Senior Emergency Manager – Poland in the interim until dedicated person appointed	enrica.piras@actionaid.org
31	GenCap Adviser (OCHA Lviv)	Dana Yanine Baron Romero, Senior Gender Adviser, GenCap, hosted by OCHA (Lviv)	dana.baronromero@un.org