

MOLDOVA: GENDER TASK FORCE MEETING

| Meeting Details | |
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| Date | 24 March 2023 |
| Time | 11:00 – 12:30 |
| Venue | UN Women Office & Zoom |
| Chair/ co-chair | Dominika Stojanoska (UN Women), Nina Lozinschi (Platform for Gender Equality) |
| Agenda | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates Refugee Coordination Forum: Temporary Protection, Local Coordination meetings • Experience of Institutum Virtutes Civilis in provision of gender-responsive refugee response • Voices from the ground: Refugee women leaders Soroca, Ungheni and Cahul on the gaps and challenges for the most vulnerable groups • Discussion of the way forward with the GTF work • Updates and AOB | |

| Participants | | | |
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| # | Name | Organization | Function |
| 1 | Dominika Stojanoska | UN Women | Country Representative |
| 2 | Evghenia Hiora | UN Women | Project Officer |
| 3 | Ala Svet | UN Women | Project Officer |
| 4 | Sabine Ebner | UN Women | Junior Professional Officer |
| 5 | Ionela Nicorici-Railean | UN Women | Project Associate |
| 6 | Ludmila Bocsanean | UN Women | Project Associate |
| 7 | Oksana Khyngul | UN Women | Local Coordinator, UN Volunteer in Cahul |
| 8 | Nataliia Borshchevska | UN Women | Local Coordinator, UN Volunteer in Ungheni |
| 9 | Olga Dymova | UN Women | Local Coordinator, UN Volunteer in Balti |

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| 10 | Elena Botul | | Refugee Women Activist in Soroca |
| 11 | Sean Sager | UNHCR | Protection Officer |
| 12 | Catalina Sampaio | UNHCR | Interagency Coordination Team |
| 13 | Sara Sivkova | UNHCR | |
| 14 | Vanessa Bordin | UNHCR | GBV Specialist |
| 15 | Martina Bogdeva | UNHCR | Anti-trafficking Specialist |
| 16 | Alberto Tonon | UNHCR-OHCHR | |
| 17 | Fatima Wahaidy | UNFPA | GBV Program Specialist |
| 18 | Celine Brixander | UNFPA | Information and Reporting Analyst for Humanitarian Response |
| 19 | Liliana Palihovici | Institutum Virtutes Civilis | President |
| 20 | Iva Bucatciuc | Danish Refugee Council in Moldova | Protection Officer |
| 21 | Irina Grinco | | |
| 22 | Casey O'Neill | Church World Service | Protection Program Manager |
| 23 | Alina Busila | World Food Programme | |
| 24 | Andrei Hincu | Care for Ukraine | Program Coordinator |
| 25 | Liliana Istrate | VOICE | |
| 26 | Steliana Rudco | Community Center 151 | |
| 27 | Irina Luncasu | CALM | Project Coordinator |
| 28 | Andrea Szénási | REACH | Assessment Officer |
| 29 | Ludmila Iachim | Motivatie | |
| 30 | Valentina Bodrug-Lungu | Gender-Centru | President |
| 31 | Azam Baig | HelgAge | Regional Gender and Inclusion Advisor |
| 32 | Diana Railean | | |
| 33 | Zoia Jalbă | | |
| 34 | Arina Turcan | | |

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action items

| Agenda/Discussion | Agreements/ Actions |
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| <p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominika Stojanoska (UN Women) welcomed participants, introduced the agenda of the meeting and initiated a round of presentation of the new members of the task force. | |
| <p>Updates Refugee Coordination Forum: Temporary Protection, Local Coordination meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sean Sager (UNHCR) provided updates on the temporary protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Around 1,000 persons have pre-registered for Temporary Protection (TP), out of which approximately 120 have been granted. There are two main reasons for the low numbers, and it is expected for numbers to increase: (1) the cumulative number of 45 days allowed outside of Moldova. The General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) has clarified that refugees under TP will be allowed to be out of the country for the maximum of 45 days until 1 March 2024. If this limit is overstayed, the status of TP will be revoked, but refugees will be able to re-apply. (2) Extension of the emergency laws set to expire on April 5, many refugees are waiting to see if the extension will be granted and what that will mean. IGM has clarified that no matter the extension, this will not apply to the legal status of refugees residing in Moldova. As of April 5, refugees will have until July 1 to regularize their status, through temporary protection, asylum, or residence permit. ▪ Potential beneficiaries can appeal the decision with IGM if they are denied TP status. ▪ IGM has created and shared a template for proof of residence by declaring occupancy by the owner, it is yet unclear if this needs to be notarized. Mayors' offices will not be able to issue proof of residence for refugees living in communities. ▪ As of March 1, only beneficiaries of TP or any other form of legal status will have access to primary health care. All individuals still have access to emergency health care. ▪ Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on TP have been updated and will be shared after the meeting. • Dominika Stojanoska (UN Women) asked to clarify what the main reasons for the low number of applicants are, and if it is mainly the limit of 45 days. • Sean Sager (UNHCR) answered that the uncertainty on how to prove residence is a major obstacle, especially for those living in host communities. IGM is working with Refugee Accommodation Centre (RAC) managers to ensure that documentation for proof of residence for RACs is unified for all RACs. At this moment, it is not unified. The limit of 45 days was a reason for many refugees waiting to apply, and we will see if the clarification of being able to reapply will motivate more to apply. Another main reason is refugees waiting for updates on emergency law. After April 5, they will have 90 days to legalize their status in the country. • Catalina Sampaio (UNHCR) gave an update on the local coordination meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are 7 local coordination structures for refugee response around the country, located in the south, center and north, two of them being at the border to Ukraine – in Palanca and Otaci. The local coordination teams are multi-functional, they coordinate anything from basic needs to protection on based on requests of the local actors. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share FAQs on Temporary Protection with the members 2. Facilitate the inclusion of refugee women leaders into coordination structures at the local level |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The main issue at local level is communication about the available services and referral pathways. Local coordination structures work closely with the Accountability to Affected People Task Force, and many organizations have uploaded their services and information in the Service Advisor platform. Other requests relate to cash, referrals on child protection and GBV in the border areas, and improvement of the communication at the local level. ▪ Meetings are in Russian and Romanian. All local coordination groups are co-led by local authorities. • Evghenia Hiora (UN Women) asked how it is possible to receive information on dates and locations for future coordination meetings and suggested to see how we can jointly facilitate the participation of refugee women activists in these meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catalina Sampaio shared that one of the goals for 2023 is to see active involvement of refugee leaders in the local coordination meetings, and that a further conversation should be held on how to ensure this. | |
| <p>Experience of Institutum Virtutes Civilis in provision of gender-responsive refugee response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liliana Palihovici (Institutum Virtutes Civilis) shared experience from two larger projects that are being implemented. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A project in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council on humanitarian assistance for refugees residing in Straseni and Iolaveni, from April 2022 to March 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 2,450 people (743 women, 275 men, 1,392 children) have received assistance in the form of food products, hygiene products and clothes during 2022. The assistance addressed the diverse specific needs of individuals and families. It required input of additional staff, time and effort, but proved to be most effective. In autumn 2022, 231 Ukrainian children were identified as in urgent need of warm winter clothes. One of the challenges identified is constrained access to health care services, specifically for persons with disabilities, children and children with disabilities. Family doctors are not sufficiently informed on how to advise and refer refugees to specialist doctors. • Support to platform of volunteers “Moldova for Peace” – hot meals for volunteers working in the warehouse. • Support to Bureau of Migration and Asylum – furniture and equipment. ▪ A project financed by Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund and partnered with UN Women, implemented in Amenii Noi, Causeni, Cahul, Orhei and Stefan Voda. The project is focused on strengthening public-private partnership for efficient refugee response in Moldova, with a focus on capacity development of various national actors, including women-led and women-rights organisations and local public administration in providing assistance to refugees and crisis intervention based on gender assessments. From our experience, local public administration has limited understanding of gender issues and does not properly incorporate gender considerations into their policies and initiatives based on comprehensive gender assessments that would address the | <p>3. Map the trained CSOs and include them in database to facilitate further development</p> |

diverse specific needs of the affected population.

- 5 civil society organizations were given grants of up to 20,000 USD to provide tailored assistance that will address the specific needs of women and children in 5 rayons of the county.
 - 5 joint gender-sensitive local action plans for refugee crisis have been developed, 4 of which have been approved.
 - 32 representatives from WLOs and 28 representatives of local public authorities have trained on gender analysis, importance of regular collection and analysis of SADDD, prioritization of needs, translation of analysis findings into tailored projects activities and action plans and effective collaboration for refugee response.
 - 15 mentoring sessions were provided to 56 representatives of LPA and 13 of WLOs.
 - 908 people (752 of whom women and girls) benefitted directly from humanitarian assistance (food, clothing and footwear, hygienic packages).
 - 364 refugees were provided by the public authorities in Orhei and Stefan Voda with consultations on legal issues, employment opportunities, psychological assistance, Romanian language courses, health services and temporary protection.
 - It is important to think how within the refugee response we could compensate drugs for treatment of children either through vouchers or compensated drugs available at family doctors.
- **Dominika Stojanoska** (UN Women) mentioned that it is important to have the mapping of trained organisations, since this is valuable for future outreach, follow up, exchange of experience and support. The projects are good validation on how important local organizations are in mobilizing people to have continuous dialogues about challenges and needs and can provide best practices on communication with local organizations and authorities.
 - **Evghenia Hiora** (UN Women) asked Liliana why gender equality programing is important and what would be one advice to organisations wishing to integrate more gender considerations in their programs.
 - **Liliana Palihovici** (Institutum Virtutes Civilis) agreed with Dominika on the importance of including the five organizations in a larger network of NGOs and to facilitate their continuing growth. These are organisations with a lot of enthusiasm, great staff, but limited resources. For better gender-responsive programming Liliana highlighted the importance to understand the real problem of project beneficiaries, listen to what they have to say, understand their diverse needs to be able provide efficient support and wisely use the limited financial resources. She mentioned that they have received red flags from refugees that sometimes they are being provided with things that they do not need, while their other specific needs remain unmet.
 - **Dominika Stojanoska** (UN Women) proposed to consider creation of a network of local CSOs participating in refugee response to make sure their voices are heard.

Voices from the ground: Refugee women leaders Soroca, Ungheni and Cahul on the gaps and challenges for the most vulnerable groups

- **Nataliia Borshchevska** (Refugee woman leader from Ungheni) shared that there are around 350 refugees, out of which 150 are children, registered in Ungheni. The most vulnerable groups are: (1) refugees with disabilities, including children with disabilities (2) single mothers and mothers with many children (3) older refugees.
 - People with decreased capabilities have increased needs, because they need support when travelling or commuting and because they do not know the local language. People with disabilities have big issues with health - they need medication, bandages, rehabilitation, social adaptation services and infrastructure (ramps, etc.) to be able to access services. There are refugees in Ungheni who need constant bandaging, but the local nurses do not come to their homes, so volunteers have to do the bandaging. There is a list of compensated drugs in Moldova, but some of the required drugs are not on that list, although the same drugs were and are compensated in Ukraine.
 - Single mothers and women with small children try to find work but need support for their further economic and social integration.
 - Majority of Ukrainian refugee women have high education and are ready to support the Moldovan economy. Many women are willing to get into labour market and reduce their dependency on assistance but there are issues. However, they are not able to access positions that correspond to their professional level. They are offered lower pay jobs, such as cleaner, bar tender, cook assistant with extended or inflexible working hours.
 - This is very difficult for mothers attending small children. There are no Ukrainian schools in Ungheni, and Russian speaking refugee children are only accepted into Moldovan schools as listeners. Therefore, online education remains the only option. Mothers with children in primary education are not able to work at all, as they are not able to leave their children unattended and need to help them with homework. Mothers with children in secondary education are forced to leave them at home for online schooling without supervision.
 - There is also a continuous need for clothing and footwear for children, as they quickly outgrow them. The only time when clothing and footwear was provided as humanitarian assistance in Ungheni was in the beginning of summer 2022, but no more distributions took place since then.
 - There are also some pro-Russian people in local community with negative attitudes towards refugees.
 - Older refugee women and men are also vulnerable. As I see it, their needs are similar and relate to health services. There is no cardiologist in Ungheni. To get a diagnosis or treatment, they are referred to Chisinau or expensive private clinics. There is a pronounced need for drugs for heart diseases and other chronic diseases.

4. Share the minutes with sector leads for follow-up on sector-specific issues
5. Relevant information on employment, trainings and online employment to be shared with refugee women leaders.
6. Have a dialogue with CALM to see how to facilitate communication that reaches all refugees

- With regards to temporary protection - there is no registration office in Ungheni, the closest one being in Balti. It is difficult for many people, such as older persons, pregnant women and women with infants to travel. These travels also cost money. It would be great, if an IGM mobile team could be put in place to assure registration of the most vulnerable groups.
 - With regards to the provision of humanitarian assistance in Ungheni - there are some issues with the lack of information provided to refugees, and no information is shared in platforms such as Viber. Often refugees find out late about the available assistance, many do not receive this information at all. Information is usually received not from the official sources, but from other refugees. There is a big difference between Chisinau, Balti and other big cities and Ungheni on the information disseminated to refugees on available services.
 - Currently the distribution of humanitarian assistance in Ungheni is based on residence, not on vulnerability. Refugees who live in RACs have been systemically refused assistance and vouchers for food, clothing, and hygienic kits. These are usually distributed by the mayor's office social services to refugees living in host communities. However, persons living in RACs are usually the most vulnerable – Roma, older persons, people with disabilities, women with many children and single mothers.
 - There are also good practices in refugee response at the local level. These include food and non-food packages, psychological assistance, monthly vouchers for food for children regardless of their residence. The local library and the house of culture regularly invite children, teenagers, and adults for different activities. Older persons receive regular support with drugs, hygienic items and socialization activities. Also, refugees are regularly provided with legal and psychological assistance in Ungheni.
- **Oksana Khynekul** (Refugee woman leader from Cahul) expressed gratitude to the government and citizens of Moldova and all organisations that support Ukrainian refugees. She echoed Nataliia that there are vulnerable groups among refugees who face challenges.
 - Mothers with many children, women with small children, pregnant women, older persons, disabled persons and their care-givers and Roma people. These groups often live in RACs, and many of them came to Moldova from the regions of active war. Many have spent a long time here and cannot go back to Ukraine since the war is still ongoing or their homes are destroyed. Even if they want to integrate into Moldova, many of them are limited in doing so since they cannot provide for themselves (e.g. persons with disabilities, older persons).
 - In RACs, many refugees try to find organizations and volunteers that can help them with their needs. These needs are specific – diapers for children, baby food, school supplies, glasses, bio-toilets for older disabled persons, specific medication and medical appliances for people with chronic diseases. In the south, there is lack of medication and medical services. These needs are not addressed by RACs, refugees try to cover some them through cash assistance they receive. Some organizations additionally help with this, but there is a segregation between refugees in RACs and host communities.

The challenges of refugees are the same no matter if they live in RACs or host communities. There are needs for food, drugs. Children grow fast and need clothing and footwear.

- These vulnerable groups are in special need of physiological assistance. There is a group of psychologists that come once a week and work with children and mothers. Retired male refugees are not working with psychologists, and their mental health is very bad. They are depressed because now they struggle finding a new role and space for themselves and depend on others. They need a tailored approach in psychological assistance and social networking and communication opportunities.
- There is not enough information available at the local level with regards to available assistance, job vacancies, and medical services. Family centres and doctors are often not informed about what help refugees can get and the information to the refugee community is very sporadic. We have created an informal refugee group in Cahul to horizontally share information among ourselves.
- Refugees in Cahul receive vouchers for children, clothing and drugs, but there is no distributions of hygiene kits, food in Cahul. We are far from Chisinau, while a lot of the assistance is centered around it. Oksana related to the presentation of Liliana and proposed to conduct an assessment of needs of refugees in rural areas and in towns far from Chisinau. There persons with specific needs that require tailored assistance – for example, persons with oncologic or other serious chronic diseases.
- Oksana highlighted that many organizations, both international and national, come to refugee communities and try to inform them. They display their brochures in RACs and hand out printed information, and they take photos of refugees. For organizations this means visibility but it is difficult for refugees. Photo issues have become very sensitive, many refugees do not want to be photographed. Refugees are sometimes exposed to aggression when they encounter local public authorities and local citizens. Some members of the host community blame Ukrainian refugees for the worsening of country economic well-being and believe that everything got more expensive due to refugees. They do not understand that support for refugees comes from the international community. This creates pressure that is difficult to live with.
- Women with children try to integrate into the labor market. Many mothers with small children organize themselves - one woman stays with several children, while another goes to work. There are very few job opportunities, and they are often with low salaries and long hours, such as cleaning jobs and waitressing. There is a wish among many refugees to learn Romanian, but there are no such courses available in Cahul. Many are also open for re-qualification courses to find jobs in a new profession, but there are no such opportunities.
- Psychological health of children is a challenge. Refugees living in RACs are often transferred from one RAC to another. RACs receive support from donors to improve the living standards, refugees accommodate their, become more comfortable and more integrated into local community, start looking for jobs and make friends. Then RACs get closed and refugees need to settle in in a new RAC sometimes with worsen conditions. Every transfer is stressful for refugees, especially children. They

develop digestion disorders and stuttering. Children have already been traumatized by the war and are then forced to move again and again. Refugees need time to overcome their traumatic experience and for this they need a safe space to settle in and psychological support.

- I am happy to support humanitarian actors and refugees in my capacity of Local Coordinator for Cahul, especially for better communication flows between organisations and refugees. Together we can overcome many challenges.
- **Dominika Stojanoska** (UN Women) thanked Oksana and Nataliia for sharing their experiences and knowledge. Dominika asked for them to remain active in and continue communication with the task force. Dominika recognized the challenges mentioned and that many of these challenges are shared by the local population, particularly the challenge of accessibility for people with disabilities. It is important to see how these challenges can be addressed through the coordination structures, and it is important to have a dialogue with the Congress of Local Authorities (CALM) and all actors within the humanitarian response. The GTF will try to channel all relevant information, especially regarding employment opportunities, to Oksana and Nataliia so that they can share it with their existing networks. Dialogues will be held with CALM to see how to channel information to refugees in a more effective way.
- **Elena Botul** (Refugee woman leader from Soroca) shared her experience as a leader of a refugee group in Soroca and echoed issues raised by Nataliia and Oksana.
 - The group consists of three administrators who inform and support refugee families with 43 children in Soroca. She has been in Moldova for nine months and established the group because it was difficult to obtain information and specific support from the local authorities. The purpose of the group is to systematize the information available to refugees, to address the needs of refugees and to find solutions for challenges of the most vulnerable groups.
 - Women with children under 2 years old, women with many children and Roma women are among the most vulnerable groups. They face issues with employment and childcare. It is important to come with some child-friendly spaces, where children can be kept busy for at least a couple of hours per day.
 - Soroca has the same vulnerable groups of refugees that have been mentioned by Nataliia and Oksana. To add to those Elena mentioned people with non-traditional sexual orientation. Refugees have lost their traditional social networks and need spaces, support hubs, interest clubs to socialize and receive informational support on assistance in a systematized way, that will cover all villages, regions, and local authorities. Elena also encouraged organizations to build partnerships with refugees and to work with them as equals.
- **Olga Dymova** (Refugee woman leader from Balti) shared that the system in Balti works well, there is a lot of support and assistance, but there are some issues.
 - There are issues for refugees in obtaining a license to open their own business.
 - There are many questions on Temporary Protection – will refugees who will not apply for TP will be

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| <p>able to receive cash and other types of assistance. Also, the stipulations around 45 days are not totally clear yet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are reports of incidence of verbal aggression towards refugees from the host community in the context of economic crisis. • Dominika Stojanoska (UN Women) shared that a Women’s iHub has opened in Balti and is a co-working space for women who want to engage in online work and tech initiatives. There is also a childcare space next to it, and it is available for refugees. • Irina Luncasu (CALM) mentioned that the local authorities are aware of many of the problems shared during the meeting but that they do not have the power to solve all of them. The differences between Soroca, Balti and Chisinau exist because there is no coordinated database for the local authorities. There is limited interaction with the government because local public administration at the level of villages, according to legislation, is not included in the refugee response. They do not have enough financial support. Irina mentioned that the information will be shared with the responsible institutions and encouraged the Ukrainian refugees to share all the challenges that they face so they can find solutions. The local population often faces the same challenges. Irina mentioned that the local public administration is aware of incidents of verbal aggression and encouraged refugees to avoid tensions by all means. She confirmed that there are trends of internal migration of refugees to more Ukrainian-friendly communities. | |
| <p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominika Stojanoska (UN Women) thanked the participants and informed that the remaining agenda items will be shared via email. A survey will also be shared before the next meeting on the priorities of the Gender Task Force during 2023. The next meeting will take place in a month's time. | |
| <p>Material shared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOM template for proof of residence by declaring occupancy by the owner: http://igm.gov.md/sites/default/files/achizitii-publice/declaratia - spatiu locativ - rom.pdf • FAQs on Temporary Protection: attached to Minutes of the Meeting • Service Advisor: https://moldova.servicesadvisor.net/en • Nataliia Borshchevska, UN Volunteer and Local Coordinator in Ungheni - nat1763516@gmail.com, 069895569 • Oksana Khyngkul, UN Volunteer and Local Coordinator in Cahul - gnomikksu@gmail.com, 062037167 • Olga Dymova, UN Volunteer and Local Coordinator in Balti – olea.dymova@gmail.com, 069164947 • Elena Botul, Refugee Women Activist in Soroca – botsulelena7@gmail.com, 061126589 | |