

# MOLDOVA

## Inter-Agency Winterization Plan

### November 2023 to March 2024

#### TARGETED REFUGEE POPULATION

**55,25k**

Refugees from Ukraine

#### TARGETED HOST COMMUNITY

**17,50k**

Vulnerable Moldovans living in refugee hosting areas

#### FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (US\$)

**14.62M**

#### FUNDING AVAILABLE (US\$)

**8.20M**

## People Targeted with Winter Activities

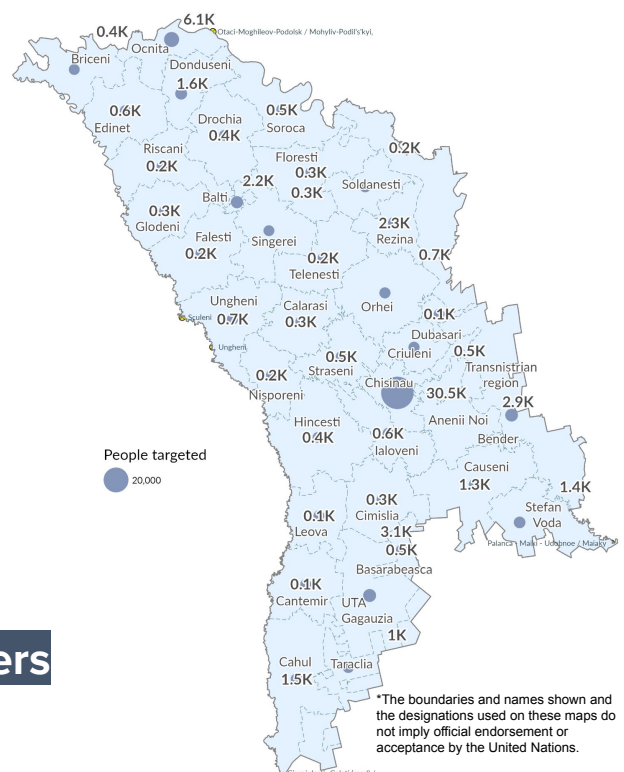


This document provides an overview of the activities outlined in the 2023 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to address specific humanitarian needs caused or exacerbated by the cold season in Moldova. The number of people targeted and the total funding required are part of the response prioritization and financial requirements of the RRP. This document also includes figures related to the first three months of 2024, which will be incorporated into the upcoming RRP.

Considering the ongoing 2024 RRP planning process and the development of the overall situation during the upcoming months, the figures presented in this document may be updated to ensure an adequate response in the first quarter of 2024.

For the upcoming cold season, 19 partners of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) have planned to implement 193 winter activities across Moldova, targeting 72,200 refugees and affected host community members. While some activities are already being implemented to ensure suitable conditions during the winter period, the timeline of the winter response spans from November 2023 to March 2024.

**193 Winter Activities by 19 RCF Partners targeting 72.2k Refugees and affected host community members.**



The Moldova Winterization Plan is a collaborative effort of RCF partners in Moldova to mitigate the effects of the winter season on affected populations. The plan aims to ensure that refugees and vulnerable Moldovans have adequate protection against the harsh climatic conditions. It is coordinated with the Government of Moldova and complements the activities of various government agencies.

An estimated 55k refugees and 54k Moldovans (those identified as below the critical vulnerability thresholds in the areas with the most refugees) fall within the scope of this plan. Of these, almost 73,000 individuals are targeted with various activities, with an overall financial requirement of 14.62 million USD covering activities from November 2023 to March 2024.

The plan prioritizes cash-based interventions, the preferred modality of both refugees and host community members, and in line with findings of several assessments highlighting the functionality and accessibility of markets in Moldova. In addition, partners are working to ensure critical winter shelter repairs, provision of winter-related items to individuals with limited capacity to access markets, and support to Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) and community infrastructure.

ACTIVITIES	REQUIREMENTS (US\$)	FUNDING AVAILABLE (US\$)	TARGET (PAX)
Distribution of Hygiene Items	621,562	617,787	17,300
Improvement of collective sites (including WASH rehabilitation)	161,434	-	1,450
Improvement of mid, long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions	1,727,920	1,457,810	11,913
Multi-purpose cash to cover basic needs	7,920,559	4,899,731	72,757
NFI distribution	3,218,489.	2,766,538	23,811
Provision of safe sanitation	26,816	-	6,276
Support for the improvement of community infrastructure and public spaces in host communities	945,061	262,837	9,660
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14,620,841</b>	<b>8,204,703</b>	

## Funding Requirements

Winterization activities aim to enhance preparedness for the cold season and directly pertain to the provision of life-saving assistance against cold weather. This particularly includes heating, and issues related to it should be classified as winter-related. Therefore, 'regular' humanitarian interventions, which are delivered irrespective of the season, should not fall under this classification. The response detailed in this plan will be provided through a mix of in-kind and cash assistance. Whenever feasible and appropriate, cash assistance will be given priority based on the existing criteria, the accessibility and proximity of functional markets, and the availability of essential winter items and services. The response package constitutes a minimum set of relief activities and a level of access to services designed to enable vulnerable groups to cope adequately with the cold season.

Out of the overall ask of the Refugee Response Plan, the implementation of this winterization plan requires US\$14.620 million. This funding requirement will cover needs from November 2023 to March 2024. Funding requirements covering activities implemented in 2023 are reflected in the current 2023 RRP, while the portion related to the remaining period of cold season (January to March 2023) will be included in the 2024 Refugee Response Plan.

RCF Partners have developed and will implement their winterization response based on ongoing coordination discussions and established agreements under relevant sectoral working groups and sub-working groups in line with findings from the various winter assessments conducted by the RCF Winterization Taskforce and by RCF partners. Government winterization strategy and activities have been considered when planning the winterization response, with active participation of key line ministries and other government counterparts in the planning process, especially regarding multi-purpose cash assistance and community infrastructure improvements.

## Analysis of the Situation

Since February 24, 2022, over 900,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Moldova, representing over 4.5% of the country's population. By the end of August, over 100,000 refugees remained in Moldova, with 17,405 receiving temporary protection as of 25 September 2023.

The winter period presents heightened vulnerabilities for both refugees and Moldovan citizens, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities, and single-headed households with high dependency ratios. This is due to the increased cost of living, predominantly attributed to additional heating expenses, and the potential barrier to access services and community life for certain groups during harsh weather conditions.

According to UNHCR's Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) of Multipurpose Cash Assistance, despite ongoing humanitarian efforts, substantial needs persist among the refugee population. Only 9% of refugees can cover more than half of their basic needs independently, thereby underlining the continuing requirement for humanitarian support. These findings are corroborated by other studies, such as ACTED's Winter Assessment and REACH's Rental Market Assessment, which emphasize that most refugee households depend on unsustainable income sources, including humanitarian aid.

ACTED's Winter Assessment indicates that the average income of refugee households is 7,155 MDL, while the average cash assistance received per household, according to the 5th round of UNHCR's PDM, is 5,103 MDL. This assistance covers approximately 71% of the average refugee household income. When comparing findings from both assessments, without humanitarian support, the average income for these households is approximately 2,052 MDL, which is roughly half of Moldova's minimum wage. These findings are supported by the 6th round of UNHCR's PDM, which shows that the majority of households (52%) had reportedly spent all of their cash assistance by the time of data collection (at least two weeks after receiving the cash). Meanwhile, 28% reported having spent more than half of the assistance, and only 3% of households saved some of the funds. Additionally, 63% of the households reported having no other sources of income besides the UNHCR Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA).

Furthermore, data from UNHCR's 5th round PDM reveals that 77% of refugees employed at least one livelihood negative coping strategy in the 30 days preceding the survey. The most commonly reported coping mechanisms included reducing expenditure on hygiene items, water, and baby products (52%), followed by cutting health expenses (46%), and tapping into savings to meet basic needs (42%).

According to the same UNHCR PDM, during the winter season, increased energy costs take priority for refugee households. Therefore, there is a need to ensure assistance that mitigates the impact of negative coping mechanisms described above. This is especially important considering the profile of the refugee population, which includes a significant percentage of older individuals and persons with disabilities, and single female headed households with high dependency ratios. According to available data, 10% of refugees in Moldova are persons with disabilities, and 22% of refugee households have at least one family member with specific needs, such as a disability or serious medical condition. Furthermore, 20.5% of the active beneficiaries of UNHCR's cash assistance are older persons aged 60 and above. Of these, 13.8% (or 6,790 individuals) are female, and 6.7% (or 3,325 individuals) are male. It is also important to highlight that according to UNHCR Rapid Socio-Economic Profiling of Refugee Households, 35% of the refugee population is living in rural areas, and who are more likely to be negatively affected by winter conditions.

In face of the challenge posed by rising energy costs, the Moldovan government operates the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF) and the Cold Period Aid (APRA). An allocated budget of 893.1 million lei has been set for 2023 to support vulnerable families. Recent legal amendments merge APRA and EVRF to simplify processes and offer a refined vulnerability criterion, addressing the needs of varying demographics. The consolidated system aims to also benefit rural residents without standard energy connections and those ineligible under previous APRA criteria. However, questions still remain about the eligibility criteria for the EVRF, especially regarding refugees from Ukraine with Temporary Protection Status.

While the winter response from RCF Partners should complement and support the Government's own efforts, it is crucial to ensure that the winter needs of refugees are adequately addressed. In this regard, it is important to advocate for the inclusion of all refugees, regardless of their legal status, in winter social assistance programs, including refugees under temporary protection status.



## Response Strategy

During the last winter season, RCF partners provided winter-related support to 65,000 refugees and 22,000 affected host community members in close collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Main activities included winter cash top-ups, insulation of Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs), coverage of utility bills for RACs, critical shelter repairs, and winter NFI distribution.

For the 2023 Winter Response Plan, RCF partners are appealing for USD 13.9 million to deliver winter assistance to over 72,000 people across Moldova.

The response will focus on supporting the most vulnerable individuals and households who are unable to meet their winterization needs. The reasons for this inability include:

- **Inaccessibility of Basic Winterization Means:** Refugees and affected host community members may be unable to access basic winterization means due to socioeconomic vulnerabilities.
- **Limited State Assistance:** Refugees and affected host community members may not be receiving winterization-related assistance from the state, or their critical winter needs may not be fully covered.

The affected host community households in need of winter assistance total 18,046, equivalent to 54,137 individuals. In contrast, the number of refugee households in need stands at 25,943, or 55,250 individuals. According to available data, these refugees primarily rely on humanitarian assistance as their main source of income and are resorting to at least one negative coping mechanism.

RCF and its partners will advocate for the inclusion of refugees in winterization-related state support, including initiatives like the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF). Assistance from humanitarian partners is designed to fill existing gaps in the state response, and, when necessary, to complement it. This alignment is based on the specific needs of the target groups and prioritized vulnerable populations. Development partners, under the overall coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator and within the UNCT, have been working in close coordination with the government of the Republic of Moldova at all levels to keep strengthening the country's resilience to the cold season, including support for the implementation of the EVRF.

The response builds upon last year's efforts, including insulation of 24

RACs, as well as the insulation of reception centers in Palanca and Otaci, and safe spaces, including Blue Dots and Community Service Centers. For the upcoming cold season, also considering the stabilization of the refugee population in Moldova, and the functionality and accessibility of local markets, RCF partners will prioritize winter cash-based interventions, specifically through the Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programs, to individuals in need. MPCA is positioned to respect the dignity and independence of beneficiaries, empowering them to make choices aligned with their priorities. This approach fosters a sense of normalcy and ownership among those receiving aid. While the value of cash transfers is still being coordinated with the government and must maintain coherence with the EVRF, for planning purposes partners considered the value of 700 MDL per month per household from November 2022 to March 2023, totaling 3,500 MDL for the entire winter season.

Distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs) will be considered as a complementary measure when other options are not feasible or appropriate. This includes difficulties in accessing local markets and challenges in obtaining certain goods. Against this background, RCF Partners aim to support approximately 23,000 people with winter-NFIs. This is in line with planning figures for those in need of such assistance, including both refugees and the affected host community. Partners will coordinate NFI distribution within the framework of the RCF Basic Needs Working Group.

RCF partners will also work to support the improvement of mid- to long-term accommodation (non-cash) to ensure adequate living conditions for 11,913 individuals. This will ensure full coverage of all refugee and affected host community households in need of critical winter repairs.

In addition, partners - with the technical and logistical support of UNHCR, IOM, ACTED, and DRC - have worked with local public authorities in areas hosting refugees to identify and assess community infrastructure in need of critical winter repairs to ensure continuity of activities during the cold season. By ensuring the continuity of activities in these locations, RCF partners aim to benefit over 9,500 individuals who benefit from the activities and services provided in these facilities. RCF partners will continue to support accredited RACs (reception and accommodation centers) during the cold season, while also ensuring that individuals at both accredited and unaccredited RACs can access winter support.



*To support the planning and targeting of the upcoming winter response, the RCF Winter Taskforce, with logistical and technical support from UNHCR, IOM, WFP, ACTED, and DRC, conducted two winter-related assessments to evaluate the needs for winter shelter repairs and support to community infrastructure. The household surveys encompassed 481 Moldovan households and 346 refugee households.*

*The findings revealed that only 1% of refugee households and 2% of hosting households reported having a dire need for shelter interventions to ensure adequate protection against climatic conditions. A further 20% of refugee households and 10% of hosting households have generally adequate shelter conditions but need an intervention to at least one critical element of the housing, such as wall repairs, mold remediation, or heating system improvements. The rest of the surveyed population reported living in conditions adequate enough to withstand the winter season.*

*Additionally, 12 communal facilities were assessed to determine the extent of needs and the feasibility of providing support. The findings have been shared with partners and will guide the implementation of the winter response.*

## Centrality of Protection

Winter season brings additional challenges to refugees and host community members to meet their basic needs and to participate in the daily life of the communities where they live. Additionally, availability of services and their accessibility will also be affected. In this context it is key that humanitarian actors adopt the necessary measures to mitigate winter related protection risks, and ensure refugees and host communities are aware of their rights and existing services.

Moldova's refugee response underscores its commitment to protection, evident through the initiatives of the Protection Working Group, sub-working groups, task forces, and the supportive efforts of the PSEA, AAP, and Gender Taskforce. By incorporating an age, gender, and diversity approach, coupled with a consistent emphasis on accountability to affected people and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, RCF partners aim to make humanitarian programs inclusive, equitable and safe.

The development of the winter response strategy was informed by consultations with refugees and affected host community members, as well as individual surveys and assessments conducted by partners and RCF working groups. The Gender Task Force engaged with women's rights and women-led organizations, while the Inter-Agency Coordination Team connected with civil society organizations in the Transnistrian region. The Protection WG also consulted with partners to establish key protection considerations for the winter response.

While a significant portion of the refugee population is in urban centers, the 35% located in rural areas present distinct challenges. Winter poses increased risks to these communities, so RCF partners are prioritizing outreach in rural areas, deploying mobile teams to identify and assist high-risk profiles, such as individuals with disabilities, older people, and Roma refugees.

The target groups for the 2023 Winter Response include refugees living in both accredited and unaccredited RACs, those in substandard housing, refugee-hosting households in similar conditions, and refugees in rural areas.

Winter-related assessments have highlighted specific vulnerable groups requiring prioritization, such as individuals with chronic illnesses, older people, people with disability, Roma refugees, unaccompanied and separated children, and female single female headed households with high dependency ratio. Tailored responses are required to address the unique needs of each group, ensuring their access to support and services.

To ensure the centrality of protection throughout the winter response, RCF partners will:

- **Increase outreach and monitoring activities** inside and outside RACs, and actively outreach to individuals at higher risk due to the winter season (including older refugees or refugees with disabilities) to promote their access to essential services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Child Protection and GBV prevention and response activities.
- **Ensure safe and timely referral of refugees** and affected host community members with uncovered winter needs to organizations providing winter assistance, including MPCA, as a means to also prevent the adoption of negative coping mechanisms.
- **Work to ensure that activities at community centers and safe spaces are maintained** throughout the cold season, as maintaining a sense of connection, as well as access to services is critical to protection and for mental health, and this will be more needed as the cold winter months arrive.
- Support refugees to **obtain a secure legal status** in Moldova to ensure access to government services for which they may be eligible during the winter months.
- Continue ensuring that **aid workers are aware of their obligations** when engaging with refugees and host communities, and also aware about where to refer survivors of GBV, including SEA, for care and support.

Support for the host community during winter is essential for maintaining social cohesion and mitigating the overall socio-economic impact of the winter season. Winterization assistance for Moldovan households should complement the aid package provided by the government and must be closely coordinated with relevant government counterparts. RCF partners shall prioritize and support the inclusion of vulnerable host community members on existing government winter response, and must not create parallel systems.

*Gender and diversity mainstreaming in the winter response is essential for effectively addressing the unique challenges and specific needs of women, girls, men and boys. By considering the different needs, capacities and priorities of each individual, we can ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalized have equitable access to essential resources and support during the cold months.*

*The Gender Task Force, under the leadership of UN Women and Platform for Gender Equality, has prepared a comprehensive guidance document for RCF sectors and partners on gender and diversity mainstreaming. This resource provides recommendations and best practices on how to integrate gender considerations throughout the winter response. The recommendations can be accessed [by clicking here](#).*



## Funding and Target by Partner

ORGANIZATION	REQUIREMENTS (US\$)	FUNDING AVAILABLE (US\$)	TARGET (PAX)
ACTED	151,440	151,440	1,305
ASOCIAȚIA DE SUPT FAMILIAL DE RECUPERARE TIMPURIE A COPIILOR CU DEFICIENȚE DE AUZ ȘI VĂZ "AUDIVIZ"***	26,816	-	6,276
CARITAS MOLDOVA	1,457,810	1,457,810	10,425
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES	580,000	580,000	1,400
CHARITY CENTRE FOR REFUGEES	251,828	251,828	6,400
CONCORDIA MOLDOVA**	233,050	-	1,510
DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL	50,775	47,000	2,800
HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL	36,000	18,018	100
HELVETAS	287,100	-	638
INTERNATIONAL BLUE CRESCENT RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (IBC)*	357,951	75,000	3,950
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE RED CROSS AND THE RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)	1,426,376	1,426,376	12,000
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)	1,023,852	996,852	13,485
KEYSTONE MOLDOVA	222,477	222,477	500
NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL (NRC)	950,000	600,000	4,000
PARTENERIATE PENTRU FIECARE COPIL**	5,000	-	200
PEOPLE IN NEED	67,000	67,000	500
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)	5,183,464	1,800,000	58,478
UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)	1,269,403	1,269,403	1,400
WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL	1,041,500	1,041,500	5,800
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>14,620,841</b>	<b>8,204,703</b>	

\*Not a 2023 RRP appealing partner

\*\* 2023 RRP - Implementing partner

**FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL AT [MDACHRCF@UNHCR.ORG](mailto:MDACHRCF@UNHCR.ORG)**

For updated information on the refugee response in the Republic of Moldova, please visit the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#). To view the 2023 RRP Funding Requirements and Funding levels, refer to the [Refugee Funding Tracker](#).