Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

SLOVAKIA
JUNE 2024

MULTI - SECTOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ANNEX REPORT | FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Bratislava, Slovakia. Families with children from Ukraine participating in an informative session. ©UNHCR/Kristina Valjentova

Since February 2022, Slovakia has seen a rapid influx of persons fleeing hostilities and seeking protection as a result of the escalation of the war in Ukraine. More than two million Ukrainians and third-country nationals (TCNs) in need of international protection have crossed the borders into Slovakia[1], 80 per cent of whom are women and children. Refugees from Ukraine include older people, persons with disabilities, and those with urgent healthcare needs. The Government of Slovakia has generously kept the borders open, and national, district and local authorities have rapidly responded to the large numbers of arrivals. Local communities have taken a welcoming stance, with humanitarian actors, civil society, the private sector, and community volunteers complementing government-led efforts by providing significant support at border reception points and urban areas.

Despite the favorable protection environment for refugees in the country, major challenges in addressing areas such as access to longer-term accommodation, education, employment and livelihoods, as well as quality healthcare, remain.

Within the framework of the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the situation in Ukraine and specifically within Slovakia's RRP, the Inter-agency Multisectoral Needs Assessment Team conducted an annex analysis to the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment[2] (MSNA) conducted in Slovakia in 2023.

This report presents the results of the analysis; an overview of the situation and needs of refugee families with children coming from Ukraine who have fled to Slovakia due to the ongoing conflict in their country of origin. The analysis is presented across sectors, based on the MSNA 2023 collected information, and complemented with information from secondary sources, such as focus groups discussions (FGD) and previous analysis.[3]

This annex report studies the differences and similarities between different types of households (HH) with children through a comparative analysis between families with children and one adult, and families with children and two or more adults. In addition, analysis based on the number of children in the household is included for some of the indicators.[4]

Household with children and only one adult

Household with children and two or more adults

1 As of March 2024 – Source UNHCR Operational Data Portal; online
2 Slovakia Multisector Needs Assessment 2023 - online
3 Summary Analysis of Focus Group Discussions with Refugees on Education, March 2024: online
4 Due to sample size limitations, analysis by number of children in the household was included in some of the indicators.

Profile & needs overview

This section discusses the demographic profile and outlines needs of the interviewed HH with children, including a comparison depending on the number of adults; only one adult with children, or two or more adults with children.

The assessment covered a total of 819 households (HH), out of which 413 were HH with children. Among those, 45% were HH with only one adult and 55% were HH with two or more adults. As per the table below, the majority of only one adult HH are female-headed (98%).

HH with children (n=413)	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Female (head)	98%	84%
Male (head)	2%	16%

Additional analysis shows that adult members in HH with only one adult are, in the vast majority of cases, below 60 years old, while in HH with two or more adults, the second adult in the HH is often a person over 60 years old.

HH with children (members=1.278)	HH one adult (members)	HH two or more adults (members)
<18 years old	57%	43%
18-59 years old	42%	45%
60+ years old	1%	12%

Both types of HH present profile similarities in terms of the number of children, with those who have only one child being more frequent. Very few HH reported having three or more children in their HH (between 5-8%). Out of the total children surveyed (560), 1% were reported to be living in a HH with only one adult, aged over 60.

	HH by number of children		
	1 child	2 children	3 + children
HH one adult	74%	21%	5%
HH two or more adults	71%	21%	8%

A more detailed analysis of the demographic profile of the HH according to the age group of the children shows that the majority are in the 5 to 11 age group, with very similar results according to the type of HH.

	HH one adult (children)	HH two or more adults (children)
0-4 years old	17%	18%
5-11 years old	41%	44%
12-14 years old	31%	26%
15-17 years old	11%	12%

Priority needs

The comparative analysis reveals that both types of HH with children (only one adult, and two or more adults) identified priority needs, albeit with variations in the specific types of needs. In general, healthcare services, language courses and employment and livelihoods were predominantly outlined, however differences were identified in the type of needs reported.

Healthcare services were reported more often by HH with two or more adults, which can be related to the demographic profile of this type of HH, including more older persons.[5] Language courses, which are key for the successful integration in the host community, were reported more frequently by HH with only one adult. A similar trend can be observed for adult training and education. In addition, needs related to children's care such as baby items, childcare support and education were more often reported by HH with only one adult.

Priority needs	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
No needs	**14%**	**16%**
With priority needs	**86%**	**84%**
Healthcare services	23%	37%
Employment/livelihoods	22%	26%
Language courses	28%	20%
Education Children	18%	16%
Accommodation	17%	13%
Baby Items	17%	10%
Training Education Adults	11%	5%
Childcare Support	13%	6%

Further analysis shows that HH with only one child have greater needs, specifically for health services. On the other hand, families with two or more children reported more needs related to child support, such as early childhood education, baby supplies or childcare assistance.

Priority needs	HH with one child	HH with two or more children
No needs	**13%**	**19%**
With priority needs	**87%**	**81%**
Healthcare services	32%	26%
Employment/livelihoods	25%	21%
Language courses	23%	23%
Education Children	15%	23%
Accommodation	16%	12%
Baby Items	11%	18%
Training Education Adults	9%	6%
Childcare Support	8%	12%

5 MSNA 2023 results presented 36% overall HH reporting healthcare services as a priority need. This percentage increases to 58% in the case of HH with a person over 60 years old. - online

Accommodation

Results from the analysis reflected differences in the comparison by type of accommodation; 77% of HH with two or more adults reported living in their own or in shared accommodation, while 32% of HH with only one adult reported living in collective sites or hotel rooms. These are concerning results, as it was observed that girls and boys are more exposed to protection risks when staying in collective sites or hotels.[6] Similar results were observed in relation to boys' and girls' mental health and psycho-social issues, reported to a greater extent in collective centers.[7]

Type of accommodation	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Own accommodation	51%	64%
Collective site	20%	15%
Shared accommodation	16%	13%
Hotel/ Hostel	12%	7%
Other	2%	1%

Moreover, information provided by refugees during FGD revealed that additional challenges are faced while staying in collective sites, such as varying working patterns, conflicting sleeping schedules, and limited space and privacy, which can negatively impact the situation of families hosted in this type of accommodation.

Regarding short-term accommodation plans, HH with only one adult presented higher levels of uncertainty about their situation for the coming months, even higher than the overall average sample.[8]

Secure of tenure	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
For 6 months or longer	45%	49%
For 3-6 months	17%	19%
For 2-3 months	4%	3%
For one month	3%	3%
For the coming week	2%	1%
Not sure	29%	24%

Education

According to official data[9], enrolment of Ukrainians in Slovak kindergartens, primary and secondary schools rose from around 10,200 children in June 2023 to over 11,750 children in June 2024, which represents an increase of over 15% between the two academic years. Despite increases in enrolment, which were observed across Slovak regions, access to formal education often continues to be a challenge, especially for HH with only one adult, and thousands of children remain out of the Slovak education system.

Language barriers, financial difficulties, capacity constraints in schools, as well as a lack of information about enrolment procedures and educational options, were among the main factors negatively impacting school enrolment which were commonly mentioned by parents that participated in FGD in 2023.[10]

Formal education enrollment		Academic year 2022/2023	Academic year 2023/2024
HH one adult	Yes	65%	73%
	No	35%	27%
HH two or more adults	Yes	69%	80%
	No	31%	20%

While a significant number of parents have enrolled their children in Slovak schools, others prefer their children to follow online lessons through the tools developed by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education. Overall, a decrease in distance learning attendance has been reported; however, children in HH with two or more adults appear to be more likely to continue attending distance learning than children in HH with only one adult. In addition, children living in HH with two or more adults are also more likely to be enrolled in Slovak schools, with the enrollment rate increase more than of those living in HH with only one adult member.

Ukraine distance learning		Academic year 2022/2023	Academic year 2023/2024
HH one adult	Yes	76%	41%
	No	24%	59%
HH two or more adults	Yes	79%	50%
	No	21%	50%

When it comes to non-formal education, which includes educational options provided by community-based organizations, similar results were obtained for both types of HH, however, children in HH with two or more adults tend to attend non-formal education more frequently than children in HH with only one adult.

Attendance in non-formal education	HH-one adult	HH two or more adults
More than 3 times a week	30%	34%
Once or twice a week	30%	31%
Several times a month	7%	3%
Less than twice a month	1%	2%
Never	32%	31%

Participants of FGD also highlighted the importance of extra-curricular activities organized in schools, public facilities or community centres. While these activities are key for refugee children's well-being, skills development and socialization with host community children, factors such as the financial cost and the limited offer of age-appropriate options in some locations continue to impede access to sports and cultural activities for many children.

6, 7, 8 Slovakia Multisector Needs Assessment 2023 - online
9 Official data provided by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth:- online
10 Summary Analysis of Focus Group Discussions with Refugees on Education, March 2024; online

Protection

Some differences were observed between the types of HH regarding awareness of protection services. In general, HH with only one adult reported being more aware of protection services, mainly state social services, but reported being less aware about the availability of daycare services for children in their neighborhood, which needs to be further explored.

Aware of protection services	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
State Social Services	68%	64%
Safe Spaces	41%	38%
Legal Services	39%	41%
PSS Mobile Teams	19%	19%
Children Daycare	15%	23%
Reproductive Health Services	7%	5%
Crisis Room	4%	2%
Violence Support Services	2%	2%
GBV Shelter	1%	2%
Daycare disabilities	3%	4%
Don't know	13%	14%
None of the above	4%	7%

Additional analysis related to social cohesion suggests possible tensions with the host community reported by respondents. No major differences were identified between the types of HH on the reported perception of hostile behavior, with 30%-31% of respondents reporting verbal aggression, discriminatory behavior, comments on social media, etc. It is important to mention that these results are above the average obtained from the total sample (28%).[11] This can be linked to cases of school bullying (among children, but also from teachers), frequently reported by schools and by refugee parents .

Experienced hostile behavior	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Yes	31%	30%
No	68%	68%
Do not know	0%	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%

Rather positive results were received in relation to the satisfaction with the assistance received by refugees. In general, HH with two or more adults reported higher levels of satisfaction with the aid received, but also reported receiving higher levels of assistance over the last 3 months[12], which can be explained by the demographic profile of this type of HH, including higher numbers of older persons, who are generally included in the eligibility criteria of assistance programmes.

Satisfaction with aid received (in the last 3 months)	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Satisfied	64%	69%
Not satisfied	4%	5%
Have not received	28%	24%
Prefer not to answer	2%	0%
Do not know	3%	3%

Respondents were asked if they encountered any challenges accessing information related to their rights and entitlements, as well as access to services. In general, HH with only one adult reported facing more challenges accessing information.

This is an important concern to be addressed, considering that this type of HH also presented lower awareness on protection services in their neighborhood, and more likely to stay in shared accommodations, collective sites and hostels (see page 3).

Challenges in accessing info	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
No challenges	74%	77%
Faced challenges	22%	19
Prefer not to answer	1%	0%
Do not know	3%	4%

Overall, respondents mentioned feeling safe in the area in which they lived. Some differences were identified; HH with only one adult reported lower levels of safety compared to those reported by HH with two or more adults. This needs to be further analyzed in relation to the type of accommodation as HH with only one adult are more likely to be hosted in shared accommodations, collective sites, and hostels (see page 3).

Safety level	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Very safe	48%	56%
Fairly safe	43%	33%
Bit unsafe	8%	8%
Don't know	1%	1%
Very unsafe	0%	1%

With regards to awareness about services to reach out to and report cases of violence against children in the community, HH with only one adult presented lower awareness of those services, but higher awareness in the case of NGO services.

Awareness of child protection services	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Police	91%	93%
Government	26%	26%
NGO	16%	9%
Helpline	14%	18%
No services	4%	3%

Regarding access to services available for survivors of gender-based violence, HH with one adult reported higher awareness about these services, which can be explained by the demographic profile of this type of HH, mostly female-headed.

Awareness of GBV services		HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Health Services	Yes	64%	60%
	No	23%	28%
PSS	Yes	42%	40%
	No	40%	42%
Safety-security services	Yes	64%	59%
	No	24%	29%
Helpline	Yes	34%	29%
	No	43%	50%
Legal services	Yes	47%	44%
	No	34%	38%

11 Slovakia Multisector Needs Assessment 2023 - online
12 This refers to any kind of assistance provided by humanitarian actors, government, or other entities.

Economic vulnerability & livelihoods

Overall, a high level of education was observed among families with children, with slightly higher levels reported in HH with only one adult (61% of HH members reported having a university degree). This could suggest a strong potential for employability in Slovakia, moving towards integration and inclusion in society.

Education level	HH one adult (HH members)	HH two or more adults (HH members)
Grand Ph.D.	0%	1%
Ph.D.	2%	1%
Master	44%	38%
Bachelor	16%	14%
Technical or Vocational	27%	22%
Secondary education	12%	16%
Primary education	0%	4%
No formal education	0%	2%

In terms of access to employment, 38% of working-age members in HH with children with two or more adults reported being out of the labor market (i.e., persons with serious medical conditions, students, retired persons...). It is important to keep in mind the profile of this type of HH, with the second adult often being a person over 60 years old. On the other hand, adults in HH with only one adult reported higher levels of unemployment, which remains an important concern, as they represent the only source of income for their HH.

HH member current activity		HH one adult	HH two or more adults
In labor market	Employed	50%	49%
	Unemployed	18%	13%
Out of labor market		31%	38%

Further analysis shows working-age members in HH with one child are more likely to be out of labor market (i.e., persons with serious medical conditions, students, retired persons...), and present less percentage of unemployment, compared to those with two or more children.

HH member current activity		HH with one child	HH with two + children
In labor market	Employed	47%	55%
	Unemployed	14%	16%
Out of labor market		39%	30%

NOTE: Employed are those of working age (15-64 years) who are employed, have their own business, or work in a family business; unemployed are those of working age (15-64 years) who are looking for work and at the same time are ready to start work within 14 days; outside the labor market are those of working age who do not fall into the above categories (typically persons with serious medical condition, on parental leave and students who do not work).

Regarding the source of income, HH with only one adult presented more difficult financial situations; 15% of them reported not having any income, and only half of the adults reported being employed. Overall, key reasons for unemployment frequently reported by parents include language barriers, lack of appropriate employment opportunities, lack of affordable childcare options, and challenges related to education and qualification recognition.[13]

Income sources	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Employment in Slovakia	51%	62%
Social protection SLO gov	21%	24%
Social protection UKR gov	6%	7%
No income	15%	10%
Don't know	2%	2%
Prefer not to answer	4%	4%
Other sources	33%	32%

In terms of affordability of goods, it was observed that HH with two or more adults more frequently reported being able to afford fewer goods than the previous year.

Able to afford goods	HH one adult	HH two or more adults
Same	**44%**	**35%**
Fewer	34%	37%
More	12%	18%
Prefer not to answer	2%	2%
Don't know	8%	8%

Access to a bank account is a crucial element of financial inclusion, enabling individuals to achieve self-reliance and economic independence. In this regard, no major difference was observed in the comparative analysis by type of HH: 80% of HH with one adult and 82% of HH with two or more adults reported having access to a bank account.

Health and MHPSS

Access to healthcare services was reported as a first priority need by both types of HH. Health problems were more often reported by HH with two or more adults, which is an expected result as this type of HH includes more members over 60 years old. However, it was also observed that this type of HH reported fewer challenges when accessing these services; 80% of those with health problems could access the needed healthcare.

Health problem	HH one adult (members)	HH two or more adults (members)
Yes	41%	56%
No	59%	44%

Accessed Healthcare services (only for those HH reporting Health problems)	HH one adult (members)	HH two or more adults (members)
Yes	45%	84%
No	55%	16%

13 UNHCR, Regional Protection Profiling and Monitoring: Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine - online

Regarding the results related to mental health and psychosocial problems, differences were observed in the comparative analysis. One out of five members in HH with two or more adults mentioned having MHPS problems[14], while these were less frequently reported by HH with only one adult, which on the other hand presented higher rates related to the need for specialized MHPS support.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Problems	HH one adult (members)	HH two or more adults (members)
Feels Anxious	13%	20%
Needs MHPSS	58%	46%
Received MHPSS	42%	35%

NOTE: Due to the prevailing stigma associated with disclosing mental health problems within the refugee community, the actual percentage of HHs needing mental health and psychosocial services is likely higher than reported. The MSNA results reveal that there is a need for community-based mental health interventions, due to the stigma of seeking traditional psychological support within the community. Prioritizing community-based approaches can help break down barriers, fostering an environment that is more supportive of mental health and personal well-being. In addition, the access to and availability of mental health specialists is essential to respond to the needs and referrals identified through community-based support.

Conclusions

The MSNA annex report on refugee families with children aims to support an evidence-based humanitarian response in Slovakia, taking into account the characteristics of the different vulnerable groups, their situation and needs. In this regard, this analysis provides an overview of the challenges faced by HH with children, especially those with only one adult, which are usually female-headed.

In general, HH with children and only one adult reported facing more challenges across most of the sectors. Those HH reported greater needs related to their integration into society, for example language courses, as well as adult education and training. These results can be explained and linked to other reported needs, such as educational opportunities for children and childcare support, which constitute important challenges, especially for single mothers.

In addition, children in a HH with only one adult are less likely to attend formal and informal education. In this regard, important efforts need to be made to increase awareness of available services such as childcare services (with only 15% of this type of HH reporting being aware of these services), in addition to promote and support school enroment, provision of affordable options for non-formal learning and leisure activities.

Concerning results were obtained regarding HH income; 15% of HH with only one adult mentioned not having any income, despite of the high level of education reported (62% of them cited having a university degree). In addition, 18% of adult members in this type of HH reported being unemployed.

Accommodation is also an important aspect to consider. HH with only one adult reported higher levels of uncertainty regarding short-term plans, and are more likely to stay in collective centers or hotels, where more challenges may arise;[15, 16] lack of privacy, feeling of unsafety, mental health and psychosocial problems, among others. In addition, the location of collective accommodations has an important role on the awareness of available services; the difficulty of access of some of the sites, and the lack of presence of humanitarian actors are factors to be taken into account when interpreting the situation of refugee families.

From the analysis, it is observed that HH with children and two or more adult members face different types of challenges. Rather positive results were obtained regarding the situation of this type of HH, especially higher enrolment rates in formal education (80%), higher awareness of protection services and information in general. However, decreased income levels were reported by this type of HH in comparison to the previous year, which should be analysed taking into account the higher percentage of adults who are out of the labor market for this group (38% of working-age adult members). This might reflect a worsening financial situation for increased numbers of refugee families.

Generally, in HH with two or more adults, the second adult is a person over 60 years old, this characteristic being reflected in the situation and needs of the HH. As an example 37% of this type of HH with reported needs mentioned healthcare services as the priority need. In addition, 56% of the HH members reported having health problems, with the majority of them mentioning that they received the needed assistance.

In this regard, a tailored and inclusive approach to assistance programmes and support measures is crucial for an effective response targeting this type of HH, taking into account their specific characteristics, situation and needs.

14 The MHPS problem was assessed at the individual level on the report of feeling so upset, anxious, worried, worried, restless, agitated, angry, or depressed that it affects the person's daily functioning.
15 Site Mapping and Monitoring 2024; to be published.
16 Slovakia Multisector Needs Assessment 2023 - online

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UNHCR's Microdata Library is a public online library containing anonymous microdata of persons affected by forced displacement collected by UNHCR, it's partners and other third parties.