

Term of Reference Disability & Age Task Force (DATF) for Refugee Response in Moldova

Background

Since February 2022, 1,244,453 individuals arrived in Moldova from Ukraine, it is estimated that around 135,861 Ukrainian refugees remain in the country. Available data from the population trends indicate that the refugees' population consists mostly of women (around 60%); children (around 40%); and older persons (around 18%).

To support the Government of Moldova in its leading role regarding the Refugee Response, the Government of the Republic of Moldova and UNHCR established an inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) to ensure coordination between stakeholders at all stages of the refugee response and to widen the support base for refugees and affected host communities, in line with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and with the Refugee Coordination Model.

It is estimated that there are approximately 10% of refugees with disabilities in Moldova, however, there is a lack of regular, clear and structured data disaggregated by disability criteria still, and this presents a challenge in understanding how far the refugee response on the part of the Moldovan government, the UN Agencies, and other partners provides adequate support for and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees with disabilities that are placed in Moldovan accommodation centers and host families and communities in Moldova and Transnistria region.

Furthermore, Global statistics demonstrate that persons with disabilities are on average 3.4 times more likely to be sexually exploited and abused than their able-bodied counterparts. Work with the PSEA Network will be essential to ensure tailored SEA mitigation initiatives.

Acknowledging that persons with disabilities and their families, older people, caregivers, and support persons are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and displacement the Disability Task Force under the Protection Working Group has been established in 2022. The initiative was grounded on the need to understand the risks that persons with disabilities encounter as well as to approach and find solutions to the challenges faced by refugees with disabilities to access to services provided by the Moldovan government and humanitarian actors as well as access to specific rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. In 2022 the Task Force was focusing on Disability while in 2023 it will also include the thematic of Age within the group. The DATF will continue the work in 2025 after having assessed the outcomes and challenges of previous years and define the new objectives and work modality for 2024.

The Disability & Age Task Force is composed of UN Agencies, national public authorities, national and international NGOs, organizations of persons with disabilities included, and donors.

Membership

The Disability & Age Task Force (DATF) is co-chaired by Keystone Moldova, OHCHR/UNHCR and HelpAge Moldova which will report to the Protection Working Group on the achievement and challenges of the work of the Task Force. Membership of the DATF is open to all stakeholders which are providing humanitarian response to refugees and/or host communities in line with humanitarian principles. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and Organizations focusing on older people are strongly encouraged to participate as well.

Member organizations of the DATF are expected to actively engage in the work of the Task Force to achieve its objective, ensure actively regular participation to the meetings with provision of short monthly highlights of their achievement, challenges/lessons learned and support the decision-making process of the Task Force to support the implementation of the working plan. The members would make available resources (human or financial) where it is needed to support specific activities of the Task Force.

Objective and Activities

The Disability & Age Task Force sets within the refugee protection coordination and leads the coordination efforts at national level. Its objective is to improve the inclusion of older persons and persons with disabilities in the Ukrainian Refugee Response in the Republic of Moldova and Transnistrian region, ensuring access to mainstream services as well as guaranteeing the availability of specific services to respond to specific needs. This involves:

1. Promoting and mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities of all ages and advocating for ensuring their meaningful participation in line with principles of equality and non-discrimination, supporting the consideration of disability perspective, and removing any barriers that prevent refugees with disabilities from accessing humanitarian assistance and services provided by the government institutions on an equal basis with others.
2. Promoting equality and inclusion of older persons in humanitarian aid response, identifying older persons needs and capacities and ensuring that protection and assistance programs are inclusive of older persons and that services are accessible to them on an equal footing and non-discrimination basis.

To achieve this goal, the ADTF carries out the following activities:

- 1. Improve situational analysis on needs and gaps faced by older persons and persons with disabilities in accessing services in the refugee response.**
 - Conduct assessment of needs, protection concerns and barriers and facilitators to access to services for older persons and persons with disabilities.
 - Support interagency and multisectoral need assessment to include disability and age perspective.

- 2. Strengthening coordination and information sharing among actors of the Task Force and other Working Groups.**
 - Ensure planning and implementation of the Disability & Age Task Force yearly activities.
 - Strengthen communication among members of the Task Force and other coordination mechanisms to support older persons and persons with disabilities.
 - Strengthen the use of standardized IM tools and datasets in line with the Refugee Data Management System among the members.

- 3. Strengthening Age and Disability mainstreaming across the different sectors of the Refugee response in alignment with a Human Rights-Based Approach.**
 - Strengthen the mainstreaming of inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons in the Refugee Response.
 - Enhance better participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) within the humanitarian coordination system.

- 4. Ensure key advocacy messages are shared with the relevant stakeholders.**
 - Increase visibility of Disability & Age Task Force members' work.
 - Increase visibility of common key advocacy messages regarding the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in the refugee response.

- 5. Improve the capacity of different stakeholders to respond to the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities.**
 - Increase capacity of humanitarian stakeholders to deliver inclusive humanitarian action.

Meetings

Quarterly planning meetings will be organized to discuss progress and exchange information and pending actions. Members of the Disability & Age Task Force are invited to propose subjects/issues of discussion during the meetings no later than three days before the meeting.

The agenda will be circulated three days before the task force meetings to allow members the final opportunity to suggest additional items for discussion. The meeting will provide reasonable accommodations for any members, which will be requested in advance.

Meetings will take place on Friday, online or in a hybrid format. Need-based, exceptional meetings may be called by the Lead when this is considered necessary to address an issue of an urgent matter.

Validity of the terms of reference

These terms of reference will be reviewed in June 2025 to ensure the objective and modality are still fitting the context of the response.

Principles

All Disability & Age Task Force members share the following understanding, values, and principles that they commit to promote in different working groups of the humanitarian response:

In the context of this Task Force, **disability is defined as per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, Article 1: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

A rights-based approach holds people and institutions in power accountable to fulfill their responsibilities and supports rights holders in demanding their rights and access to the services needed on an equitable basis with others. The rights of refugees with disabilities are fully acknowledged under article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities towards which both UNHCR and the Moldova Government are accountable.

Persons Centered Approach is designed as a critical step toward inclusive quality service delivery. It is supposed to empower users to raise their voices, it also leads to changing practices among professionals delivering the services with a critical change of paradigm: the user originally considered as the recipient of the service (passive) reaches the heart of the service process (active). In the context of disability, the Disability Task Force members consider refugees with disabilities should be allowed to access information, make their own choices, provide feedback about the services they receive or cannot access, receive tailored responses, etc.

The **intersectionality** of an individual's identity also needs to be considered. Persons with disabilities are diverse in their experiences, in the ways that barriers impede their participation and inclusion in humanitarian and development activities, and in their identity, including their gender, age, ethnicity, and location. Due to the intersectionality of these factors, persons with disabilities often face greater marginalization and discrimination.