Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

Accountability to Affected Populations Task Force

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

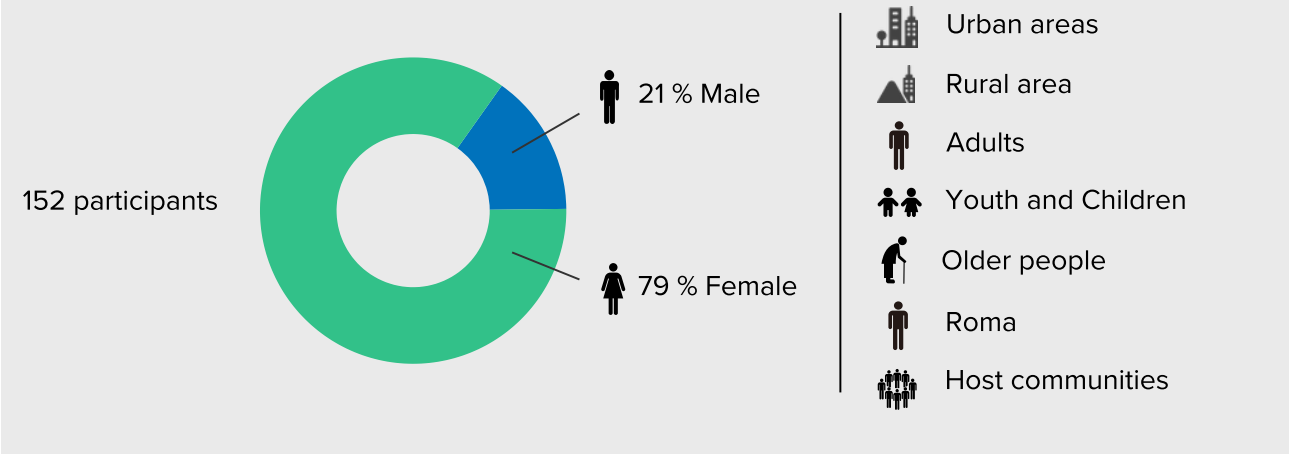
PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT 2026

Semi-Annual Factsheet – First Semester 2026 | MOLDOVA

Background and methodology

Following consultations within the Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Task Force, the Participatory Assessment (PA) methodology was adjusted in 2026 from quarterly to semi-annual data collection. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted during the first semester of 2026 with refugees, asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced persons including members of the Roma community, from diverse age, gender, disability and social backgrounds across Moldova, including the left bank of the Nistru River. Participatory Assesssment consutations were conducted through 20 FGDs representing diverse population profiles, including children and adolescents (5 groups), adults aged 30–49 (5 groups), ethnic Roma (3 groups), people of pre-retirement age (3 groups), persons with disabilities (3 groups), and LGBTIQ+ individuals (1 group), including two FGDs held on the left bank of the Nistru River. The findings presented in this factsheet reflect the perspectives, priorities and concerns expressed by affected communities and are intended to inform programming, advocacy and accountability efforts. To ensure a timely and data-driven response to the needs and challenges of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, the factsheet and an interactive dashboard have been developed and are continuously updated[1].

[1] *Interactive dashboard: Moldova: Participatory Assessment Analysis*



Role of the partners

The success of the Participatory Assessment was underpinned by the active involvement of a diverse network of UNHCR partners, including Ave Copiii, CNPAC, CDA, Tarna Rom, Charity Centre for Refugees (CCR), Keystone Moldova, the National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova (NCUM), Female Support Force, and Refugee Councils, together with the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Task Force. These partners played a pivotal role in identifying locations and participants, facilitating data collection, and contributing to the refinement of the assessment methodology. Their collaboration ensured a process that was inclusive and accessible, prioritizing the diverse needs of vulnerable groups. The joint efforts of these organizations fostered a comprehensive approach, leveraging local expertise and community engagement to deliver meaningful insights and actionable outcomes.

UNHCR extends its appreciation to all partners, community representatives, refugee volunteers, and, most importantly, the refugees and asylum-seekers who participated in the assessment. Their willingness to share their experiences and views was instrumental in identifying priorities, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening protection and inclusion efforts.

Key Finding

Participants across all profiles consistently described Moldova as a place of safety, stability and dignity. The country's geographical proximity to countries of origin, cultural similarities, linguistic accessibility and the welcoming attitude of many host community members continue to facilitate integration and well-being. Many refugees reported feeling at home in Moldova after several years of displacement. However, concerns remain regarding employment opportunities, housing affordability, future legal status[2], healthcare, access to updated information and the long-term impacts of displacement.

Participants highlighted growing socioeconomic pressures affecting their ability to remain in Moldova over the longer term. The closure of several refugee accommodation centres, rising rental costs, increasing utility expenses and higher prices for essential goods were frequently cited as major challenges. Forcibly displaced persons living in rural areas also reported limited employment opportunities, while the discontinuation of cash assistance for many households has further increased financial vulnerability. As a result, some refugees indicated that they are considering returning to Ukraine despite ongoing security concerns. Older refugees and persons with disabilities face heightened vulnerability due to limited livelihood opportunities, health-related needs, and reduced humanitarian assistance. While participants generally reported feeling safe and supported, rising living costs, healthcare expenses, and uncertainty regarding future housing and support services remain significant concerns for these groups.

Despite these challenges, refugees consistently reported feeling safe and welcomed in Moldova. Community centres, educational and social activities, and positive interactions with host communities continue to support social cohesion, integration and a sense of belonging among refugees and local populations.

Education

Education remains broadly accessible for refugee children in Moldova, with participants reporting positive experiences of inclusion and integration within the education system. The majority of children and adolescents consulted, attend schools in Moldova while continuing to follow the Ukrainian curriculum online. Participants identified in-person learning as the most effective format, highlighting direct interaction with teachers and peers. They also reported feeling accepted and integrated in their school communities, without experiencing discrimination based on nationality or displacement status. However, language requirements continue to present challenges, particularly for adolescents approaching graduation, who need to meet Romanian language requirements for final examinations and transition to higher levels of education. Roma refugee children were enrolled in school, with no reported experiences of discrimination. However, financial constraints limited their participation in extracurricular activities. Community centres and child-friendly spaces continue to play an important role in supporting socialization, wellbeing and inclusion. Participants emphasized the need for continued Romanian language support and more flexible educational pathways for refugee students who are still developing language proficiency.

[2] On 28 January 2026, temporary protection was extended through Government Decision No. 26 on the extension of temporary protection for persons displaced from Ukraine, published in the Official Gazette (Monitorul Oficial No. 62–64, Article 31) on 29 January 2026. According to this decision, temporary protection has been extended until 1 March 2027, and beneficiaries were able to request the extension by submitting an online application between 1 February and 30 April 2026. At present, any eligible person may apply for temporary protection or for any other form of protection provided under the Law on Asylum of the Republic of Moldova (Law No. 270 of 18 December 2008). However, there remains uncertainty regarding the legal status after 1 March 2027, as no decision has yet been adopted concerning the post-temporary protection framework.

"After three years of studying in a a Moldovan school, people thought our child was Moldovan."

– Refugee parent, Adults (30-49) FGD participant, Ungheni

Livelihoods and Employment

Livelihood opportunities remain among the most significant challenges for refugees in Moldova. Employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas, remain very limited, with many refugees unable to access jobs due to administrative barriers, language barriers, and childcare responsibilities. While a legal framework for freelance work exists, refugees currently face obstacles in accessing this opportunity in practice. Older persons continue to rely primarily on pensions or humanitarian assistance, while younger adults expressed strong interest in vocational training, language courses, and entrepreneurship support. Despite these challenges, young refugee families consistently expressed a strong desire to achieve self-reliance, support their households through sustainable livelihoods, and actively contribute to their host communities.

"Kindergartens are often paid, there are no jobs in the villages and rents are expensive. How are we supposed to survive?" -Adult refugee (30-49), Bălți

Healthcare and Psychosocial Support

Beneficiaries of temporary protection are legally entitled to pre-hospital emergency care and primary healthcare services in Moldova; however, in practice, access remains constrained by systemic and administrative barriers. While the majority of respondents, including families with children and adults, reported generally positive experiences with family doctors and primary healthcare, key gaps persist in access to specialist and outpatient services and in the availability of compensated medicines, with older refugees reporting interrupted treatments and affordability challenges. Access to health insurance remains a structural barrier for refugees who are not formally employed under an individual employment contract. As a result, some refugees rely on private healthcare providers or seek specialized medical services abroad. Key priorities include improving access to health insurance, compensated medicines, and specialist healthcare services in rural areas.

Social Services Access

Refugees in Moldova, particularly families with children, continue to face barriers in accessing social services. Participants reported difficulties obtaining information, receiving timely responses to their requests, and understanding available assistance schemes. However, where social workers were involved, they played an important role in facilitating access to essential support, including accommodation, rental assistance and medical services. Despite these positive examples, participants noted that access to social support remains inconsistent and highly dependent on individual guidance and outreach.

"I approached the social worker in Moldova and received support in finding accommodation and covering rent. Later, I was assisted with placement in a centre and gained access to medical services, including chemotherapy. The support I received was essential during a very difficult period." -Adult refugee with disability

Housing

Housing remains a major concern for refugees in Moldova. High rental and utility costs make adequate accommodation increasingly unaffordable for many families, while housing options in rural areas remain extremely limited. Refugee accommodation centres are undergoing consolidation, with access increasingly limited to the most vulnerable cases based on strict eligibility criteria. As a result, most refugees depend on the private rental market, where informal arrangements and housing instability remain common. Some participants reported that the rising cost of rent and living expenses has led them to consider returning to Ukraine.

In the Transnistrian region, some participants reported greater housing stability, facilitated by family ties, existing housing options, and the possibility of purchasing property. Housing and rental costs were generally perceived as lower than on the right bank of the Nistru River, making accommodation comparatively more affordable. However, participants also noted a gradual increase in rental and utility costs, placing growing pressure on household budgets.

"Rent is expensive, and without stable employment it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to survive." -Adult refugee, Bălți

Access to information

Access to reliable and timely information remained a critical challenge. Most refugees relied on peer-to-peer channels such as Viber, Telegram, and Facebook to stay informed. While these channels provide fast updates, participants expressed a clear preference for direct, face-to-face communication, stating that they "prefer when someone comes and informs us directly rather than through chats or groups." This reliance on digital sources can also contribute to uneven access to accurate information, particularly regarding Temporary Protection procedures, assistance criteria, and available services. Roma refugees primarily relied on Roma mediators and informal community networks for information. Limited literacy and language barriers reduced their ability to independently access information on available services, assistance, and entitlements.

"We prefer when someone comes and informs us directly rather than through chats or groups." –Older refugee participant (60+), Chisinau RAC

Community Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence

Participants generally reported positive relations with host communities and a strong sense of acceptance, often describing Moldova as feeling "like home." Social interaction with local residents takes place primarily through community activities which provide important spaces for building trust and mutual understanding, language classes, humanitarian services, churches. Children reported socializing with peers through recreational activities and NGO-supported programmes. However, language barriers, particularly among young refugees with limited knowledge of Russian, continue to hinder communication and integration. Participants noted a decline in opportunities for community engagement as humanitarian actors have reduced their presence. Some refugees from the Transnistrian region reported experiencing stigma and exclusion, including from other refugee groups, while differing political views were identified as a source of tensions within Ukrainian communities. Participants emphasized the continued need for opportunities for social interaction, language learning, and community-based activities to strengthen social cohesion, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence.

"I chose Moldova because of the language and similar culture. I knew it would be easier to adjust here than in other European countries. I have relatives here, so it was easier to move and receive the support I needed. I feel protected here." – Adult refugee (30-49), Left bank

General recommendations

- Expand vocational training and livelihood opportunities to strengthen refugees' self-reliance and economic inclusion.
- Improve access to healthcare through clear information on entitlements, available services, and referral pathways, with a focus on vulnerable groups.
- Support inclusive education through school enrolment, Romanian language learning, and access to extracurricular activities.
- Provide timely and accessible information on Temporary Protection, available legal status options beyond TP, and access to legal assistance, including state-funded legal aid for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons.
- Strengthen community-based protection and outreach through proactive engagement by social workers, including in Refugee Accommodation Centres, rural areas, and the left bank of the Nistru River.
- Promote social cohesion and integration by supporting community-based activities that bring refugees and host communities together.

A moment from The Flying Seagulls project at the Donduseni Community Centre, where children take part in interactive games, circus activities, and creative experiences that promote joy, confidence, and social connection.

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