



REGIONAL SUB-WORKING GROUP CHILD PROTECTION Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND

A rapidly growing number of children and families are fleeing to neighbouring countries as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, with many more expected to be displaced in the coming months.

Children are – and will continue to be – disproportionately affected given their unique vulnerabilities and needs, which can be heightened by a child’s age, gender, disability, and circumstances. The humanitarian response must understand these needs and seek to address them through an adapted approach. Unaccompanied or separated children, in particular, are at a heightened risk of violence, gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation. The risk of trafficking also soars in emergencies.

Children’s lives should not be put on hold. Meeting their immediate needs, including preventing family separation, ensuring early identification, child-friendly reception, safety, housing, education, health care and Mental Health and Psycho-social Support (MHPSS), are essential steps to ensure that they can continue to learn, grow, and discover. Protection is needed to allow the children who are fleeing Ukraine to grow, thrive and enjoy life as all children should.

In March 2022, UNHCR and partners launched the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to promote and implement a comprehensive response to support efforts by five countries neighbouring Ukraine to protect and assist refugees coming from Ukraine. UNHCR leads and coordinates the implementation of the RRP in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. Within the framework of the RRP and building on existing country-level humanitarian coordination structures, an inter-agency Regional Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) chaired by UNHCR with participation from RRF members and other relevant actors has been established in Geneva to ensure efficient situational information management and support to country level coordination as required.

In light of the high number of children affected by the emergency, and the wide range of intersectional child protection risks at stake, an agreement was reached among RCF members on the need to establish a Regional Sub-Working Group focused on Child Protection, co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF, and working under the auspices and guidance of the Regional Protection Working Group.

GOAL

The Regional Sub-Working Group on Child Protection (SWG CP) provides technical and policy guidance and support to the Sub-Working Groups on Child Protection established at country level in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, and seeks to ensure effective, coherent and predictable interventions to support these countries Governments’ efforts to respond to the child protection needs of refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern fleeing from Ukraine.

The SWG CP will be guided by the UNHCR/UNICEF Joint Agenda for Action for Children Fleeing Ukraine of February 2022, as well as the [UNHCR’s Framework for the Protection of Children](#), [UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action](#) and [Child Protection Strategy \(2021-2030\)](#), and the and the interagency [SPHERE Child Protection Minimum Standard in Humanitarian Action](#).

Particular attention will be afforded to the protection needs of unaccompanied and separated children, children with disabilities and other children with specific needs and at heightened risk.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Ensure regional analysis of information on the situation and needs of children fleeing Ukraine, including considerations of age, gender, and diversity.
- Ensure that the protection needs of children fleeing Ukraine are addressed through timely and coordinated action, in close collaboration with the Sub-Working Groups on Child Protection at country level.
- Ensure relevant and robust coordination mechanisms, including information management, timely and effective needs assessments, planning, prioritization, implementation, reporting and evaluation, under the overall umbrella of the Regional Protection Working Group.
- Ensure that all SWG CP members are accountable to affected populations through consultative and participative approaches, and community-based feedback and complaints mechanism, and that the best interest of the child is the guiding principle for all interventions.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Protection Analysis:** Provide strategic guidance and advice to the Regional Protection Working Group and country level SWG CP on courses of action related to child protection, including develop messaging and analysis to support advocacy and resource mobilization for child protection in the region based on evidence and outcomes of protection monitoring.
- **Data and Information sharing:** Manage information to support decision making. Facilitate the flow of child protection information between country level SWG CP and other fora and promote consistency in co-ordination standards, information management and capacity between national SWG CPs.
- **Joint protection response:** Coordinate, identify and strengthen the child protection response in line with regional efforts (i.e., EU), national plans, the agreed regional protection strategy, and ensure joint efforts in the needs/gaps analysis, joint recommendations for responses, working together within the RRP framework to ensure adequate funding, joint planning, joint information management and joint reporting.
- **Technical advice:** Contribute with child protection considerations into to the regional wide response plan and any appeal documents, in line with regional efforts (i.e., EU level), national plans, the Joint Agenda for Action for Children Fleeing Ukraine and the agreed regional protection strategy. Provide technical guidance and support on protection and assistance services to country level SWG CP. Promote standards, guidelines and promising practices on child protection across the region.
- **Advocacy:** Strengthen regional advocacy with the aim to consolidate protection strategies with key stakeholders, in line with the agreed regional protection strategy. Identify advocacy gaps and develop appropriate advocacy messages and tools to engage relevant Governmental and other key stakeholders. Advocate for and coordinate resource mobilisation initiatives for the SWG CP and its members.
- **Inclusion in national systems and nexus approach:** Ensure clear linkages between all child protection interventions and responses with existing national child protection systems, ensuring capacity building and support to such national systems when needed. Strengthen linkages with other development initiatives on protection being undertaken by the Governments and/or international development actors in the region, European Union

institutions when appropriate, including through the collection, and sharing of child protection analysis on refugee and host communities.

- **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP):** Ensure that AAP is at the centre of the humanitarian response through robust community-based complaints mechanisms to guarantee participation and inclusion, communication and transparency, feedback and response with an age, gender, and diversity approach. Coordinate, identify and strengthen the resilience of host communities, through support benefiting both host populations and refugees and through increasing the awareness of, and equitable access to services.
- **Gender and diversity:** In coordination with the Regional Gender Taskforce, ensure that analyses include assessments of impact and understanding of age, gender and diversity dynamics, so that any unintended negative effects that may increase the vulnerabilities of persons of diverse gender, including girls and boys, with different backgrounds and profiles to protection risks be minimized or prevented. Ensure effective inclusion of all children, including children with disabilities, with serious medical conditions and at the intersection of diverse SOGIESC, as well as other diversity considerations.

LINKAGE WITH OTHER REGIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES

The SWG CP will working under the auspices and guidance of the Regional Protection Working Group and will report back to the Regional Protection Working Group through its co-chairs.

The SWG CP will collaborate, as and when needed, with other Regional Sub-Working Groups, such as the Gender Task Force and the upcoming Sub-Working Group on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the Regional Task Force on Anti-Trafficking.

MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRING

The SWG CP is open to all child protection partners (including UN agencies and other international organizations, international and national NGOs and the civil society organizations) which are currently or planning to be engaged in actual delivery of child protection services as part of their humanitarian response to the refugee crisis, as well as a selected number of strategic regional actors.

The co-chairs of the SWG CP at country level in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, will be invited to attend the meetings of the regional SWG CP and provide updates on a regular basis.

The RPWG is co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF.

MEETINGS AND PERIODICITY

The SWG CP will convene in hybrid format (virtually and in-person) initially on a weekly basis, every Monday from 15h00 to 16h30. Ad hoc meetings may be called at short notice in case of critical issues with a regional dimension. Minutes of the meetings will be circulated among all members in a timely manner. Notetaking will rotate between the two co-chairs.

REVISION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These terms of reference guiding the structure and activities of the SWG CP will be revised every three months and/or based on immediate needs as agreed by the members.

UNICEF and UNHCR
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