

**Ukraine Refugee Situation
Regional Protection Working Group (RPWG) Meeting
25 March 2022**

Meeting minutes

Agenda:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Key Developments on Child Protection /Prevention of GBV/Trafficking /PSEA**
- 3. Tour de Table**
- 4. Overview of Protection Coordination at Regional and Country Level**
- 5. AOB**

1. Introduction

- UNHCR chair opened the meeting by informing that the main purpose of the meeting was to share key developments in the response to the Ukraine refugee response, discuss the protection risks as identified in the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP), present the coordination mechanisms established or in the making at the country level, and to propose coordination structures at the regional level and invite expressions of interest in co-chairing regional working groups.

2. Key Protection Developments

- UNHCR shared an overview of the key protection needs identified in the region:
 - There are variations across EU member states in terms of progress made in the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).
 - In terms of asylum/registration, countries are at different stages of implementation/apply different systems. Ongoing initiative to roll out Blue Dots, focusing on children and families, and would like more actors to join in.
 - Identification of specific needs remains challenging due to lack of Governments' capacity and people moving onward. Effective identification, assessment, and tailored support for children at-risk remains limited (insufficient capacity for BIA), which will be further discussed in the Child Protection sub-WG. Protection Monitoring Tool (PMT) is being rolled out; keen to have more partners involved in PMT.
 - In the context of (informal) reception/transit facilities, and private arrangements for transportation from the border as well as accommodation, risks of gender-based violence (GBV), sexual abuse and exploitation and trafficking are high, especially in view of fact that 90% of all refugees from Ukraine are women and children. The ongoing Stay Safe campaign aims to mitigate these risks. UNHCR is also advocating for and providing advice to private actors on registration and vetting systems.
 - There are formal and informal transfers of refugees already, particularly from Moldova (buses to Bulgaria and Romania) through the Green Corridor established by Governments and UNHCR, with support from IOM. First air transfers to Austria from Moldova took place last weekend; SOPs have been put in place. Discussions are ongoing on transfers (and relevant SOPs) from Romania.
 - Protection monitoring shows significant gaps in information provision on legal status, rights associated and access to services. Information provision and referrals to service providers through the Blue Dots aims to address these gaps.
 - National protection systems and first-responders have been overwhelmed by the scale and speed of arrivals; they require support and capacity-building.
- 1. Family reunification, especially for separated and unaccompanied children, is a key concern and Governments need further support on this.

- Country-level Response Plans are receiving inputs, along with suggestions on how to address identified protection risks. PWGs at country level are mapping actors involved and gaps in the response.
- UNHCR will shortly be putting together information on a dedicated webpage on the global UNHCR data portal (Ukraine Situation section), to reflect the protection work being done. All RPWG members are invited to contribute information/key materials to be posted on the portal (for external consumption).
- In terms of protection response, greater presence of international agencies and NGOs is needed.

3. Tour de Table

- INTERPOL: This is an opportunity for synergies between INTERPOL initiatives and RPWG actors' initiatives, since INTERPOL is already supporting authorities on the ground in implementation of registration/vetting systems. INTERPOL has received request from Moldova for registration at border and on transit routes. INTERPOL's Project SOTERIA supports countries on PSEA and anti-trafficking, in the context of humanitarian assistance, which includes identification of individuals which could cause harm to refugees, and INTERPOL is ready to support actors on the ground. Already present in Moldova, happy to meet other actors there.
- UNHCR shared proposal to establish a regional Anti-Trafficking Task Force for the Ukraine refugee emergency and welcomed the involvement of Interpol, alongside the EU anti-trafficking unit, EUROPOL, Frontex and UNODC.
- IOM: Responding in all concerned countries, in many of which, systems are overwhelmed. In Ukraine, IOM has 17 partnerships, in Moldova two. Funding mechanisms exist and can be ramped up.
- UN Women: Through the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), working currently in Moldova as well as Ukraine to strengthen the engagement of women-led and women's right organisations within the relevant response frameworks, and happy to support in other countries. UNW noted a first Gender TF meeting was held in Moldova, with over 40 participants. UN Women in partnership with IOM shared the preliminary results of a Rapid Gender Assessment that took place with over 1,700 Ukrainian refugees and third country nationals were interviewed on displacement patterns, needs and intentions between 9-17 March in 4 border crossing points at entry and in 3 transit locations, other temporary placement centers and private accommodation. Women and girls account for 81% of all refugees in the sample. On average, there are 190 children aged below 18 years per 100 women refugees. Among the most pressing and immediate needs expressed are: support for transportation (40%), support to return home when possible (37% in transit vs 42% for those met in the centers), food (30% in transit location vs 54% in centers), financial support, communication and access to information, employment/job. Will share the published results of assessment. UN Women briefed on a Gender Task Force which will be established at regional level and invited those interested to participate to come forward.
- UNHCR suggested to use this forum to share information on ongoing activities and hope that coordination structures that are in place in Moldova can be replicated to other countries.
- UNODC: Focusing on trafficking of persons. Gathering interest for information sharing. Possibly establishing a TF on Trafficking under ICAT. Two-tier process of working with law-enforcement actors to identify victims plus setting up a platform for information exchange.

4. Overview of Protection Coordination at Regional and Country Level – see PPT presentation

- UNHCR provided an overview of the inter-agency coordination mechanisms at both country and regional levels. The RRP outlines the activities to support authorities in the region. UNHCR is both leading and partner agency in coordination structures. Over 110 partners submitted inputs thus far, and more are looking to become operational. Inter-agency coordination under Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), building on existing governments-led coordination structures

- At country level: While coordination structures in Moldova and Poland have been agreed with Government counterparts and formally launched, inter-agency coordination architecture in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia has been discussed with Governments and will be presented for formal launch the second week of April.
- The establishment of a GBV sub-WG, an Accountability and inclusion working groups as well as an ATTF (mention was made of discussions held with IOM on possible co-chairing arrangements) and a PSEA Network (led by a new Senior Regional PSEA Coordinator), were proposed and explained to the group and feedback was sought from all RPWG members. The establishment of an Accountability and Inclusion working group was proposed to help address the protection needs of persons with special needs (e.g., persons with disabilities, older people, discriminated (incl. LGBTI+) persons, etc.) and ensure an age, gender and diversity approach to the refugee response. Mention was also made of the CASH WG which has already been activated. The establishment of a Solutions WG is still being discussed.

5. AOB

- IOM: At national and regional level, ready to support funding streams, as part of Global Protection Cluster and Co-Chairing of Anti-Trafficking TF. Discussed GBV and agreed to join in the messaging within the Stay Safe Campaign and would like to discuss IOM's role in this SWG. IOM can extend support through existing IOM Help lines. There are discussions around PSEA, IOM's role is yet to be defined, including the role *vis a vis* unaccompanied children.
- ICVA: Would like to hear more about the establishment of a Solutions WG at regional level.
- UN Women: Regional Gender TF, co-Chaired with CARE International, will also have a strong focus on inter-sectorality and will coordinate closely with the new Accountability and Inclusion WG (contact person: jo-anne.bishop@unwomen.org).

The Next RPWG Meeting will take place on Friday 1 April, 3:00-4:30 PM.

Action point 1: UNHCR to provide update on Solutions WG at the next meeting of RPWG.

Action point 2: Participants to send an email to to salducci@unhcr.org and/or dragovic@unhcr.org and specify which of the proposed regional coordination structures they would like to join.

Participants:

Name	Organisation	Title	Contact Details
Selena Kozakijevic	DRC	Regional PRAB Project Coordinator	selena.kozakijevic@drc.ngo
Marion Staunton	HELPAge International	Humanitarian Protection & MHPSS Adviser	marion.staunton@helpage.org
Gwenaelle Fontana	ICRC	Global Advisor on Migration Issues	gfontana@icrc.org
Jerome Elie	ICVA	Head of Forced Migration	jerome.elie@icvanetwork.org
Isaac Espinosa	INTERPOL	Coordinator	I.ESPINOSADELGADO@interpol.int
Giulia Menegatti	INTERSOS	Project Coordinator at Migration Unit	Giulia.menegatti@intersos.org

Heather Komenda	IOM	Migrant Protection and Assistance Specialist	hkomenda@iom.int
Daniel Redondo	IOM	Senior Migrant Assistance Specialist	dredondo@iom.int
Irina Todorova	IOM	Regional Thematic Specialist on THB	itodorova@iom.int
Anne-Birgitte Krum-Hansen	UNHCR	Snr Protection Coordinator / Reg Bureau Europe	krumhans@unhcr.org
Geraldine Salducci	UNHCR	Snr Protection Officer / Regional Bureau for Europe	salducci@unhcr.org
Ivo Freijssen	UNHCR		freijssen@unhcr.org
Machtelt De Vriese	UNHCR	Snr Community-Based Prot Off	devriese@unhcr.org
Houda Chalchoul	UNHCR	Senior Legal Officer	chalchou@unhcr.org
Emilie Page	UNHCR	Senior SGBV Officer	page@unhcr.org
Constanze Quosh	UNHCR	Senior SGBV Officer	quosh@unhcr.org
Liliana Sorrentino	UNHCR	Legal Officer	sorrentl@unhcr.org
Sandra Siefert Stroem	UNHCR	Assoc. Protection Officer	stroem@unhcr.org
Katherine Harris	UNHCR	Protection Officer	harrisk@unhcr.org
Vera Dragovic-O'Donnell	UNHCR	Assoc. IA Coord Officer	dragovic@unhcr.org
Mukundi Mutasa	UNODC	Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer	mukundi.mutasa@un.org
Gabriele Aiello	UNODC	Associate Expert in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	gabriele.aiello@un.org
Jo-Anne Bishop	UN Women	Regional Strategic Planning and Coordination Specialist	jo-anne.bishop@unwomen.org
Ekram El-Huni	UN Women	Regional Programme Coordinator	Ekram.elhuni@unwomen.org