Ukraine Refugee Situation
Regional Protection Working Group (RPWG) Meeting
01 April 2022

Meeting minutes

Agenda:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Presentations by INTERPOL, IOM and UNODC of ongoing Anti-Trafficking Initiatives**
3. **Update on the operationalization of Blue Dots**
4. **CP Update**
5. **GBV Update**
6. **AAP Update**
7. **AOB**

I. Discussion highlights

1. Introduction

- UNHCR opened the meeting by presenting the meeting agenda and thanking the INTERPOL, IOM and UNODC colleagues for agreeing to present their ongoing anti-trafficking and related initiatives. The Chair thanked the UN Women for sharing the ToR for the Gender TF and informed of intention to submit comments on the same.

- The Chair further informed the group on current discussions concerning the establishment of an Anti-Trafficking Task Force (ATTF) under the Regional PWG and considerations for the possible establishment of a GBV SWG in the coming week. She welcomed offers received from members of the RPWG for (Co-) Chairing. Until the CP SWG (the launch of which is scheduled for 11 April), the GBV SWG and the PSEA Network are formed, CP, GBV as well as AAP and PSEA will be standing agenda items of the RPWG meetings.
- The Chair informed that the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) is currently being revised based on inputs provided by partners at national level; the new RRP should be officially launched by Easter.

2. Presentations on Anti-Trafficking Initiatives

<u>IOM</u>

- Quite engaged with information activities; HELP lines established both in Ukraine and for all surrounding countries.
- Scaling up info dissemination in all border crossing points (BCPs) and capitals; intention to scale up to Television and to develop more child-friendly materials.
- 20,779 consultations in response to 4,400 calls received were provided through the National Toll-Free Migrant Advice and Counter-Trafficking Hotline 527. Of those calls nearly 60 per cent (56.7%) were about general information about human trafficking and safe travel.
- Integration of protection monitoring and referral into transportation.
- Extending technical assistance and distributing equipment at BCPs, for referrals and identification of vulnerable individuals. Continuing to support and activate systems in place.
- Supporting development of registration systems, activation of national identification systems to support referrals.

- Scaling up grants to existing partners in neighbouring countries.
- Capacity- building, training and sensitization for a broad range of staff and partners.
- This week started identifying trafficking cases.
- Working with national authorities in assisting one trafficking case in Romania; one more case in Poland. Monitoring the situation in other countries including in Slovakia.
- TCN WG had a first meeting today and will be meeting next Friday again.
- In Poland, the Counter-Trafficking WG also meet this week.

UNODC

- *UNODC shared links to resources already published on the Ukraine crisis:* LINK 1, LINK 2
- Preparing a UNODC global position paper on Ukraine. Position paper will give an overview of the situation in Ukraine, focusing on UNODC mandate areas. Once out, position paper will be shared with the RPWG.
- Engaging with relevant TIP authorities in and around Moldova to foster coordinated responses and standardized approaches.
- Focus of interventions on access to justice, promoting rule of law and legal aid in addressing trafficking in persons and sexual and gender-based violence in and around conflict zones.
- Coordination with NGOs from countries neighbouring Ukraine to share information and support to develop referral and indicators.
- Conversations with other UN agencies (UNHCR and IOM) for a coordinated response to trafficking in persons.
- Establishing a Policy Group under ICAT. Scope for complementarity with the Anti-Trafficking TF under RPWG, both in mandate and scope.
- Welcome the possibility of meeting with UNHCR and the IOM in the coming week to discuss the scope, planned outputs and outcomes of the AT TF.
- Availability to participate in and contribute to the work of the RPWG.

INTERPOL

- An operational support team has been deployed in Moldova, upon request of Moldova's Ministry of Interior; this team has been conducting meetings at different levels with authorities and organisations on the ground.
- Initial assessment identified the basic needs of local authorities when it comes to border management and control, and identification of predators and offenders.
- Will partner with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), who are planning training sessions for the police and other law enforcement forces in Moldova, and also for frontline workers.
- Ongoing project SOTERIA links the aid sector and the authorities, making sure that the necessary mechanisms are in place and that people are assisted.
- Also supporting local authorities with the publication of notices to prevent the cases of missing children – the "yellow notice" cases. Following up on missing person cases. Few reported last week and, luckily, located. Continuing to support the issuing of these yellow notices as a preventive action at least (applicable to prevention of minors' disappearance).
- The deployed team is now in Romania and possibly extending their activities to this country.
- Operational Coordinator of Project SOTERIA will provide an update to the RPWG meeting next week.
- INTERPOL would be interested to co-Chair the ATTF and/or possibly the PSEA Network.

3. Update on the operationalization of Blue Dots

UNHCR

- Undertook missions to Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, to accelerate the Blue Dot Roll out.
- Blue Dot concept is based on the 2015-2016 emergency context, readapted to Ukraine refugee emergency jointly by UNHCR and UNICEF.
- These are meant to offer standardised information and protection services as a One stop shop for people on the move. Specific focus on children and families and people with specific needs.
- 8 Blue Dots are up and running in three countries so far, in Poland, Romania and Moldova. In Romania, the concept of Blue Dots is foreseen in a ministerial decree as part of the response to the needs of children fleeing Ukraine.
- Development of Digital Blue Dots underway to complement physical Blue Dots, together with UNICEF. UNHCR and UNICEF are encouraging more actors to join and operate in the Blue Dots.

UNICEF

- Light Blue Dots are situated in border areas and provide identification, referrals, information and advice (UNHCR), and Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) and rest and recuperation areas (UNICEF). Other Blue Dots are situated further inland and provide, apart from already mentioned services, legal advice and MH and PSS as well.

4. CP Update

UNICEF

- Key aspect is integration in international protection systems; the challenge is a bureaucratic one, and there is a lot to do on flashing out inclusion at the practical level.
- One of the most defining features is lack of screening mechanisms for UASC, in particular at internal EU borders; increasingly more systematised now, bust still major gaps.
- Above gap is manifesting in a few broad concerns: 1) one is the fact that a number of children are entering without legal guardians, making it difficult to identify them later; 2) Issues around residential care transfers and increasingly organised transfers by authorities of Ukraine, which need to be made secure at some level.
- Other issues are state-sponsored invitations for sports events for example. UNICEF is looking for a systematised approach.
- The biggest challenge for UNICEF is that on paper inclusion is robust but there is a limbo period during which the status of children is not legally resolved. They have a right to stay but their status is not otherwise regulated.
- Final challenge is the fact that the population is still highly transient. Hoping that over the next few weeks there will be clarity on the catch point in transit countries.
- UNICEF and partner collectively advocating for assignment of guardians upon entry soon after the arrival of unaccompanied children.
- The joint UNHCR/UNICEF statement on UASC fleeing Ukraine: LINK.

UNHCR

- Echoed that the lack of national services and capacity are key concerns, even when vulnerable persons are identified. There is also a limited number of international actors; protection systems are quite reliant on national actors.

- CP SWG will be established under the RPWG, co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF. Monday 11 April at 3 PM is the official launch. Draft ToRs will be circulated for comments at the first meeting on 11 April. Also established a CP SWG page on the operational portal. Initial invitation to the CP SWG will be sent to all RRP CP partners.

5. GBV Update

UNHCR

- UNHCR has specialised GBV staff also deployed in Romania and Hungary. Activities are centred around service mapping, national capacity-building, and establishment of referral systems.
- Will be focusing on safety audits for reception facilities. In Moldova for example there is more than 100 reception points.

6. AAP Update

UNHCR

- A lot of focus on development of info materials, including on air transfers from Moldova to EU MS. Also developing materials on Temporary Protection Directive and opportunities for travel and stay in non-EU countries. New arrivals are looking at what countries to travel onwards to.
- Looking into strengthening other information gaps, e.g., through the Stay Safe campaign concerning, GBV, SEA and trafficking. Also strengthening information on government assistance initiatives.
- Expanding info dissemination through FB and other social media.

7. AOB

- UNHCR noted that, as the thematic WGs are formed, more information will become available on how issues are addressed regionally.

- Regarding the ATTF, IOM and UNODC expressed interest in chairing. UNHCR will be reaching out to them next week to discuss the proposals and will be keeping RPWG members informed on progress/outcomes. Keeping further note of interest in chairing and co-chairing the coordination structures.

II. Action Points

1. **UNHCR to share the agenda for action that UNICEF and UNHCR developed for Ukraine.**

The Next RPWG Meeting will take place on Friday 8 April, 3:00-4:30 PM.

UNHCR suggested to keep meetings to one hour. Also suggested that, once CP, GBV sub-WG and the Anti-Trafficking Task Force are activated, RPWG members could meet every fortnight, whereas the thematic WGs would meet on a weekly basis.

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