UKRAINE SITUATION

REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

SLOVAKIA CHAPTER

January-December 2023

Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

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Geneva, Switzerland, January 2023

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A word from the Regional Refugee Coordinator

Pascale Moreau
Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Ukraine Situation
UNHCR, Regional Director for Europe

It is difficult to convey the enormity of the destruction and human suffering in Ukraine – and the impact the war is having across the region, where neighbouring countries have, since the outset, welcomed millions of refugees fleeing the violence.

The support offered to those fleeing Ukraine has been nothing short of extraordinary – from governments, civil society, individuals and volunteers, NGOs and local organizations, as well as private sector actors. In the European Union, the swift activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in March 2022 was historic and proved the EU can effectively receive and include refugees. Non-EU countries must also be commended. The Republic of Moldova has, in particular, shown exemplary leadership in extending protection to the refugees on its territory, modeled largely on that provided in EU Member States, despite significant challenges.

With much achieved in 2022, refugees and host communities are counting on our continued solidarity in the year to come. As in Ukraine, our immediate focus in the refugee-hosting countries must be on supporting national efforts to ensure that refugees in Europe have adequate and safe shelter during the difficult winter months ahead. At the same time, knowing that the conflict dynamics inside Ukraine may lead to further outflows, we continue to work with governments to develop contingency plans that will allow us to quickly respond to the urgent needs of new arrivals. This includes, among other things, providing targeted cash assistance, while supporting national and municipal efforts to ensure access to secure, dignified shelter through renovations and winterization of identified facilities. Prolonged stays in collective centres or group housing inevitably create protection risks, particularly for the most vulnerable. We must all redouble efforts to ensure they are safe through prompt identification and referral to appropriate services.

In the medium and long-term, the best way to protect refugees – and harness their potential to contribute – is through their inclusion in national systems. The implementation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive ensures that refugees can find safety in EU countries in the region and provides a legal basis for refugees to access rights and services. This includes rights that allow refugees to access the labour market and secure decent work. Going forward, addressing the practical, administrative and legal barriers to the enjoyment of rights will be a vital part of supporting their sustainable stay in host countries. It is important to support their swift and effective

inclusion into national systems to promote self-sufficiency and mitigate protection risks that can result if refugees are unable to meet their basic needs.

We are aware of the challenges ahead: the ripple effects of the war are widening, causing economic impacts in refugee-hosting countries and beyond. Fuel shortages and inflation loom large in the coming months. Reception and accommodation capacities are stretched, as are social welfare systems. Notwithstanding these realities, I remain reassured by the solidarity and creativity, political will and hands-on support that host governments, communities and partners have demonstrated over the past ten months – the speed and comprehensiveness of the response to date is a testament to what can be achieved when we work together. I take this opportunity to, once again, highlight the critical role of national and local non-governmental organizations, including refugee-led organizations, as first responders to urgent humanitarian needs since 24 February. They will remain the bedrock of our collective preparations and response, and they need our support to further strengthen their capacities.

I do not underestimate the magnitude of what we are asking when we encourage our partners to stay the course. The situation remains unpredictable, and we must continue to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable refugees, particularly older persons, people with disabilities, and unaccompanied children and adolescents. I trust that together we can find ways to work together to ensure that people forced to flee Ukraine continue to find safety, assistance, and protection until they can safely return home.

Pascale Moreau
Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Ukraine Situation
UNHCR, Regional Director for Europe

At a Glance

Regional Planned Response
(January-December 2023)

4.035 M
targeted refugee population

120 K
targeted host community members

$1.7 B
total financial requirements in USD

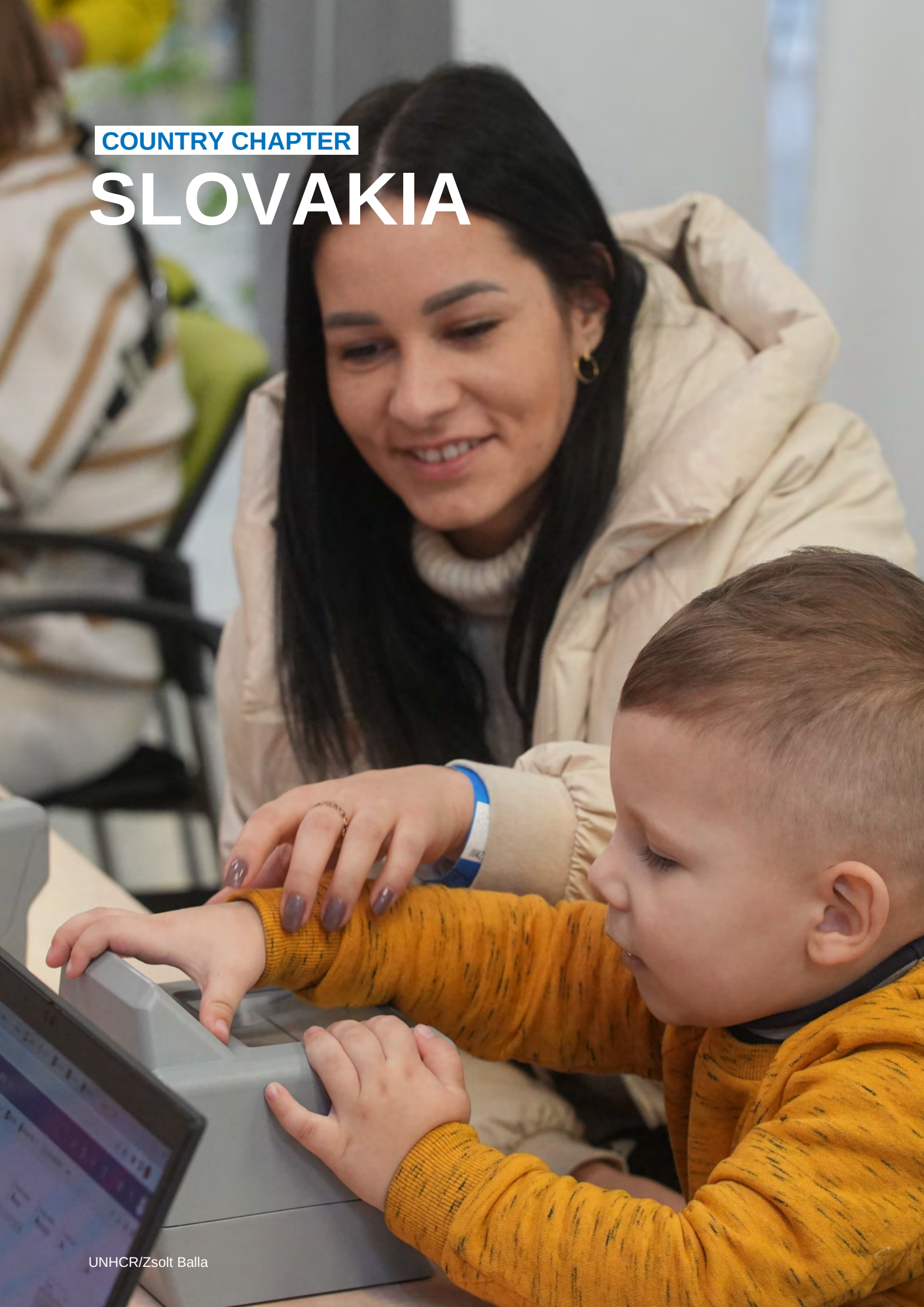
243[1]
partners involved

REGION	FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS IN USD	PARTNERS INVOLVED
Bulgaria	43,387,258	18
Czech Republic	81,578,288	4
Estonia	9,135,766	14
Hungary	62,741,799	37
Latvia	11,989,791	14
Lithuania	17,813,459	10
Republic of Moldova	426,961,899	73
Poland	709,399,440	83
Romania	153,603,900	34
Slovakia	80,126,073	28
Regional support	88,757,581	7

[1] This figure represents the total number of partners operating regionally, and counts partners only once even if operating in more than one country. The country chapters provide the absolute number of partners per country.

COUNTRY CHAPTER

SLOVAKIA



UNHCR/Zsolt Balla

At a Glance

Slovakia Planned Response (January-December 2023)

200,000
targeted refugee population

$80.1 M
total financial requirements in USD

28
partners involved

SLOVAKIA

Part 1: Current Situation

Situation Overview

Since the escalation of the war in Ukraine, Slovakia has seen a rapid influx of persons fleeing hostilities and seeking protection. More than one million Ukrainian and third-country nationals (TCNs) in need of international protection have crossed the borders into Slovakia, 78 per cent of whom are women and children.[112] Refugees from Ukraine include older people, persons with disabilities, and those with urgent health care needs. The Government of Slovakia has generously kept the borders open, and national, district and local authorities have rapidly responded to the large numbers of arrivals. Local communities have taken a welcoming stance, with humanitarian actors, civil society, the private sector and community volunteers complementing the government-led efforts by providing significant support at border reception points and urban areas.

Temporary protection (TP) status has been accessible to refugees arriving from Ukraine and their families since 1 March 2022 and as of end December 2022 a total of 104,764 individuals have applied for temporary protection in Slovakia, with the Government estimating that an additional 10,000 Ukrainians are benefiting from tolerated stay, within the legal framework, and hence are not registered for protection in Slovakia.

On 30 March 2022, the Government adopted Act No. 92/2022 Coll (Lex Ukraine) introducing further measures to address the situation in Ukraine, amending in total 32 Acts, including the Asylum Act, Residence of Foreigners Act, and the Health Act. In particular, these amendments extended the validity of temporary stays, permanent stays, and tolerated stays already granted to Ukrainian citizens as well as third-country nationals until two months after the state of emergency - which has been declared in connection with the Ukrainian situation - concludes. The amendments also established the possibility for TP holders to be accommodated outside of humanitarian centres or asylum facilities. Additionally, TP holders are entitled to “urgent and necessary” health care as well as certain social benefits, including core relief items, childcare allowance for children up to three years of age, or up to six years of age for children with a long-term adverse health condition, subsidies for lunches in kindergartens and primary schools, and for school stationery.

Despite the favorable protection environment for refugees in the country, there remain major challenges in addressing areas such as access to longer-term accommodation, the labour market and quality health care, especially for persons with underlying serious health conditions. Such gaps

[112] Based on data provided by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Government

include comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, preventative mother and childcare, including immunization, education, available social protection mechanisms, ensuring specialized services for GBV survivors, and access of persons with disabilities to existing assistance mechanisms.

The risk of further displacement from Ukraine remains high, and new arrivals of refugees in Slovakia are expected in the context of escalating attacks on and damage to civilian infrastructure and evacuation of civilians in areas affected by the conflict. The projected population in need of assistance in Slovakia over the course of 2023 may reach 200,000 individuals, due to additional people joining those from the first emergency wave, including those who may be moving due to particular winter needs, which could provide additional strains to overloaded services, such as for accommodation and health services. In addition, there are secondary movements of refugees from Ukraine to and from other countries in the region, which provides additional challenges for the authorities to plan services.

This inter-agency refugee response plan (RRP) for Slovakia brings together 28 partners in a coordinated multi-sectoral response with the aim to complement the government-led efforts and in particular by addressing any gaps in the provision of assistance and services to refugees. In addition, this multi-partner response plan will advance the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in the Slovak society, including by strengthening social cohesion between refugees and their host communities.

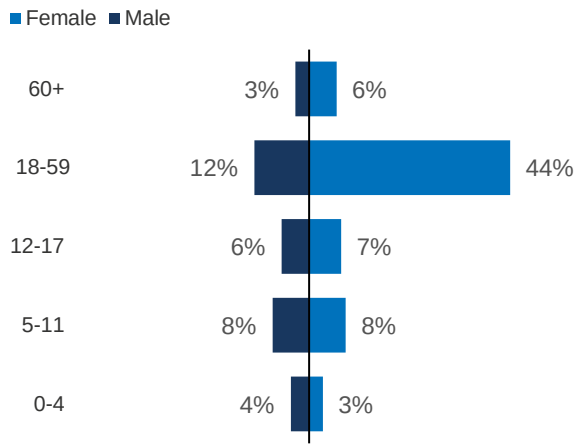
Population Planning Figures

The RRP aims at providing protection and assistance to Ukrainian refugees, as well as to TCNs in need of international protection and people who are stateless or at risk of statelessness.[113] The RRP will continue to address the needs of impacted host communities, in areas of arrival as well as in areas of final destination of refugees, by strengthening the capacities of local institutions and ensuring access to services benefiting both refugees and local populations.

The projected planning figures are based on current trends and planning assumptions, considering refugees' intentions to remain in Slovakia or choosing to transit further to other countries. These figures allow for planning, programming and budgeting purposes.

Slovakia	Refugees registered for Temporary Protection as of end Dec 2022[114]	Targeted population in 2023
Refugee Population	104,764	200,000

Age and gender breakdown[115]



68%
Women and girls

32%
Men and boys

[113] Third-country nationals not in need of international protection are not included in target population figures, but may benefit, on par with host community members, from the support provided to community resources and services.
[114] This figure may include multiple registrations of the same individual in two or more EU+ countries; registrations that remain incomplete for various reasons, or registrations of refugees who have moved onward, including beyond Europe.
[115] Based on Temporary Protection registration data and UNHCR's PROGRES database for child-specific disaggregation.

Country Protection Needs, Vulnerabilities and Risks

The majority of those who have arrived in Slovakia from Ukraine are women, children, older people, and persons with disabilities, many of whom remain vulnerable. The multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) and protection profiling and monitoring assessments highlight the needs of refugees from Ukraine, including on protection and access to the social safety net, health services, employment, education, housing and childcare.[116]

Gender-based violence (GBV) referral pathways are being strengthened in the country, however, currently there is one operational referral pathway covering one out of the eight regions of the country with a national general framework of services provision. In this regard, further support is required to strengthen and expand GBV direct response services adapted to the needs of refugees, as well as to coordinate actions amongst all involved partners. Targeted services are still required for people with heightened protection needs, including survivors of GBV, children at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, including unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), and those facing intersecting vulnerabilities such as LGBTIQ+ individuals and Roma women.

Survivors of GBV face various challenges in accessing multi-sectoral services such as health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and legal assistance. These challenges include limited access to information on services provided, limited availability of quality GBV prevention and response programming, and limited essential and time-sensitive services, such as clinical management of sexual violence and other sexual and reproductive health services. National protection systems require additional capacity development and support to scale-up much-needed GBV prevention and response services which are accessible to refugees, in particular refugee women and girls. While there are important GBV-related mechanisms in place in the Slovak national system, there is an opportunity for GBV prevention and mitigation to be mainstreamed into different sectors of the refugee response, while also ensuring that frontline workers are capacitated on GBV case management, including safe disclosures and referrals.

A key priority is strengthened access to and outreach by State child protection services, including to identify children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children, and ensure their access to appropriate protection services starting from the point of entry to solutions . National laws and standard protocols are in line with international standards, and there are wide ranging State benefits regarding child protection issues, including support for legal guardians of children. However, given stretched capacities of the relevant national authorities, there is a need to ensure that children have access to the procedures consistently and as early as possible throughout Slovakia, and that the capacities of the key stakeholders to support the child protection system are strengthened. Refugees have strong capacities to achieve socio-economic resilience and access livelihoods opportunities, with much to contribute based on their professional and technical qualifications. However, employment opportunities remain low, hindered by barriers to recognition of their formal qualifications and expertise; around one-third of surveyed refugees face challenges to generate sufficient income to cover the household's monthly needs, primarily food, but also rent for households living outside collective centres. In addition, language and lack of childcare have

[116] UNHCR–REACH, Slovakia - Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), October 2022.

been also reported as barriers to access employment opportunities. The majority of refugees report benefitting from cash and food assistance through humanitarian aid, followed by a lower share who have benefitted from shelter, clothes, as well as sanitation and hygiene products. However, the need for food assistance, accommodation options and employment opportunities still remains high. There is a need to make social protection systems more shock-responsive and ensure they can be expanded to additional beneficiaries if the need arises.

Almost one-quarter of household members among refugees from Ukraine were found to be in need of health care, with the most pressing needs cited being for preventive consultation, and access to health care in response to acute and chronic communicable and non-communicable diseases. In particular, the number of children who have not received or have missed some or all childhood vaccines remains unknown, and efforts to conduct mass vaccination in accommodation centres have proved difficult, including due to the significant vaccine hesitancy among mothers. Exposure to potentially traumatic and distressing events related to the conflict, displacement and family separation have given rise to needs related to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Ensuring access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care by removing legal and policy barriers and strengthening the capacity of the health system is also important to better serve refugees.

Education appears to be one of the core priorities among refugees; however, only 8,739 children have been enrolled to pre-school, primary and secondary school programmes in Slovakia out of a total 33,827 refugee children granted with temporary protection.[117] There are systemic barriers to access education, including the lack of spots in preschool, primary and secondary school, and limited opportunities for informal learning and skills development for teenagers and youth. Further support to local and national stakeholders should be provided to expand services for children of up to three years of age, including early learning opportunities through alternative and diversified early childhood development services and early learning provisions. Moreover, further support is needed to strengthen the capacities of the education system, schools and teachers for quality learning and inclusion. There is also growing concern about Ukrainian children and adolescents who are following exclusively online education in the Ukrainian system, or have discontinued their studies, and have no contact with their peers. More needs to be done to ensure inclusion in the Slovak education system and to increase informal learning opportunities for those who may not yet have the language skills to join the public education system.

Efforts should continue towards minimizing and eliminating barriers to inclusion in the host society and to actively promote interactions that foster social cohesion between host and Ukrainian communities. In particular, adolescent and youth programming as well as targeted programmes to support women are areas not yet systematically addressed by stakeholders. Such programmes are key to social cohesion and positive attitudes towards all refugees, helping create avenues for young refugees and women to integrate in the Slovak society. In this regard, strengthening community-level structures will remain a key element to ensure an effective response to priority areas of the protection strategy and to promote the inclusion of refugees.

[117] Data refers to school year 2022/2023 as of September 15, 2022, provided by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

As the Ukraine crisis persists, it is important for all actors who are involved in the response to the Ukrainian situation to have an understanding of the capacities, needs, risks, constraints, and future opportunities for Ukrainians in Slovakia to enhance their socio-economic inclusion and resilience.

Part 2: Country Protection and Solutions Strategy

The inter-agency response builds on leveraging national and sub-national protection systems and strengthening and complementing the national response, with a view to mitigating protection risks and facilitating refugee inclusion. As the conflict continues, new arrivals will continue, as well as "pendular" movements due to the circumstances in areas of origin. Therefore, it is likely that a portion of the population will still be 'on the move' in 2023, and protection services and assistance will need to be delivered in a manner tailored to their needs and situation.

With more than 90 per cent of arrivals comprising women and children, the risks of GBV, trafficking and other forms of exploitation are high, in particular at border crossing points and in the context of private and informal transportation and emergency accommodation. Arriving populations are often highly distressed and in need of information to keep themselves safe. These risks will need to be mitigated in the context of providing protection services to the population on the move and ensuring that a protection-sensitive response is promoted and enhanced.

With regard to child protection, timely identification, assessment and targeted support for children at-risk and those affected by violence, abuse, and neglect – including at crossing and transit points and in private and collective accommodation options – requires strengthened case management/ best interests procedures and coordination among the State and humanitarian child protection actors. The capacity of national child protection agencies can benefit from further support in terms of availability and preparedness of the workforce to adequately respond to the scale and nature of the current and anticipated needs. Timely application of the best interest procedures for children at risk, to address child's protection needs in accordance with their best interests, including placement in appropriate guardianship, family reunification and alternative care arrangements will remain a key priority. In addition, best interest procedures and child friendly procedures will be strengthened throughout the national protection systems to ensure dignified and sustainable return of children at heightened risk, in particular in situations of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) to Ukraine, when family reunification is seen as the best interest of the child.

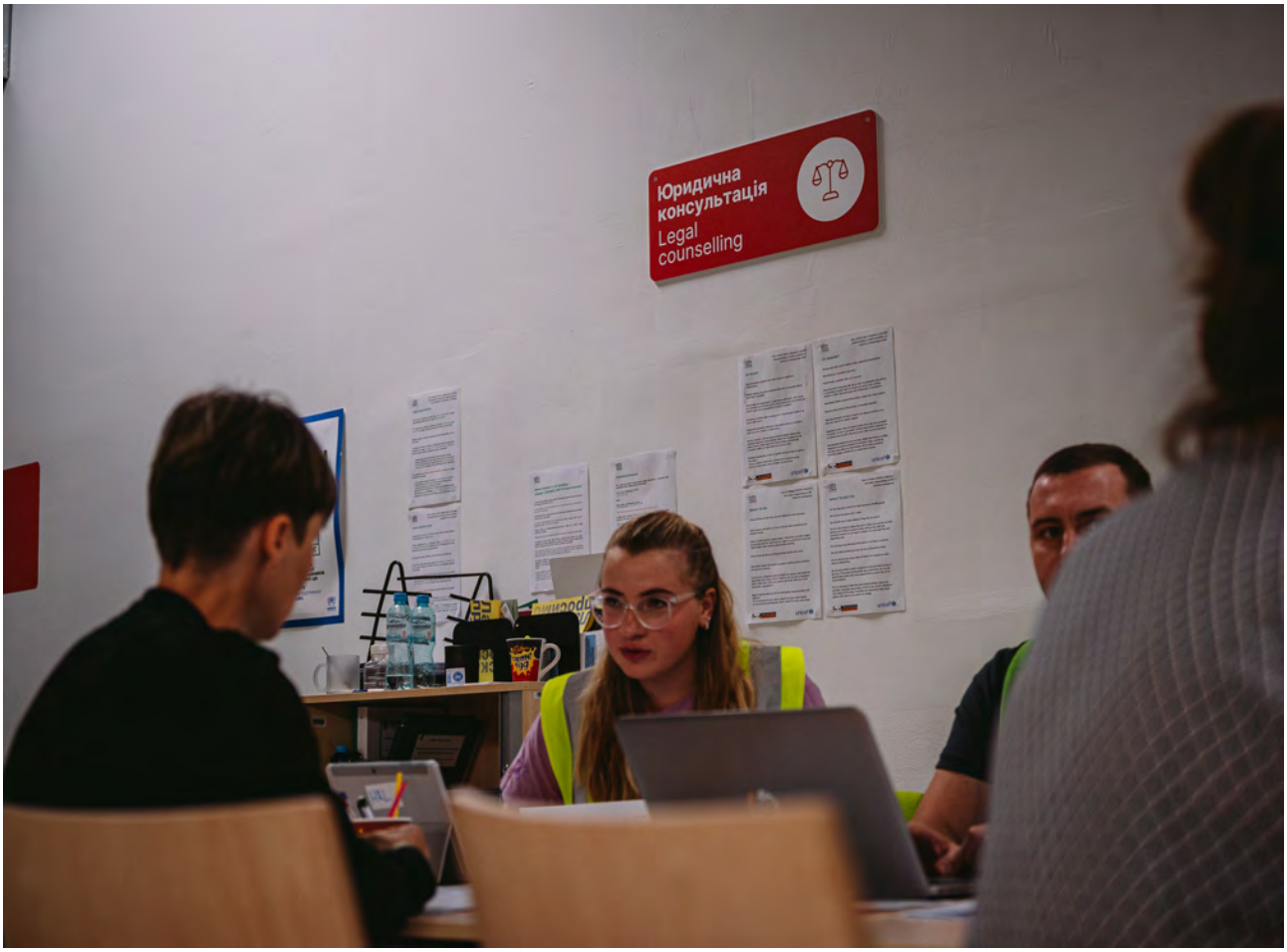
Protection interventions should support the inclusion of older persons and persons with disabilities, with a view to ensuring accessibility of reception facilities and information provision, in partnership with national organisations working for persons with disabilities.

Protection assessments have highlighted significant needs related to reliable and accurate information among refugees and others in need of international protection, including where and how to access humanitarian assistance and public services, and on how to stay safe from exploitation and abuse. Mis- and disinformation are significant concerns and can be used to take advantage of persons on the move, including in the context of trafficking in human beings. Without sufficient access to information, the ability of refugees to make informed decisions on how and

where they will settle in displacement is also compromised, ultimately jeopardizing their ability to access their rights through national protection systems, and potentially delaying their ability to reunite with family members.

At the same time and given the nature of the refugee situation, it is increasingly important to shift toward a more sustainable response model over the medium- to longer-term. While multi-sectoral support and assistance for the new arrivals will be ensured throughout the implementation of this annual plan, efforts will continue so that the livelihoods can be further supported and the socio-economic inclusion in the Slovak society and economy can be promoted. Together with the Government, regional and local authorities, and other key actors, including civil society, private sector and development entities, collective efforts will continue, including through advocacy, to streamline the legislative framework and create a favourable protection environment to enable refugees' socio-economic inclusion and integration, ensuring also alignment with other good practices within the European Union. In that regard, continuing vocational training, skills identification and the recognition of qualifications and previous learning experiences should be further promoted to support employment opportunities. Additional support will also be provided in terms of self-employment, including through self-reliance grants for enterprise development, among others.

In addition, the health response will transition from a focus on short-term emergency health to also supporting the primary health care system at the level of data collection, disease surveillance and service delivery. Needs-driven, equitable, and systematic access to health care and MHPSS will be essential to addressing health-related needs. MHPSS support is also required to support inclusion and integration of refugees, to effectively access and enjoy education and self-reliance opportunities. Efforts should continue to channel refugee children and youth into mainstream education systems, including higher education. This requires institutional changes to facilitate access to education programmes, including by hiring bilingual teachers, offering financial support and recognising credits from previous studies, as well as support to ensure participation in education continues longer-term. Language and inter-cultural communication activities, as well as support to community centres and other local institutions in urban areas will be pursued to strengthen social cohesion between refugees and their hosts.



Slovakia. Refugees receiving legal assistance at the Assistance Center in Bratislava.© The Municipality of Bratislava

The inter-agency response will be informed by continuous participatory assessments, intersectionality analyses and community-based approaches. The leadership and participation of refugee women and girls, as well as members of other vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and the LGBTIQ+ community, will be further promoted, and advocacy will continue so that policies and programmes are designed in line with their priorities. Supporting the capacity of national and community-based institutions, national NGOs and other representatives of civil society, including local women-led and women's rights organizations, can have an important impact on the access of women, girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons and other groups with specific vulnerabilities to equal opportunities with a view to ensuring their integration in the Slovak society.

Country Strategic Objectives

The overarching response strategy aims at protecting the rights of refugees from Ukraine, TCNs in need of international protection, and stateless persons or those at risk of stateless, who have fled the conflict in Ukraine. The immediate needs of new arrivals will be addressed throughout the year, while long-term solutions and improved opportunities will be promoted to empower refugees and ensure socio-economic inclusion, as well as to ensure social cohesion.

The response plan in Slovakia will be guided by the following strategic objectives (SO), which are in line with regional strategic objectives:

SO1: Ensure that all refugees, and others in need such as third-country nationals in need of international protection, fleeing the war have access to safety, life-saving assistance and international protection in Slovakia.

RRP partners, together with other actors involved in the refugee response, will continue to support the Government of Slovakia in ensuring that all refugees from Ukraine are aware of the benefits of registering for TP, while continuing advocacy efforts for strengthening the protection environment for TCNs, asylum-seekers and refugees from other countries and ensuring that they have access to life-saving humanitarian assistance, including among others cash assistance, health care and MHPSS, as required.

SO2: Facilitate the identification of solutions and expand access to social and economic opportunities to reinforce inclusion through a whole-of-society approach and in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, recognizing in particular the critical role played by national and local actors, including national and refugee-led NGOs and community structures, as well as other actors at regional level.

RRP partners will support the Government of Slovakia in identifying the best solutions for the inclusion of refugees, in particular by working and advocating together with other actors involved in the refugee response such as regional and local authorities, as well as development actors and private sector, to facilitate activities as per identified needs including for strengthening skills and enhancing entrepreneurship, and ensuring social, economic and cultural empowerment.

SO3: Ensure that refugees with specific needs, including vulnerable and unaccompanied and separated children, people at risk of and survivors of GBV and trauma, and people with diverse backgrounds and characteristics to have access to targeted support and assistance, while also engaging with and strengthening community-level protective mechanisms.

RRP partners will continue complementing government-led efforts for the protection of and assistance to persons with specific needs and groups facing specific vulnerabilities ensuring access to quality, age-, gender-, and diversity-sensitive services for all, including by providing expertise and continuing advocacy.

SO4: Promote social cohesion between refugee and Slovak communities through targeted interventions.

RRP partners together with the Government of Slovakia and other actors, in particular regional and local authorities, will strengthen efforts to ensure social cohesion, including by supporting community centres and promoting enhanced service delivery.

A whole-of-society approach: advocacy and support in action

Since the full-scale war in Ukraine began, a network of national NGOs in Slovakia has mobilized and joined efforts with other actors, including local and regional authorities, to better respond to the needs of refugees from Ukraine. A central component of these efforts is advocacy for the rights of refugees, including for their socio-economic inclusion, and the provision of direct assistance, particularly for health services.

With a goal to better inform inclusion measures for persons with temporary protection from Ukraine, five national NGOs (CVEK, Nadácia Milana Šimečku, People in Need, Human Rights League and Mareena) worked on a policy paper, 'Integration of People from Ukraine'. The recommendations stemming from this policy paper suggest the importance of a multi-partner efforts, in particular by involving NGOs and municipalities; the coordination of inclusion activities; and focus on specific measures in relation to employment, self-employment, social services, financial aid, housing, access to information and legal aid, health care, education and vocational and language trainings.

An integration centre in Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia, has been established by nine local organizations (DEDO Foundation, Human Rights League, Mareena, People in Need, ETP Slovensko, Všetci pre rodinu, Dorka, Oáza, and the Archdiocese Charity Košice) and the Košice self-governing region. Through this unique collaboration the partners aimed at ensuring the best use of expertise and know-how specific to the needs of refugees from Ukraine, as well as other persons in need.

Given the increased needs for medical care among refugees, a collaboration between the Bratislava self-governing region and humanitarian actors (Equita, Care and UNICEF) resulted in increased access to health care through a dedicated clinic for adults and children. By employing Ukrainian health care workers from among the refugee population, in the form of a temporary professional internship regime under the supervision of a professionally qualified national staff, the clinic provides primary care to refugees who live in the Bratislava Region, including the prescription of chronic medications, easing the burden on Bratislava's first contact clinics.

Sectoral Responses

PROTECTION

RRP interventions will aim at minimizing protection risks faced by people on the move**,** including upon arrival from Ukraine, or as they transit Slovakia to seek protection in other countries, by supporting timely and rights-based individual access to protection, safety, psychosocial support and other life-saving assistance and information. Interventions in line with the RRP country objectives will be crucial in maintaining the protection space for current and future refugee arrivals, taking into account already stretched capacity and resources on the part of the government and Slovak society. Protection programming will focus on supporting and complementing national protection and public services, with specific attention to persons with specific circumstances or needs and without discrimination. Due to the demographic profile of refugees from Ukraine, child protection, prevention of and response to GBV and trafficking, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and women and girl's empowerment will form central pillars of the overall protection response. Age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming across sectors and inclusion-oriented approaches will also be key, including with a view to ensure that people with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable and marginalized groups such as LGBTIQ+ individuals and the Roma and other ethnic minority groups, have effective access to information and services.

Protection interventions should seek to create conducive conditions for the rapid integration and inclusion of refugees and other people in need of protection in national protection systems and social and economic systems. Protection actors will also support efforts to address and mitigate potential tensions between refugee and host communities and work with national authorities and partners in support of peaceful coexistence.

The following are priority outcomes of interventions within the overall protection framework:

- Facilitate individuals' access to territory, protection, and the enjoyment of rights without discrimination, in line with their rights and in compliance with the principle of non-refoulement.
- Reinforce protection-sensitive systems; identify persons with specific needs, including single women, female-headed households, unaccompanied and separated children, and other children at risk, older persons, LGBTIQ+ persons, people with serious medical conditions and persons with disabilities, and refer them to services adapted to their needs.
- Expand safe spaces, Protection and Support Hubs to provide life-saving information on specialized services for women, families and children, including those at risk of abuse and exploitation, and GBV survivors in the national system.
- Strengthen and mainstream GBV risk mitigation across all sectors and enhance dissemination of information on GBV services, and related health care services including SRH services, among frontline humanitarian workers and refugee communities, building on two-way communication with communities approaches to ensure women and girls and others at risk have access to information on GBV services.

- Support the national child protection system with a view of including refugee children in best interests procedures, alternative care arrangements and other relevant services in a timely and consistent manner, as well as strengthening referral pathways.
- Reinforce anti-trafficking measures and mechanisms across sectors.
- Strengthen PSEA capacity of organizations and institutions engaged in the refugee response across sectors.
- Promote accountability to affected people through communication with communities and a community-based approach, including through community outreach through strengthened refugee- and women-led organizations, and other community-based organizations.
- Support reception conditions and accommodation, including monitoring private accommodation arrangements, as well as expanding the availability of family- and community-based accommodation options for unaccompanied children.
- Facilitate solutions through conducive conditions for the rapid integration and inclusion of people fleeing Ukraine in national social and economic systems, including by reducing barriers to access social protection mechanisms and public services; and supporting them to access information, legal and social counselling and assistance.

Sub-Sector: Child Protection

Children comprise approximately 36 per cent of the refugees in Slovakia. Children have been affected by the experiences of displacement, separation from families and peers, and a lost sense of normalcy. The availability of safe spaces that provide a protected environment to rest, play, receive basic psychosocial support and further response to identified child protection concerns is of key importance. Many children may have also been exposed to potentially traumatic events, violence and family separation during flight, transit and upon arrival, giving rise to a need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). It is also acknowledged that protection of children starts at the point of entry into the country and continues throughout the transit or stay in the country. The inter-agency response will focus on complementing and strengthening national child protection systems and supporting the capacity of actors, including the frontline responders at borders, those responsible for social and legal protection, case management/best interests procedures, as well as community-based and specialized child protection and MHPSS services and other professionals working with children. The response will be further informed by the UNHCR-UNICEF Agenda for Action for Children Displaced from Ukraine.[118] Coordination with government agencies, local authorities and key stakeholders, including in establishing referral pathways and initiatives to bolster capacity and effectiveness in addressing refugee children's needs on the basis of their best interests will be key. Specific focus will be placed on supporting child protection programming for children at risk, including children with disabilities at risk, unaccompanied and separated children, Roma children, and others. The response will focus on strengthening national capacities on child-friendly procedures, implementation of best interests procedures and supporting family reunification or providing alternative care options during stay or possible return to the country of origin provided

[118] UNHCR-UNICEF: Joint Advocacy Agenda For Action in Support of Children Fleeing Ukraine

conditions for such returns are safe and in the child's best interests. The child protection response will also ensure linkages with the development of longer-term strategies for inclusion and integration of children into national social and protection systems, and their swift inclusion into quality national education system, without creating parallel systems.

Blue Dot Safe space, Protection and Support Hubs

Responding to the critical need for safety, stability, updated and accurate information, and specialized protection services, UNHCR and UNICEF have jointly established Blue Dot Safe Space, Protection and Support Hubs in Bratislava, Bottova Centre, Kosice Train Station and Michalovce Sports Hall. Together with UNHCR and UNICEF, three national NGOs (Human Rights League, Slovak Humanitarian Council and Tenenet) and national services work within the Blue Dots to provide consolidated and reliable support to people forced to flee. Services available at Blue Dot hubs aim to assist all refugees, with a particular focus on children and those at greatest risk, people with disabilities, people who might have been trafficked, survivors of violence and refugees from the LGBTQI+ community.

Sub-sector: Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Approximately 68 per cent per cent of refugees are women and girls. Capitalizing on the existing national systems for the prevention, risk mitigation and response to violence against women and girls, the national GBV response will be reinforced and supported. The strategy prioritizes three objectives: i) establish GBV referral pathways with a view to ensure access to information on GBV services and safe entry points to facilitate survivor-centred disclosure; ii) reinforce national capacity on GBV across all sectors, including with a view to expand and ensure safe access to case management and specialized services for GBV survivors, including related health care services such as sexual and reproductive health services; and iii) establish community outreach networks, engaging communities in GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response and enhancing partnerships with women-led organizations, in particular those led by refugee women. 'Safe from the Start' programmes, including through communication with communities, will support the safety of people on the move against GBV including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. Blue Dots and other additional centres will serve as safe spaces for women, girls, men and boys, including survivors of GBV, persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons, to facilitate survivor-centred disclosure and referral to appropriate services. Participatory assessments and GBV safety audits of reception and accommodation facilities will be mainstreamed, including for people in hosted accommodation. Outstanding GBV response needs and barriers impeding refugee access to GBV support services, including relevant health care services, will be addressed.

Sub-sector: Prevention, Risk Mitigation of and Response to Human Trafficking

National authorities' efforts to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons will be complemented and supported through improved data on the risk and occurrence of trafficking, capacity-building programmes for authorities, civil society organizations, frontline workers and volunteers and the reinforcement of existing capacities to provide case management and support, such as MHPSS, shelter, and legal counselling and access to justice for victims of trafficking. Specific interventions promoting age and gender sensitive approaches towards the prevention, identification and response to trafficking of people on the move will be key to the strategy, in particular benefiting from linkages with strengthened child protection and GBV responses as well as reinforced SEA prevention.

Prevention interventions will constitute a core focus of activities through capacity-building of relevant stakeholders – including competent state authorities and implementing partners – and the design and distribution of information materials. Prevention and information sessions will be provided at the border, reception and information centres, and larger accommodation centres in all eight regions of the country to raise awareness of multi-sectoral risks exposing people on the move to trafficking, with a focus on labour exploitation. Interventions for mitigation of labour exploitation will be supplemented through the provision of legal and social counselling, including labour counselling. These efforts will be strengthened through enhanced cooperation with and strengthening the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate to identify potential cases of people exposed to the risk of trafficking. Protection focal points will be engaged in all eight regions or larger accommodation centres, with effective feedback and complaints mechanism established in line with the community's reporting preferences.

EDUCATION

RRP interventions will prioritize the inclusion of refugee children in the formal national education system by supporting the Slovak national education system, which currently faces significant challenges as a result of the influx of refugee children and adolescents from Ukraine. Interventions will focus on strengthening the Slovak education system's capacity to host and provide quality education to refugee children, as well as addressing the learning (foundational skills), social (life skills) and emotional needs (through mental health and psychosocial interventions) across all stages of the child's life cycle.

In particular, inter-agency partners will continue to strengthen the national capacities in planning, monitoring and evaluation of ongoing interventions that support the inclusion of refugee children and adolescents, such as data collection, monitoring of learning, and identification of children at risk of dropout, among others. Partners will also support schools and teachers in improving refugee children's access to quality learning through, for instance, strengthened capacity and sensitivity to work with children who experienced adverse and distressing events and aggravated stress, anti-bias awareness, conflict resolution and constructive communication, and intercultural education, at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. As the country moves towards ensuring legal entitlement in pre-primary education for all children from the age of three years by 2025,

collaboration with national institutions, municipalities and civil society will be strengthened to support diversified early learning provision.

Partners will keep supporting schools to create a favourable environment for the inclusion of refugee children, through Slovak language classes, provision of learning assistance and the engagement of additional pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, including by integrating Ukrainian teachers, teacher assistants/Ukrainian cultural mediators and psychologists in the response. By accelerating collaboration and engagement with NGOs local responders and local communities working closely with children and young people the aim will be to expand non-formal learning opportunities, strengthen social inclusion and support parents, families and caregivers to create environments conducive to learning and development and to strengthen the family engagement in supporting the children's learning.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

RRP partners will coordinate efforts to improve the accessibility of quality primary health care services and continuity of care. In coordination with national, regional and local health authorities and other relevant stakeholders, partners will provide assistance including directly to health clinics, to address specific needs of refugees. Capacities of health actors, key stakeholders and volunteers providing health-related services to refugees and TCNs in need of international protection in Slovakia will be strengthened, with a particular focus on immunization, early detection and intervention for developmental delays and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Relatedly, advocacy efforts will focus on accelerating the recognition of medical diplomas of Ukrainian doctors, as well as other medical personnel, to facilitate their employment in the health sector. Tailored training will be delivered to relevant stakeholders – social workers, law enforcement, health professionals – to enable strengthened health provision, continuity of care, referral, and health promotion activities specific to early childhood development, immunization, non-communicable diseases and other health issues. In addition, awareness-raising and other communication campaigns will be tailored to the specific needs of refugees and other populations, including about their rights and pathways to access all types of vaccinations. Attention will be given to ensure that women and girls are aware of and have access to quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. SRH activities will include the strengthening of information on available services, outreach, capacity development, including for clinical management of rape, linkage to medical services, including for reproductive health services, technical support and building of local capacity, to support localization.

LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION

With the aim to strengthen the personal development and supporting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, as well as TCNs in international protection, partners will continue targeted interventions, including through the provision of tailored adult education. Partners will further work to ensure that refugees and can have access to market-oriented, certified technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes, including existing national TVET programmes and other training opportunities. Free and low-threshold online and live courses on the Slovak language will be delivered utilizing interactive teaching methods, during which the emphasis is mainly on conversation, with the aim of enabling social inclusion, with a particular focus on practical language. Childcare and other household solutions will be further explored to facilitate access to the labour market while ensuring safety and dignity for all family members.

Advocacy efforts will continue to address barriers refugees in Slovakia face in attaining jobs that match their qualifications, particularly those whose qualifications are not automatically recognized in Slovakia and who are underemployed. In addition, support will be offered for education and retraining courses and the recognition of foreign education. Dedicated courses will enable students to confirm their qualifications and/or to continue their university studies in Slovakia, thus enabling contributions to the Slovak economy as medium- and high-skilled workers, a higher standard of living, and greater opportunities for decent work and meaningful integration. Advocacy efforts will also continue in regard to enabling self-employment of refugees from Ukraine, ensuring self-sufficiency and strengthening social connections.

Socio-relational activities including cultural activities, sports and play, and art-based activities will be provided for refugees from Ukraine, in particular in community centres and other urban areas, with host community members invited to foster supportive interpersonal exchange and networks, facilitate integration, and strengthen social cohesion among refugee and host communities.

BASIC NEEDS

RRP partners will join forces to support refugees in meeting their basic needs, including with interventions that directly benefit refugees, as well as by supporting private and public sectors in improving access to basic goods and services for the affected population according to identified specific needs. Improving disability accessibility and reasonable accommodations, including safe and dignified access to WASH facilities, is a gap that advocacy efforts will focus on.

With the Government in the lead in providing accommodation options, based on availability of resources, advocacy efforts will seek to ensure that accommodation assistance continues until the end of the TPD. Synergies and advocacy efforts should also continue with the municipalities to ensure additional solutions so that refugees have access to information for a safe transition from emergency accommodation in collective sites and hosted accommodation to longer-term accommodation, including social housing support for the most vulnerable refugees. Activities will include support to collective centres providing accommodation for refugees, including

reception/transit accommodation facilities, along with procurement of in-kind items, including for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), to ensure warm, safe and dignified living conditions.

Coordination among stakeholders and the humanitarian community will continue to ensure adequate provision of core relief items (CRIs), both for new arrivals and those already in the country, to enable people to meet their immediate basic needs and to rebuild their lives in dignity, considering specific needs among the population groups such as for children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons. In cooperation with the Government, partners will ensure that where applicable, multi-purpose cash grants, as well as targeted cash assistance, are provided to support the affected population in meeting their immediate basic needs, including for temporary accommodation, transition to more sustainable accommodation options, food and hygiene items, as well as for education purposes. At the same time, partners will continue working with the Government for their effective inclusion into national social protection programmes and social services. This approach will ensure an effective and timely way to provide assistance to refugees, especially to new arrivals, while at the same time, enabling refugees to remain at the centre of decision-making with regard to how to meet their most urgent needs and prioritize their expenditures. This said, a modality – cash or in-kind – can replace the other, or be combined, to ensure the response is the most effective, as well as protection- and gender-sensitive.

Given that many individuals as well as households among the refugee population are struggling to access complete food portions and cover specific dietary needs mainly because of increased living expenses, due to lack of employment opportunities, partners will ensure that necessary support is provided so that refugees can meet their basic food needs. Food security will be strengthened including through community interventions by serving ready-to-eat nourishing meals and organizing in-kind distributions, as well as assisting new arrivals and those in transit at border areas. In addition, innovative ways of ensuring food security will be explored, including through collaboration with the private sector.

Country Cross-Cutting Response Priorities

Accountability to Affected People (AAP)

The RRP response should reinforce accountability to affected people through communication with communities and a community-based approach, increasing access to information and awareness-raising for refugees on their rights and access to assistance and services through the community's preferred and trusted channels. Partners will also support the participation and capacity of community-based actors including refugee- and women-led organizations and other community-based organizations. This includes establishing community-based feedback and complaints systems, including for sensitive complaints, and adapting programming and interventions based on the feedback received from refugees themselves. Conducting systematic participatory assessments and establishing refugee advisory boards, as part of national coordination mechanisms, will be key to the accountability of the RRP partners. In addition to establishing consultative mechanisms that include refugees in solutions, ongoing and systematic mapping and empowerment of community-based structures and initiatives will be key to the strategy.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Protecting affected populations from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is a key priority in the refugee response in Slovakia, and a cross-cutting component of the RRP. Refugees from Ukraine continue to be at high risk of SEA owing to the high prevalence of women, including single female-headed households, children, and older persons among the refugee population, and given their high levels of mobility. The response has triggered the engagement of a wide range of organizations that rapidly expanded their capacity in the course of 2022, including through the help of volunteers. The engagement of new actors requires a collective commitment to increase PSEA capacity, to establish and reinforce prevention and response measures, and to coordinate outreach and communication with communities on PSEA. The PSEA Task Force, composed of UN agencies, the IFRC, NGOs, refugee-led organizations and government actors, will continue to promote awareness and understanding of PSEA, and to function as the main forum for technical-level implementation and coordination of PSEA activities in Slovakia.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

With the objective to ensure the enhanced mental health and psychosocial well-being of refugees from Ukraine, partners will work to provide tailored MHPSS services as well as community-based psychosocial supports, including at border crossing points and during onward movement to regional transit/reception centres. MHPSS services will also be provided in collective accommodation centres, with referral to appropriate service providers for people in need of specialized mental health services. Capacity building will be provided for MHPSS actors, key stakeholders and volunteers providing services to refugees and TCNs.

Localizing the global compact on refugees

The Government of Slovakia has affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. Slovakia made three pledges at the first- Global Refugee Forum in 2019 aiming to aid refugees and stateless persons and has since provided updates against these pledges. The response of the government to the Ukraine refugee situation has been complemented by local and regional authorities responsible for some of the most important needs of refugees in terms of access to housing, education, health care and employment, as well as inclusion in the Slovak society. In addition, national NGOs, civil society organizations, volunteer groups, development actors, the private sector, cultural and sport associations, and faith-based organizations have all been actively involved in the humanitarian response. With a whole-of-society approach, the implementation of pragmatic and people-centred activities has been central to advancing the objectives of the GCR, in particular where solutions to pressing challenges require strong partnerships and collaboration.

Partnership and Coordination

The Government of Slovakia is leading the refugee response, with the support of the humanitarian community in the country, including civil society and a strong network of volunteers. The Ministry of Interior coordinates the refugee response, in cooperation with other line Ministries.

Partners involved	28
UN Agencies	7
International NGOs	5
National NGOs	13
Refugee-led Organizations	2
Faith-based Organizations	1

Note: This list only includes appealing organizations under the RRP, many of which collaborate with implementing partners to carry out RRP activities. See 'Budget Summary by Partner' for partner breakdown per type.

The 2023 inter-agency RRP, brings together 28 partners, including 13 national NGOs, 2 refugee-led organizations, 1 faith-based organization, 5 international NGOs, and 7 UN Agencies. RRP partners work closely with the civil society, volunteers, academia, cultural and sport associations to enhance synergies and complementarities, ensuring the best possible outcomes as outlined in this Plan. In addition, the RRP will broaden the scope of partnerships to mobilize resources and increase visibility for the needs of refugees from Ukraine, as well as other people we serve and their host communities. In 2023, cooperation with municipalities as the key actors in the long-term integration of refugees as well as coordinators of the response and services at the local level will be strengthened. The Global Compact on Refugees, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the principle of "Leaving No One Behind" provide important frameworks for collaboration with partners, including national and bilateral actors, as well as international and multilateral humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organizations to ensure a nexus approach from the start. In particular, the engagement of women-led and women refugee-led organizations (WLOs/WROs) is critical for ensuring inclusiveness and effectiveness of interventions that adequately address the complexity and diversity of refugee needs. International and regional financial institutions and private sector engagement will also be critical to ensure sustainable solutions. The RRP aims at strengthening partnerships and providing opportunities for constructive linkages with regional bodies, including the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE).

Operationalizing an inter-agency comprehensive refugee response in Slovakia required setting up a number of systems, workflows, and structures in support of the government that, in other countries nearby, already existed before the full-scale war broke out in Ukraine. Through the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF), UNHCR helps coordinate this work in line with the refugee coordination model. The countrywide RCF meets alternatively in Bratislava and in eastern Slovakia, co-chaired by the government and UNHCR. At field-level, the RCF East serves as a platform for coordination of all partners operating in the regions of Kosice and Presov, in particular at the border crossing points. UNHCR is co-chairing the RCF East together with authorities of the two regions.

Within the RCF, at country-level, there are three working groups (Cash, Health, Protection and Inclusion WGs) and two sub-working groups (Child Protection Sub-WG under the Protection WG and MHPSS Sub-WG under Health), as well as an Information Management Sub-WG, a PSEA Task Force and an Anti-trafficking Task Force under the Protection WG. Within the Protection and Inclusion WG (PIWG) there are dedicated sessions on GBV, employment, accommodation and education and the PIWG and the MHPSS WGs maintain a common standing agenda item in relation to safe referral pathways for survivors of GBV in its distinct forms, including conflict-related

Slovakia. Refugees attending a summer open garden event with the aim to enhance social connections in the receiving community.. © Mareena

sexual violence. Accountability to Affected People (AAP) is mainstreamed across all sectors of the response and an RCF standing agenda item. UNHCR also convenes and chairs regular meetings of a RCF Humanitarian/Development Donor Group.

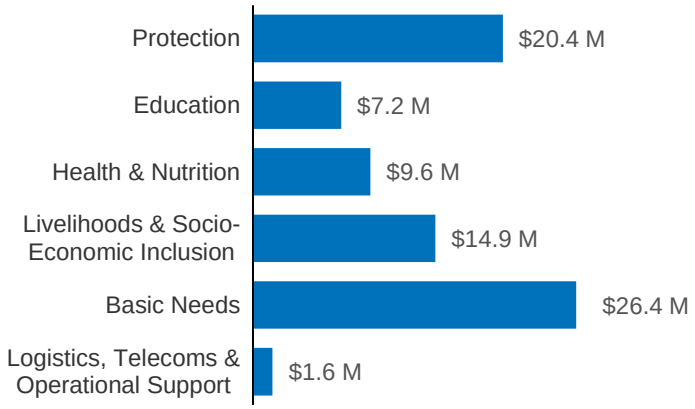
The Steering Committee for Migration, Integration and Inclusion of Foreigners led by the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior was reactivated in November 2022. Under this government-led platform sector, specific working groups will be created. UNHCR's coordination structure within the framework of the RRP will continue to support the government-led coordination arrangements following a multi-sectoral and multi-partner approach. The RCF, the inter-agency platform established by UNHCR in cooperation with the government, will merge with government-led coordination structures at a later stage. For now, the RCF serves as an open platform for all humanitarian actors and other entities in the country.

Inter-Agency Financial Requirements

Total financial requirements in USD

$80.1 M

By sector in million USD



Total Protection requirements	$20,401,525
Other protection activities	$9,212,762
GBV	$2,931,571
Child Protection	$8,257,192

Total Cash Assistance requirements*	$19,662,100
Basic Needs	$19,662,100

** This is a breakdown by sector of the requirements for cash assistance which are included in the above total sectoral budgets. Cash assistance is pursued and reflected as a key modality of assistance and protection in line with UNHCR's CBI Policy 2022-2026. Cash assistance is used as a cross-cutting modality across the various sectors, including protection, and is budgeted for accordingly and in line with a basic needs approach. As the modality of choice of the people we serve, cash assistance will be used as the primary means to meet immediate basic needs and provide important protection outcomes.*

By partner type

Partners involved	28
UN Agencies	$64,631,058
International NGOs	$2,355,000
National NGOs	$10,284,132
Refugee-led Organizations	$542,400
Faith-based Organizations	$2,313,483

By partner

Partner/Acronym	Protection	Education	Health & Nutrition	Livelihoods & Socio-Inclusion	Basic Needs	Logistics, Telecoms & Operational Support	Total Partner Requirements in USD
UN Agencies							
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	400,000	600,000	2,750,000	500,000	4,450,000	300,000	9,000,000
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)						300,000	300,000
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)						150,000	150,000
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	525,000		425,000				950,000
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	7,444,596	4,911,342	1,568,363	8,822,050	9,000,000		31,746,351
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	6,971,797			4,171,995	10,330,915		21,474,707
World Health Organization (WHO)	10,000		1,000,000				1,010,000
International NGOs							
Center for Reproductive Rights	100,000		100,000				200,000
Doctors of the World - Belgium			1,500,000				1,500,000
Habitat for Humanity International					100,000		100,000
International Rescue Committee				375,000			375,000
VOICE Amplified	180,000						180,000
National NGOs							
Carpathian Foundation Slovakia		34,500	34,500	35,000	103,200	34,500	241,700
Daruso is helping Ukraine		180,000			150,000		330,000
Equita	163,200		940,000				1,103,200
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Slovakia	12,500	8,360					20,860

Partner/Acronym	Protection	Education	Health & Nutrition	Livelihoods & Socio-Inclusion	Basic Needs	Logistics, Telecoms & Operational Support	Total Partner Requirements in USD
League for Mental Health in Slovakia			200,000				200,000
Mareena	648,000	325,000		300,000			1,273,000
Our Way	2,500	15,000	10,500	2,000	157,400	99,600	287,000
People in Need Slovakia	400,000	150,000					550,000
Samaritan Slovakia			500		35,000		35,500
Scouting Slovakia		5,000					5,000
Slovak Humanitarian Council	1,236,757	32,000	32,000	127,500	475,842	669,323	2,573,422
TENENET (NGO)	1,152,000	480,000	768,000	576,000			2,976,000
The Human Rights League	688,450						688,450
Faith-based Organizations							
Caritas Slovakia	394,185	274,238			1,645,060		2,313,483
Refugee-led Organizations							
Ukrainians for Ukrainians			300,600				300,600
We are together	72,540	169,260					241,800
Total	**$20,401,525**	**$7,184,700**	**$9,629,463**	**$14,909,545**	**$26,447,417**	**$1,553,423**	**$80,126,073**

UKRAINE SITUATION

REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

January – December 2023

Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

UNHCR operational data portal
rbeext@unhcr.org