



Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Protection Working Group

Meeting Details	
Date	<i>2 August 2023</i>
Time	<i>10.00 am – 12.00 am</i>
Chair	<i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR, Sector Coordinator</i> <i>Carolina Cazaciuc, Coordinator on Refugee Rights, Ombudsperson Office, Co-Chair</i>
Reporting	<i>Sean Sager, Protection Officer, UNHCR</i>
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Agenda	



Welcome & Review of Agenda

1. Introductions/Review of Agenda
2. Situational Updates (CDA & INTERSOS)
3. RAC Consolidation (UNHCR)
4. Community Service Center (UNCHR)
5. Contingency planning (UNHCR)
6. AOB



Participants			
Andrew Painter, UNHCR	Hanna Ursol, UNHCR	Andrei Hincu, CARE&SERA	Casey O'Neill, Church World
Carolina Cazaciuc,	Natalia Stelea, UNHCR	Romania	Service
Ombudsperson Office	Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR	Ina Cepoi, Association of	Oleg Hincu, Palladium/D41 Project
Sean Sager, UNHCR	Maryna Bozkurt, OHCHR	Women Legal Careers	Gabriela Georgial, CRS
Oleksandr Mainov,	Bianca Miccione, ACTED	Christina Triboi, Terre des	Victor Rotaras, Mercy Corps
UNHCR	Diana Alexei, Chisinau City Hall	hommes Moldova	Sevan Petrosyan, World Vision
Katie Lampe, UNCHR	Giulia di Porcia, WHO	Joanna Jaworska, Impact	Simona Ruznic, TdH NL
Sabina Sandu, UNHCR	Martina Gastaldello, OHCHR	Initiative (Reach)	Ghaza Ghandour, ICRC
Sivkova Sara, UNHCR	Stella Lingens, ACTED	Alexandr Solomonenco, PIN	Dilnoza Nicolescu, Caritas Moldova
Natalia Kropivka, UNHCR	Daniele Pedretti, HelpAge	Meric Balkanli, PIN	Vitalie Popov, Refugee Response
Martina Bogdeva, UNHCR		Elena Cristian, IOM	Green Line
Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR		Ersilia Apreda, IOM	Celine Brixander, UNFPA
Carolina Sclifos, UNHCR		Natasa Omerovic, IOM	



Mariana Leyva, ACTED

Ludmila Malcoci, Keystone

Sergiu Zubco, IOM

Myriem El Khatib, ICRC

Natalia Sorbala, Dorcas

Moldova

Svetlana Jioara, CDA

Satomi Konni, AAR Japan

Shadan Rafiq, NRC

Alma Tabakovic, DRC Moldova

Christina Kouri, INTERSOS

Tatiana Zaloj, Terre des

Ines Arnautovic, DRC Moldova

hommes

Constanta Cravet, A.O. Concordia

Veronica Lupu, AFSC

Rebecca Oswago,

Wassim Ben Romdhane, REACH



Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
<p>Agenda Point 1</p> <p>Welcome & Review of Agenda</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>The PWG co-chair welcomed participants, thanked them for their presence, and encouraged them to attend in person for future meetings, in order to have more engaging discussions. He presented the agenda, and no objections were raised.</p> <p>If any modifications are necessary to minutes of the PWG, please contact: sivkovas@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Agenda presented and agreed</p>



<p>Agenda Point 2</p> <p>Situational Updates (CDA & INTERSOS)</p> <p>Svetlana Jiora, CDA/LCA svetlana.jioara@cda.md</p> <p>Cristina Baroni, Protection Officer, INTEROS protoff.moldova@intersos.org</p>	<p>CDA</p> <p>During the reporting period at Palanca BCP, there were 22 asylum seekers (AS), with 14 of them crossing the border illegally. The border police do not provide information to CDA regarding the number of denials to RM. Traffic exhibited a medium flow of cars and a moderate flow of pedestrians in both directions. Intelligence services from both RM and UA were present at the BCP. Recent developments in Odesa did not lead to a significant increase in pedestrian or vehicular flow. NGO Gloria provided regular evacuation buses, and NGO Faith and Hope provided one bus. Ukrainian border guards conducted thorough checks on all vehicles, particularly those with male passengers. Some men were loaded onto service vehicles and taken to the Maiaki checkpoint. Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) faced prolonged verification and wait times before continuing their journey.</p> <p>Throughout the reporting period, there were 26 instances of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), leading to intervention by the Guardianship Authority (GA) in all cases. Most UA arrivals to Moldova originated from Odesa, Odesa region, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kherson.</p> <p>At Otaci BCP, no AS seekers were registered. Vehicle flow remained low in both directions, while pedestrian movement was intense in both directions. TCNs underwent supplementary verification, and some Ukrainian citizens received fines for overdue vignettes. Arrivals to Moldova mainly came from Vinnitsa and its region, with many leaving for EU countries. Two instances of separated children were documented, both of which led to the GA intervening in order to provide appropriate documentation.</p>	
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A few cases were reported involving Ukrainian individuals entering RM illegally through the green border via Besarabasca BCP. These individuals were taken to the police station and filed a claim for asylum.

INTERSOS provided additional updates on situation at the Palanca Bus Hub

The reporting period saw a low to medium volume of arrivals at the Palanca Bus Hub. During the Odesa bombings, there was a slight increase in refugees arriving via humanitarian buses (approximately 20-40 individuals) provided by **NGO Gloria**. Most arrivals originated from Odesa, Odesa region, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Sumy, Luhansk, Chernihiv, and Dnipro. The majority chose to stay within Moldova (Chisinau, Costesti, Causeni), while a few continued their journey to EU countries. Among the vulnerable groups were unaccompanied elderly, women traveling alone with children, individuals with disabilities, and severe medical conditions.

INTERSOS informed on the situation of arrivals from different cities in UA

Some first-time arrivals from UA revealed they hadn't left the country earlier due to lack of awareness about evacuation buses. Those from Odesa reported a comparatively stable situation despite intermittent alarms, with limited access to water and electricity. Residents were moving to Western Ukraine instead of leaving the country. **Mykolaiv** arrivals highlighted water contamination issues, with humanitarian organizations distributing water and food packages. Shops and businesses remained operational (closing during alarms), and hospitals continued to function despite local disturbances. Destructive attacks on residential structures were reported in the countryside.

Arrivals from **Dnipro** reported damaged residential buildings and casualties, while those from Donetsk noted forced acquisition of Russian citizenship in the occupied territories. In **Kherson**, the region suffered heavy destruction, and some elderly residents declined to leave the area. **Kyiv** arrivals reported daily



	<p>explosions and missile strikes on residential buildings, while those from Zaporizhzhia mentioned drone and missile attacks.</p> <p>INTERSOS continues to inform refugees about Temporary Protection and the EU Air Transfer program. Many chose to proceed to Romania for TP benefits, while those remaining in Moldova expressed intention to apply for the program.</p> <p>Comments & Discussions</p> <p>HelpAge inquired about new arrivals from Odesa since the recent attacks. CDA clarified that the number was relatively modest, observing only tens of individuals.</p>	
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<p>Agenda Point 3</p> <p>Consolidation of RACs</p> <p><i>Consolidation of RACs</i></p> <p><i>Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR Co-Chair of Basic Needs Working Group</i></p> <p>cuisana@unhcr.org</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the Consolidation of RACs</p> <p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) has launched the process of consolidating Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) due to the low number of residents and the high maintenance costs associated with their operation. Presently, there are 53 active RACs accommodating around 2500 refugees. The MLSP's strategy aims to close about 20 RACs, housing approximately 900 residents, by the end of 2023 as part of their short and mid-term consolidation approach. However, this consolidation significantly affects vulnerable refugee groups, who will need to secure alternative housing.</p> <p>To initiate the consolidation, MLSP, in collaboration with the Basic Needs Working Group (BNSWG) and members of the Protection Working Group (PWG), convened a meeting with RAC managers to communicate the timeline and strategy for closures. The final list of RACs selected for closure was based on prior assessments by the BNSWG, considering cost-effectiveness, capacity, occupancy, managerial capabilities, and other parameters.</p> <p>The 20 RACs slated for closure this year were categorized into five groups (A, B, C, D, and E). Group A, consisting of three RACs (two in Chisinau and one in Orhei), will be the first to close, providing residents with a two-month window to secure alternative housing. The RACs in Group A are set to close by the end of August or the beginning of September. UNHCR advocated for a two-month notice based on previous RAC closure experiences.</p> <p>UNHCR is currently coordinating the formation of a Multifunctional Team (MFT) that will be deployed to specific RACs to inform and assist residents during the consolidation process, offering options for relocation. The MFT will include existing partners at the location, such as the protection partner and the rental assistance partner. The MFT will provide information on conditions and procedures for enrolling in the cash-for-rent program. It will be tailored to address the specific needs of RAC residents, potentially involving Child</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the SOPs with the PWG for comments.</p>
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Protection actors, the Roma Task Force, or Disability Task Force to address the needs of relocated individuals. UNHCR conducted preliminary screenings of RACs to understand the structure and needs of residents to be relocated.

For each RAC, a dedicated Relocation Case Manager will be assigned to oversee the relocation process. The Relocation Case Manager will assist residents in finding alternatives, assess specific needs, and refer cases to protection partners if necessary. They will also have access to information on all available RACs for relocation provided by the MLSP and conduct a Relocation Survey to identify beneficiaries' special needs and intentions.

The initial visit by MLSP and the MFT will introduce the closure process and timelines to RAC residents. A subsequent visit will include a question-and-answer session to inform residents about their options, including rental assistance and accessible protection services. The Relocation Case Manager will then conduct a Relocation Survey to monitor beneficiaries' intentions.

After the relocation process is complete, the next step involves decommissioning the RACs, which entails cleaning and disinfecting the facilities to restore them to their original use. The subsequent phase includes post-relocation surveillance to monitor beneficiaries' integration into communities and their ongoing protection needs.

Experience from the first visit to RACs in Group A in Chisinau:

UNHCR, in collaboration with MLSP, CDA (protection partner), and ACTED, visited RACs in Group A in Chisinau. MLSP informed residents about the rationale behind the consolidation process. Residents were presented with two relocation options: rental assistance or moving to other locations (another RAC or private accommodation). ACTED introduced the rental assistance program and explained eligibility criteria, but there was limited interest from residents.



<p>The upcoming phase will involve Relocation Case Managers assisting in identifying solutions and alternatives for all beneficiaries.</p> <p>Initial resident reactions were mostly negative, marked by frustration and anger. The MHPSS focal point (INTERSOS) was present to engage with beneficiaries and discuss the entire process. The presence of MHPSS or PFA focal points is crucial for future visits.</p> <p>Comments & Discussions</p> <p>ACTED recommended holding only one RAC visit per day to ensure a comprehensive explanation to beneficiaries and to provide individual assistance whenever needed. It is crucial to establish a clear referral mechanism between the rental assistance partner and the protection partners. Regarding the responsibilities of the Relocation Case Manager, there was a proposal to provide supporting staff to aid in the relocation process.</p> <p>IOM emphasized the importance of avoiding negative publicity during this process and promoting a distinct separation between eviction and relocation. IOM also raised questions about the sustainability of the rental assistance programs. UNHCR shared that all rental assistance partners operate under specific conditions, including suitability criteria, to grant rental assistance to beneficiaries. These rental assistance partners were designated to specific RACs to communicate their program's conditions during beneficiary visits.</p> <p>CRS provided insight into their rental assistance program, which incorporates sustainability as a criterion for program enrollment. Simultaneously, CRS assigns a case manager to enrollees who might struggle to cover rent once the initial rental assistance period concludes. These enrollees are accepted based</p>	
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	<p>on protection referrals. CRS is also actively working on linking livelihood programs with longer-term housing solutions in host communities.</p> <p>The representative from the Ombudsman Office inquired about relocation to informal RACs. UNHCR clarified that the MLSP (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection) clearly stated its stance of not supporting the relocation of beneficiaries to informal RACs. The MLSP is committed to assisting with relocation solely to formal RACs.</p> <p>MdM France expressed its willingness to participate in the Consolidation process and offered to provide MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) services, both group and individual counseling, to the beneficiaries.</p>	
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<p>Agenda Point 4</p> <p>Contingency Planning</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the Contingency Planning</p> <p>The 2023 Protection Contingency Plan has been formulated to address the scenario of an influx of approximately 500,000 refugees within a span of 10 days (equivalent to 50,000 individuals per day). This contingency plan is structured into three primary segments: immediate activities, short-term activities, and identification of gaps and preparedness measures.</p> <p>The Protection sector is currently in the process of finalizing budgetary calculations and evaluating the activities of partners in order to enhance and expand the provision of protection services in Moldova. The Contingency plan is designed to build upon the existing services available at the Border Crossing Points (BCPs) and within local communities, including the implementation of mobile services.</p> <p>Moving forward, UNHCR will initiate communication with protection partners to conduct an assessment of their capabilities in the realm of protection and to estimate the budget required to support these efforts.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the Contingency Plan 2023 when finalized</p>
<p>Agenda Point 5</p> <p><i>Community Service Centres (CSCs) presentation</i></p> <p><i>Oleksandr Mainov, Community-based Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>mainov@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Presentation on Community Service Centres (CSC)</p> <p>These centers serve as platforms for fostering peaceful coexistence and delivering services to both refugee and host communities. The primary objective behind establishing CSCs is to empower these communities, offering them a dedicated space where active involvement in decisions that impact their lives is encouraged.</p> <p>The CSCs function as comprehensive hubs offering an array of critical services for refugees. This multi-faceted approach is particularly important for refugees whose mobility might be restricted by factors such as distance, transportation</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the presentation and the CSC Concept Note with PWG.</p>



<p>costs, disabilities, or safety concerns. There are eight key objectives driving the CSC initiative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mobilize and empower communities, engaging them in the decision-making process.2. Create a shared space for communal interactions.3. Assist communities in identifying needs and available capacities, promoting peaceful coexistence.4. Coordinate and synergize efforts at the local level, including collaboration with local authorities.5. Identify vulnerable and at-risk individuals, providing them with necessary information and services.6. Establish, maintain, and promote local referral pathways.7. Ensure local ownership of the humanitarian response.8. Identify and support local initiatives for community development. <p>In the context of CSC, both the refugee community and local populations actively contribute to planning, implementing, assessing, monitoring, and evaluating the programs and services offered in the community centers.</p> <p>Typical services available at UNHCR-funded CSCs in Moldova encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Mobilization & Outreach• Legal Aid and Service Referrals• Awareness Raising & Provision of Information• Skills Development• Education	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation• Specialized Services• Other Services <p>UNHCR collaborates closely with local authorities, existing social entities, and NGOs at the local level to establish CSCs. These centers are tailored to accommodate individuals with reduced mobility and are equipped with necessary devices and indoor navigation systems for the visually impaired.</p> <p>In addition to service provision, the partner organizations managing the CSCs conduct community development activities. Social media networks, feedback mechanisms, and complaint channels are maintained to foster effective communication with the local and refugee communities. Through these avenues, the quality of services is monitored, issues are identified and addressed, and each center offers an information desk for counseling and referrals.</p> <p>Presently, there are eight operational CSCs in Moldova (Donduseni, Orhei, Balti, two in Chisinau, Causeni, Comrat, Cahul), and the goal is to have a total of ten CSCs by the end of 2023. One notable initiative within the CSC activities and the Community Support Initiatives Programme is the Gagauzia Hackathon event in Cahul. This two-day event seeks to enhance community engagement and social cohesion between refugees and the host community. Participants will collaborate in teams to design social projects focusing on refugees, with the potential for replication in other cities hosting CSCs.</p>	
Agenda Point 6	IOM provided an update regarding recent developments concerning healthcare accessibility for individuals lacking Temporary Protection (TP) or any	



<p><i>AOB</i></p>	<p>legal status in Moldova. In the final week of July, the Ministry of Health and National Insurance submitted a request to the Government to revise the eligibility criteria for healthcare access for individuals without legal status or those awaiting status acquisition. This initiative stems from advocacy endeavors aimed at ensuring healthcare and medical care access for individuals grappling with severe illnesses, particularly emphasizing oncological treatment.</p> <p>Emerging details indicate that refugees who receive medical assistance prior to obtaining legal status could potentially be reimbursed for medical expenditure upon gaining their legal status in Moldova. This demonstrates a concerted effort to address the healthcare needs of vulnerable individuals within the context of their legal status transitions.</p>	
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Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Information collection and relevant links

Moldova operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe: The Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive - Six Months On (October 2022)

<https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/unhcr-regional-bureau-europe-implementation-temporary-protection-directive-six-months-october-2022>

If necessary, feel free to add extra rows in the matrix above.