

Basic Needs, Socio-Economic Vulnerability and Multipurpose Cash Assistance

Moldova Refugee Response Plan | October 2023

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) has been an essential part of the refugee response in Moldova, helping refugees and vulnerable host community members meet their basic needs. Under the Cash Working Group (CWG) – co-chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and UNHCR – Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) partners have been coordinating the use of the MPCA since the onset of the response.

Post Distribution Monitoring findings underscore the appropriateness of MPCA in Moldova. The findings show that 96% of the interviewed refugee population prefers cash assistance, as it enables them to meet their essential needs. The remaining 4% opt for a combination of cash and in-kind assistance. This strong preference for cash assistance highlights its effectiveness in addressing the needs of the affected population.

Market Assessment has confirmed the availability of essential items in the market for both refugees and the host community. Food items are readily accessible, with an impressive 95% availability rate, while non-food items maintain a robust presence at 82%. The supply chain is functioning efficiently, with most sellers confident in maintaining adequate product stock.

Considering the relevance of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to the Moldova Refugee Response Plan (RRP), **UNHCR conducted a Rapid Socio-Economic Profiling exercise in the first half of 2023** to assess the socio-economic vulnerability level of refugees in Moldova. The findings – outlined below – allow RCF partners to more efficiently and equitably plan and target assistance.

Socio-Economic Vulnerability of Refugees in Moldova

The Rapid Socio-Economic Profiling Exercise had a sampling of 607 refugee households encompassing 1,342 individuals. This sample size represents a confidence level of 97%, with a margin of error of 5% from the current cash beneficiary caseload.

To analyze socio-economic vulnerability levels among the refugee population, an association analysis was conducted by using key variables, including the Food Consumption Score, Negative Coping Strategies, and Economic Capacity to Meet Essential Needs (ECMEN). ECMEN is a measure of economic vulnerability, defined as the

percentage of households with sufficient economic capacity to meet their essential needs, as measured through the minimum expenditure basket (MEB).

The initial findings of this association analysis reveal that household demographics (families with 4+ members), heating sources, accommodation types, residential areas (urban vs rural), and specific needs associated with specific profiles (older people, people with disabilities and single parents) has a significant correlation with the level of socio-economic vulnerabilities among refugee population. Based on these indicators, it is estimated that approximately **70% of the total refugee population requires support to cover their basic needs**, with approximately **15% classified as extremely vulnerable** due to multiple layers of vulnerabilities within their households¹.

These findings are consistent with observations from partners in the field, and it is worth noting that they cover characteristics of certain groups at higher risk of marginalization, such as Roma households, who have an average household size of 5.6 individuals according to available data, as well as single female households.



When considering the 2024 Refugee Response Plan planning figure (90,000 refugees), the assessed vulnerability levels mentioned above result in approximately **63,000 refugees in need of support to cover their basic needs**, out of which **9,450 will be classified as extremely vulnerable**, while the remainder will exhibit high or moderate levels of vulnerability. These figures shall guide RCF Sectors and partners when planning activities supporting refugees to meet their basic needs, including MPCA.

Based on the findings of the Rapid-Socio Economic Profiling, the Socio-Economic Profiling, and the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, the Cash Working Group will develop a **vulnerability assessment framework** in coordination with relevant sectors and the Government Commission on Migration and Asylum. The framework will enable monitoring of changes in vulnerability over time, improved targeting of assistance, and

¹ Figure may be adjusted based on the findings of the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment in case of significant discrepancies.

strengthening of the coordination and decision-making of humanitarian assistance delivery.

Coordinating efforts with the government is a priority when addressing the basic needs of refugees. This coordination serves two purposes: leveraging existing national systems and development initiatives, such as social safety nets, and advocating for the rights of refugees. Collaboration with development actors is also essential for establishing a sustainable approach that capitalizes on the skills and capacity of refugees.

RRP partners have been working with the government to strengthen national systems and promote the inclusion of refugees. However, it is important to acknowledge that the government is not expected to fully absorb the refugee caseload in the short term. Therefore, RRP partners will continue to support this need as a transitional measure, while enhancing support for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Moldova, including through expanded livelihood opportunities.

Socio-Economic Vulnerability of Affected Host Community

The RRP is primarily oriented toward refugees, with its main objective being to support government-led responses and uphold the protection environment granted to refugees by the host states.

The RRP target population figures include refugees, as well as TCNs in need of international protection and people who are stateless or at risk of statelessness (e.g. the Roma population). For the host community, figures are calculated based on those who are affected by new arrivals, for example due to their location and who will benefit from initiatives that aid refugees as well as host communities.

In the context of the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situations, individual members of the host community are included in the target population figures only for Moldova where the pressures of hosting refugees have particularly strained local capacity and put strain on scarce resources.

This comprehensive approach seeks to preserve social cohesion and alleviate the broader socio-economic consequences stemming from the refugee influx.

The 2024 RRP planning figure for vulnerable host community individuals in need of assistance to meet basic needs is 55,000. Specific considerations regarding the socioeconomic vulnerability of affected host communities will be further specified later in the year once the data from the Socio-Economic Assessment being conducted by the World Bank, UNHCR, and UNDP is available, and following further coordination with the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Meanwhile, planning figures are based on

available data from the Acted Winter Assessment and reflect the population in need of winter support, as these are identified as the most vulnerable households in refugee-hosting areas and who need support to meet their basic needs.

To establish this figure, key factors informing the targeting of social assistance by the government of the Republic of Moldova were considered, such as disability and age, as well as household expenditure on heating bills versus available income and resort to coping mechanisms to be able to cover basic needs.

When supporting affected host communities, partners must ensure that assistance is aligned with existing government programs and, when appropriate, complement them. The priority should be to connect those eligible for government support to existing government assistance. RRP partners should prioritize and support the inclusion of vulnerable host community members in existing government response and must avoid creating parallel systems.

Breakdown by Gender, Age and Disability of People in Need of Support to Cover their Basic Needs

Refugees				Host Community			
63,000 Individuals				55,000 Individuals			
Female	Male	Child.	Adults	Female	Male	Child.	Adults
36.5k	26.5k	28.6k	34.6k	28.5k	26.5k	11.5k	43.5k
Older Persons		Persons with Disabilities		Older Persons		Persons with Disabilities	
5.9k	7.0k	9.45k		3.5k	2.5k	8.2k	

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For updated information on the refugee response in the Republic of Moldova, please visit the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#). To view the 2023 RRP Funding Requirements and Funding levels, refer to the [Refugee Funding Tracker](#).