

Terms of Reference
Refugee Education Working Group (REWG)
Moldova
Updated April 2024

Background

The war in Ukraine has had a devastating humanitarian impact on children and families from Ukraine. UNHCR estimates that as of March 2024, roughly 6.5 million people from Ukraine have been displaced to other countries and another 3.7 million are internally displaced.

Moldova shares a large border with Ukraine and has traditionally had strong socio-economic ties with the country. Moldova is considered an upper middle-income country with a population of roughly 2.65 million people (2020).¹ Despite strong economic growth, Moldova remains amongst the poorest countries in Europe. The GDP per capita remains around USD 4,500 annually. However, even with domestic economic challenges, the Republic of Moldova has been incredibly supportive and generous to the situation of refugees from neighboring Ukraine.

Since late February 2022, Moldova has faced a huge humanitarian crisis with large numbers of refugees entering Moldova due to the conflict in Ukraine. According to the UNHCR Data Portal, between March 2022 and April 2024, a total of just over 1 million refugees from Ukraine crossed the borders from Ukraine to the Republic of Moldova². Many of them continued their journey to Romania and other European countries, but about 118,000 refugees remain in Moldova, of whom 44% are children.

The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) has taken an open and active role in addressing the education needs of the refugee children. MER issued an Instruction in September 2023, easing requirements for enrollment in Moldovan schools. All children from Ukraine arriving after the 24th of February 2022 can enroll in Moldovan schools regardless of their legal status. However, the Moldovan education system is overburdened and there is a need to increase support for MER to be able to provide formal and non-formal education opportunities to refugee children. Furthermore, many families have chosen for their children to continue attending online Ukrainian classes, leading to low enrollment rates in Moldovan schools.

Objectives

The overall objective of the Refugee Education Working Group (REWG) is to enhance and strengthen the coordination in the interventions of education stakeholders in Moldova to support the Government of Moldova in providing access to quality and inclusive education in safe and protective learning environments for refugee children living in Moldova.

The REWG specific objectives are:

- Provide strategic guidance and technical inputs for the implementation of the education refugee response in Moldova.
- Ensure a timely, coherent, and effective education response by mobilizing stakeholders to respond in a

¹ [Moldova Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank](#), World Bank in Moldova.

² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>



- strategic manner to the education needs of children displaced due to the war in Ukraine.
- Strengthen information sharing and improve knowledge to better identify relevant gaps and opportunities to further strengthen the overall education sector.
 - Encourage technical and institutional capacity building of multi-stakeholders.
 - Improve data and information management for evidence-based programming and promote the use of comparative advantages for implementation of education interventions.
 - Support MER in ensuring that all children displaced from Ukraine access formal education (in person or online)
 - Support the inclusion of all children, including Roma refugee children and children with disabilities, in formal education systems.
 - Strengthen the Moldovan education system's capacity to integrate refugee children.

The lead and co-leads of the REWG will actively engage refugee and host communities, promote innovative delivery modalities and sustainable models to further maximize impact and sustainability.

Working modalities

- The REWG includes members from MER, Parliament, Chisinau municipality and local and national authorities, donors, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and other stakeholders active in the education sector. There is no limit to the number of members, and all organizations involved in education response are encouraged to participate in the EWG meetings.
- REWG meetings will take place on a monthly basis on the last Thursday of every month at 1:00pm. Ad-hoc meetings for specific or urgent issues can be organized on request and can include representatives from other line ministries and Local Authorities.
- An agenda will be shared a minimum of 3 days before the meeting, and the meeting minutes will be prepared and circulated by the meeting co-chair within 3 working days after the meeting has been held.
- All education partners are encouraged to align their interventions with the Education Sector Plan 2030 as well as the education priorities identified within the RRP 2024 for planning, implementation, and monitoring of their education interventions.
- The working group will have a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) consisting of: MER, UNICEF, UNHCR one national NGO and one International NGO to consult on different technical interventions and policy issues.
- The working group will maintain close links with other relevant sectors including but not limited to Child Protection, GBV, Health, Accommodation and Transportation (for WASH component) as well as Disability and Roma Taskforces.
- Based on needs, technical task forces can be formed to find/recommend solution to specific education issues.
- The REWG will relay main takeaways, achievement and bottlenecks shared by the sector to Inter-agency coordination forum.
- These terms of reference will periodically be amended, particularly when there are substantial changes in the situation.

Main Collective Responsibilities of the REWG leads:

- The REWG is led by the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and co-led by UNICEF and UNHCR.
- The co-lead agencies (UNICEF and UNHCR) provide technical support to MER, strategic policy guidance, capacity development and technical support to education stakeholders strategic planning, implementation and monitoring, including information management and mapping interventions.

- UNICEF, UNHCR and MER chair the meetings on a rotational basis. In case one party will not be able to chair it for unforeseen circumstances, the other two co-chairs need to be notified in advance to arrange the meeting logistics and chairing on the agreed dates every month.

Main Responsibilities of the REWG chair (Ministry of Education and Research):

- Coordinate the strategic response by setting guidelines for the response in alignment with government priorities and sector plan.
- Oversee the strategic planning and implementation, monitors progress and identifies gaps, and advocate for the importance of education in the response to the crisis.
- Provide overall guidance in the development of the Inter Agency Refugee Response Plan.
- Advocate for the importance of education and develop key messages in the response to the crisis.
- Provide the oversight and guidance on policy formulation in response to the crisis.

Main Responsibilities of the REWG co-leads (UNICEF and UNHCR)

1. Coordination:

- Ensure alignment of the sector interventions with government policies and strategies.
- Ensure inclusion of key humanitarian and development partners in the sector working group, respecting their mandates and program priorities.
- Ensure the alignment of partners' interventions within the group with Education Sector Plan 2030 and RRP 2024.
- Ensure coordination mechanisms are set in place between all education partners, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies and other organizations or institutions involved in education. This includes ensuring effective links, communication, and information management, as well as linkages to technical working groups and coordination platforms as appropriate.
- Ensure cooperation and facilitate information sharing between the education sector and other relevant sectors so that education partners are aware of key inter-sectorial issues and actions are taken as appropriate.
- Facilitate linkage with government counterparts on local and national levels regarding education issues.
- Provide technical oversight to the development and implementation of the education strategy and RRP 2024 with education stakeholders.
- Develop joint advocacy messages in coordination with the MER and working group partners.

2. Needs assessment, analysis, and strategy development:

- Proactively work to improve coordination and harmonization of education assessments and analysis – involving all relevant partners – and sharing outcomes widely, both within the EWG and to the wider humanitarian community.
- Encourage agencies to adopt adequate education related contingency planning and preparedness measures for potential significant changes in the situation.
- Share best practices and lessons learnt through seminars, workshop, trainings, round table discussions, conferences, sessions, lectures, etc.

3. Monitoring and reporting:



- Encourage education partners to update ActivityInfo with their education interventions on a regular basis.
- Support REWG partners on reporting on established indicators and support the development of new indicators whenever needed.
- Ensure partners' reporting on all education activities on ActivityInfo online platform on a quarterly basis. The information drawn from the reported activities will provide a basis for needs and gaps analysis, which enables an improved targeted response.
- Encourage agencies to ensure that adequate monitoring mechanisms (including AAP) are in place to review the outcomes of education interventions and progress against workplans.
- Encourage adequate education outcome reporting from partners and effective information sharing (with all partners supporting education).
- Ensure key issues from the updated Education activities reported on ActivityInfo are highlighted and shared.
- Ensure that implementation of sector activities is in line with existing standards and guidelines.
- Ensure that implementation considers and mainstreams cross-cutting issues such as age, gender and disabilities.

4. Capacity building:

- Identify capacity building needs of the REWG members involved in the education emergency response.
- Provide support to organize trainings, share technical documents and work together with other technical working groups on certain thematic areas.

Main Responsibilities of the REWG partners:

- Participate actively in the REWG meetings and share relevant updates with the sector members regarding recent developments, challenges and key achievements.
- Proactively work to improve coordination and harmonization of education assessments and analysis – involving all relevant partners – and sharing outcomes widely, both within the education sector and other relevant sectors.
- Report on education activities to the REWG and via the ActivityInfo platform.
- Participate in the development and sharing of the education strategy/refugee response plan, ensuring consistency with other sector strategies and in accordance with MER standards, the UNHCR Global Education Strategy, UNICEF Core Commitment for Children, Child Protection Minimum Standards, INEE and SPHERE standards.
- Provide technical support to the REWG according to areas of expertise of each member organization.
- Collectively identify the capacity building needs and assist in building the capacity of education stakeholders.
- Ensure that adequate monitoring mechanisms are in place to review outcome of education interventions and progress against implementation plans.
- Develop, use and update tools for the collection, analysis and management of education data and promote information sharing among partners and with other working groups.
- Under the guidance of the REWG Chair, support in the development of joint advocacy messages.