Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Protection Working Group (PWG) and Basic Needs Working Group (BNWG) ad hoc meeting

Meeting Details	
Date	*21 January 2025*
Time	*10.30 am – 12.00 pm (hybrid)*
Chair	*Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR (co-chair)* *Alexandru Zubco, Directorate for the Prevention of Torture, Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Moldova (Co-chair)* *Andrea Cuisana, Shelter Officer, UNHCR – Basic Needs Working Group (co-chair)*
Reporting	*Sara Sivkova,* Associate Protection Officer*, UNHCR*
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Talking points	
1. Introduction 2. Partners Updates 3. Sector Updates - Child Protection and Education, older persons and persons with disabilities, GBV and Cash working Group 4. NFI distribution, Shelter 5. Office of the Regional Coordinator 6. Accommodation	
Participants	

Andrew Painter, UNHCR	*Elena Ustoroi, CWS*	*Corina Sfirencea, Keystone*	*Pippa Bown, British Embassy*
Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR	*Hanna Ursol, PiN*	*Moldova*	*Chris Lomas, Hope4*
Sean Sager, UNHCR	*Victor Morari, Ombudsman*	*Andreas Boloban, Don Bodco*	*Yurie Tabuncic, US Embassy*
Alberto Tonon, UNHCR	*Office*	*Foundation*	*Katarina Mitic, IRC Serbia*
Pierre Chacon, UNHCR	*Nicolai Brunna, Concordia*	*Gratiela Parlui, IGM*	*Constanta Popescu, World Bank*
Sivkova Sara, UNHCR	*Moldova*	*Lilia Gantatuc, Comision for*	*Cristina Triboi, Tdh Moldova*
Sorina Pinzaru, UNHCR	*Gabriela Georgial, CRS*	*Migration*	*Dina Daniliuc, JCM*
Sabina Sandu, UNHCR	*Svetlana Cires, CRS*	*Petru Novesina, Caaritas Moldova*	*Teodor Vicol, MLSP*
Tamara Ropot, UNCHR	*Mihaela Ciorba, CRS*	*Cojocaru Juna, Caritas Moldova*	*Cristina Lelic*
Serghei Zubco, IOM	*Ecaterina Silvestru, CDA*	*Almothana Hasan, ACTED*	*Denis Sirbu, Laolalta*
Elena Corbrauk, IOM	*Ilinka Leger, HEKS/ESPER*	*Anton Balan, ACTED*	*Dmitry Nacu, ACTED*
Rei Sulo, IOM	*Ina Rusu, ADRA*	*Baviko Olena, ACTED*	*Andrei Banu, Worl Vision*
Danielle Pedretti, HelpAge	*Azhar Irfan, HEKS/ESPER*	*Daryna Kovtun, ACTED*	*Angela Cutasevici*
Olha Florynska, OHCHR	*Nina Lozinschi, Gender-centre*	*Iryna Mitioglu, Female Support*	*Mihail Cuibuc*
Oleg Palii, CDA	*Svetlana Jioara, CDA*	*Force*	*Suzanne Virecoulon*
Milos Popovic, UNRCO	*Roman Russu, NCUM*	*Natalia Peancovskaya, Tarna Rom*	*Mihai Rotaru, MLSP*
Fadel Daoud, WFP	*Valentina Ghenciu, Lumos*	*Nina Cusnir, Tarna Rom*	*Alesia Kovalchuk, Female Support*
Petru Lupu, UNFPA	*Galina Climov, AOPD*	*Irina Vrancean, CDA*	*Force*
Eva Cvalia, NRC	*Selina Dicusar, WFP*		

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions

Introduction *Andrew Painter, Senior ProtectionOfficer, UNHCR* painter@unhcr.org	The **PWG co-chair** welcomed participants, thanked them for their presence, and presented the talking point. UNHCR reiterated its support for the refugees and vulnerable host populations in the Republic of Moldova (RM), including the refugee population at the Left Bank of the Dniester River (further referred to as Left Bank). The exceptional ad hoc meeting of the PWG and BNWG was called to discuss the energy crisis at the Left Bank which is affecting both refugees and the host population residing there. The response to this energy crisis should be coordinated, to ensure that the distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs) is not duplicated. The response to the energy crisis is coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator (RCO) who oversees addressing the needs of the affected Moldovan population, however, UNHCR remains actively involved in the aid to the refugee population on the Left Bank and in addressing their needs. UNHCR continues its winter cash programme for its beneficiaries. As for the intentions of refugees residing at the Left Bank, there was no significant increase in movement to the Right Bank of the Dniester River (Right Bank). Only a few individuals reached out to the Greenline with inquiries about potentially moving to the refugee accommodation centres located at the Right Bank. However, the general intention of refugees is to stay at the Left Bank if possible. Based on recent border monitoring reports, an increased number of Ukrainian refugees residing at the Left Bank have been observed to be returning to Ukraine	

	through a small regular bus on the route Bender to Palanca as a result of the energy crisis. Those returning to UA are doing so for an undefined period of time. UNHCR intends to adapt its protection monitoring tool to reflect the general situation of the refugees at the Left Bank. The tool is to be deployed by the start of February. The results will be shared with PWG partners when ready.	
Partners updates	OHCHR is conducting regular visits to Tiraspol to collect information from beneficiaries for its rights monitoring assessment. Based on observations from these visits to Tiraspol, OHCHR confirmed that there was an increased need for winterization products and inquiries about cash assistance. Caritas Moldova informed about their presence on the Left Bank and about the challenges faced while transporting NFIs into the Left Bank. Caritas has provided NFIs (wood and heaters) and food on the Left Bank to vulnerable host and refugee families. Originally, the number of beneficiaries was some 40 children, which doubled due to the energy crisis. Caritas has observed a significant increase in requests for firewood and an increase in the number of their beneficiaries. Caritas intends to launch a mobile team to provide support at the Left Bank (more information at the NFI distribution part). ACTED informed that implementing partners have observed a movement of refugees from the Left Bank to the Right Bank, and a significant increase in movement from urban to rural areas. This is mostly due to rural area settlements being less dependent on gas and electricity, most of which use wood burning stoves as a source of heating. ACTED has been supporting the beneficiaries, especially	

	through cash intervention which is primarily focusing on refugees and vulnerable host populations.	
Sector Updates	*Child Protection and Education* The NGO Resonance is closely following the situation at the Left Bank and continues to support Child Protection cases. The NGO informed that the main needs were NFIs, especially winter clothing, heating and hygiene items. Currently, there has been no significant increase in child protection concerns identified on the Left Bank. The Child Protection partners on the Right Bank are prepared to support case management of child protection cases if requested. ***Persons with disabilities and older persons*** The Disability and Age Task Force have been in contact with partners providing services on the Left Bank. NGO Osorc has identified some 600 refugees with disabilities in need of support. The main request was for NFI provision of blankets and electric heaters. UNHCR also informed that based on the information from partners, the de-facto authorities had moved some of the particularly vulnerable populations from residential care to sanatoriums where there is a stable source of heating ensured, including vulnerable refugees. Co-chair of the Disability and Age Task Force informed about the report shared by Keystone Moldova on general needs at the Left Bank. Keystone report highlights that among Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, some 765 are persons with disabilities or have equivalent status. On the Left Bank, the needs in rural areas differ from those in urban settings. The main request for NFIs were heating pads, candles, fireplaces, lamps, blankets, warm clothing, lanterns, electric stoves, hygiene	

	products, diapers and mobility aids. Additionally, 160 families requested generators or solid fuel boilers. During the assessment, there were some 765 refugees with disabilities. HelpAge has recently inquired with the RAC managers on the Right Bank if they have received some refugees from the Left Bank as a result of the energy crisis. Out of 30 RAC managers, none has indicated receiving any request from refugees residing on the Left Bank for accommodation. For now, there has been no increase in requests for relocation to the RACs from persons with disabilities and older persons. ***Gender-based Violence Sub-Working Group*** IOM provided an update on the activities of the Gender-based Violence Sub-Working Group (GBV SWG) members. There are currently five NGOs working on the Left Bank involved in the prevention of GBV. The GBV SWG is supporting one shelter for survivors of GBV in Tiraspol. All members continue their programs and focus especially on the vulnerable refugees and vulnerable host population, i.e. survivors of GBV, trafficking and people with disabilities. The GBV SWG is currently reviewing its Referral Pathways to ensure up to date information and referrals. ***Cash Working Group*** The co-chair of the Cash Working Group (CWG) informed about the ongoing coordination of the cash for winter assistance through the CWG. There is ongoing deduplication of cash programs of CWG partners.	

	The co-chair encouraged all partners who intend to provide cash assistance on the Left Bank to contact the working group for further coordination and non-duplication of efforts. ***Roma mediators*** UNHCR received a request from Roma mediator stationed on the Left Bank for NFIs. The request was for around 2.000 persons, both the Roma refugees and the host community residing in Bender, Andreevka, Dubasari, Tiraspol, Slobozian and Ribnitsa. **Discussion:** CDA asked about who the main target population for the intended item distribution is. UNHCR informed that the main focus will be on the refugee population as the UNHCR mandate is to aid primarily the refugees, however, the aid will not be limited to refugees only and the vulnerable host community will be included as well. The World Bank representative inquired about the estimated number of refugees currently known to be residing on the Left Bank. UNHCR explained that there are no firm statistics, and that the latest estimation was around 4.000 to 6.000 refugees. This estimation is based on the number of active recipients of UNHCR and IOM cash assistance. The representative from IGM highlighted that currently there were some 6,764 refugees, beneficiaries of the Temporary Protection residing on the Left Bank. OSORC representative reiterated that on the Left Bank, there is a great difference in the experiences of the population residing in urban and rural areas. The urban population is more affected by the energy crisis due to a higher reliance on electricity as a source of heating. The urban population may be in higher need of	

	blankets and NFI distribution in comparison to the rural areas where people more rely on using wood burning stoves instead.	
NFI distribution and shelter	The BNWG co-chair/UNHCR has been reaching out to partners to coordinate the distribution of NFIs on the Left Bank. Based on the information from partners the main needs of the population residing on the Left Bank were for heaters and blankets. UNHCR/inter-agency representative highlighted that those organizations who intend to provide generators should also take into consideration the fuel provision and costs when planning the distribution. UNHCR commenced the distribution of blankets and solar lamps for both refugees and host population on 9th January, in Rezina and Varnita. IOM shared their intention to distribute blankets, bedding sets, hygiene sets and other items (generators). The winterization project is supposed to target both refugees and host communities supporting some 1.853 households (HH). It should start by the end of January. The distribution will be conducted through NGO Osorc and ADRA. NRC is launching its response on the Left Bank on 21 January. The response consists of two programs. The first one is in collaboration with ADRA, establishing two warm spaces in Bender and Ribnitsa, which will be operating until March. In those locations, NRC will be providing snacks and hot beverages, as well as a space for recreational activities. The spaces are available for both refugees and host communities. The second project is for	UNHR will be sharing an excel sheet for tracking the distribution.

	NFI distribution and a cash programme in partnership with the Medical Social Program. The aim is to support 1.100 HH, half refugees and half host population. NRC will be applying its vulnerability criteria that were already established for its winter support program last year. NRC has conducted a rapid market assessment through its partners to inquire about the availability of non-food commodities which was also supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of its regular winterization program, NRC provided cash support to 150 vulnerable HH in the first months of winter. NRC will also provide an ad hoc response with cash assistance to reach an additional 200 HH. ACTED have two programs on the Left Bank. The first one is the distribution of NFIs which should target some 150 HH, based on reports from partners, the main request was for electric heaters and stoves. The second is the cash for winter which will be reallocated to the Left Bank, the cash program will be reachable through the Right Bank due to limited access. The cash for winter should target some 200 HH. The distribution of NFIs and the cash program will target both refugees and vulnerable host communities. Caritas provided heaters and generators for centers for children in Rashcov and Tiraspol, the heaters were also shared with vulnerable households. Caritas established two centers in Ribnitsa and Rashcov to provide hot meals and shelter. Caritas noted that since the start of the energy crisis the request for hot meals has tripled. A mobile unit was organized to transport hot meals to persons with disabilities and big families with children. Currently, Caritas is hiring social assistance workers for the Mobile Team to be stationed on the Left Bank to be in contact with local partners. Caritas is identifying people with	

	vulnerabilities in collaboration with the local church. Caritas is planning to continue distributing food and hygiene kits. The target population is both refugees and host communities. Hope4 plans the distribution of winter clothing and blankets. The clothes were donated from the US, UK and UNIQLO. A list will be published when all NFI is categorized and accounted for. Hope4 intends to discuss with partners the ways of distributing the items at the Left Bank. The co-chair of the BNWG encouraged all organizations to share their intentions on the distribution of items on the Left Bank with the Working Group. At the same time encouraged all partners conducting NFIs all around Moldova to take part in the BNWG and to coordinate their distribution with the sector. **Discussion:** Several organizations inquired about conducting the rapid needs assessment to compile the information and make informed decisions on the location and focus of NFI distribution. Currently, there is ongoing discussion with the Office of Resident Coordinator on conducting such an assessment.	
Office of the Resident Coordinator	The representative of the Office of the Resident Coordinator informed about ongoing discussions with the government and the de facto authorities on the Left Bank to address the energy crisis. The position of the UN is such that currently the situation has not escalated to be considered a humanitarian crisis yet.	

	The implementation of rapid needs assessment to assess the needs on the Left Bank is currently under discussion. More information on the rapid needs assessment will follow.	
Accommodation	The representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) supported the notion that currently, there were not many people interested in relocating to the Right Bank from the Left Bank as a result of the energy crisis. The representative from MLSP explained that people who would be interested in relocating to the Right Bank accommodation centres can reach out to Green Line and inquire about the availability of RACs on the Right Bank. Currently, there are 26 RACs open on the Right Bank. The representative of MLSP informed that there are two accommodation centres for vulnerable populations at the Left Bank hosting elderly persons, and persons with disabilities that are in need of generators. The representative from MLSP encouraged organizations who have extra resources to provide support for these centres. **Discussion:** The IOM representative inquired about the transportation for people interested in relocating from Left Bank to Right Bank accommodation centres. The representative from the Ministry answered that currently there is no such transportation provided. Nevertheless, if the number or request was to increase an alternative solution will be prepared by the MLSP.	

Moldova Operational data portal: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784

If you have any difficulties accessing the Inter-agency shared folders or if any modifications are necessary to the minutes of the PWG/BNWG, please contact: sivkovas@unhcr.org