ISWG Inclusion & Solutions Working Group Moldova

Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

2nd ISWG meeting 11 June, hybrid, UNHCR conference room	
Meeting details	
Date	*11.06.2025*
Time	*14:00 pm*
Chair	*Andrew Mitchell, WFP*
Lead	*MLSP, Andrew Mitchell WFP, Artiom Sici UNICEF, Iva Vavic UNHCR, Zinaida Adam UNDP*
Email	*mdachiswg@unhcr.org*
Agenda	
1. ISWG members' support options 2. Planning for 2025 3. National Program for Phased Integration of Foreigners update 4. RACs update 5. Cash updates 6. AOB	
Participants in person	

Andrew Mitchell, WFP	Daniele Pedretti, HelpAge	Mary Khozomba, NRC
Artiom Sici, UNICEF	Daryna Kovtun, ACTED	Mihai Rotaru, MLSP
Iva Vavic, UNHCR	Denis Valac, UN Women	Mihail Platinda, UNICEF
Zinaida Adam, UNDP	Domnica Ginu, Lumos	Natalia Curnic, UNHCR
Maria Dragan, WFP	Dumitru Burdeinii, IFRC	Natalia Manea
Alberto Tonon, UNHCR	Eirini Aletra, CRS	Natalia Stelea, UNHCR
Alexandru Tutu, UNICEF	Elena Tibirna, CNAS	Raoul Herbert
Alina Alexei, WFP	Fadel Daoud, WFP	Sara Sivkova, UNHCR
Almothana Hasan, ACTED	Gleb Fursa, Logoped-Magician	Senedu Negash, IOM
Analia, Intersos	Hanna Ursol, PIN	Svetlana Cires, CRS
Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR	Ibrahim Marte, IOM	Svetlana Jioara, CDA
Andrei Baleanu	Ina Rusu, ADRA	Tara Mccoy, IMPACT Initiatives
Andrei Girleanu, ADRA	Irina Gherceac	Tatiana Popa, CNAS
Angela Alexeiciuc, We World	Irina Osoianu, CRS	Victor Rotaras, APSCF
Arefu Araki, UNHCR	Irina Stefan, AO LAOLALTA	Vladislav Sripniciuc, CARITAS
Aveen Jalal, NRC	Iurie Tabuncic, US Embassy	Yigit Gurer, UNHCR
Corina Cazacu, HOPE	Lucretia Ciurea, UN Women	Zinaida Mantaluta, CNAS
Cristina Berdos, CRS	Marie Laffeter, ACTED	
Cristina Sirbu		

Meeting Summary: Key Discussions, Decisions, and Action Points

Agenda / Topic	Discussion	Decisions/ Action Points
Introduction	The chair opened the meeting and introduced the agenda to the participants. Following on from the launch meeting of the Inclusion and Solutions Working Group on April 14, the 2nd meeting's aim is to discuss the ISWG members' support options in more depth, introduce a first proposition of a Road Map of objectives for the group, present critical updates on the National Program for the Phased Integration of Foreigners, RACs and Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance.	

ISWG members' support options	The ISWG inter-agency coordinator presented the members' support options shared with the group through an online questionnaire, thanked the partners that had already submitted their input and invited any interested members to continue submitting feedback online or to participate in the discussion directly. The first support options proposed were: - training to staff - cost-sharing initiatives and events - policy briefs and data analysis - joint assessments. The most votes received through the questionnaire was for the *joint assessments* option. *Meeting with focal points from various ministries and organizations* and *increased coordination to avoid duplication amongst partners* were additional options suggested by partners online. The proposed topics for a first workshop event were: - funding framework and transition to development funding - government RESTART reform and new systems - protection - legal framework gaps. The meeting chair invited participants who answered the questionnaire to expand on the support options they chose. People in Need expressed support for more updates on access to social protection, to health, social housing. IOM recommended focusing on the development of frameworks and policies regarding social housing and affordable housing as well as policy development training, as it is not normally a humanitarian sector activity, joint assessments in support of the government and joint monitoring and evaluation.	

	ACTED underlined the need for the ISWG to be a transition mechanism between humanitarian and development work and for the group to support the participants in this process in shifting their thinking towards development aspects, such as transitioning from the normal shelter support to more social housing, learning more about relevant donors, the process of fitting into the country's regulatory framework, transitioning from funding for livelihood activities such as grants to beneficiaries, to more credit opportunities through the banks. UN WOMEN agreed on the need for more labor market inclusion support and ensuring gender sensitivity across activities. ISWG chair stressed that funding for inclusion fits within the larger issue of poverty, which is not seen as a priority by the state, and which contributes the fiscal space challenges that the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is facing. ACTED underlined the need for clarity on funding opportunities for Moldova related to the EU accession process and on what the role of INGO is in supporting the Ministries' access to development funding. Crucially, the ISWG can be an opportunity for direct communication with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, for partners to understand precisely what gaps need filling on the Government side and what other support to Government is needed for Ministries to be able to implement programs. IOM suggested the funding framework support could be shared directly through the ISWG working group meetings, rather than organizing a training event on this topic. Advocacy was proposed as a main pillar of the working group, in support of the Government, of the partners and with the donors. Partners agreed that a training event organized as early as July would be beneficial, potentially in half-day sessions to allow participants more flexibility in relation to other engagements. UNHCR Inter-Agency Coordination Officer reminded the group of the funding opportunity summary document linked in the presentation and updated regularly on the UNHCR Operational Data Portal, which informs CSOs of open funding opportunities and available in 3 languages.	

Planning for 2025	The chair introduced the second agenda point – the draft proposal of a Road Map of objectives, based on objectives already laid out in the main RRP document, explaining that a clear Road Map for the ISWG would facilitate the process of gaining donor support and define in a clear way the different strands of work, dividing the expertise and priorities in the pre- and post-elections context and supporting synergy across the inclusion efforts, with a series of assumptions underpinning the proposition: - The elections will slow down new initiatives for inclusion, focus on existing initiatives, many elements of the framework will carry over into 2026. - An extra focus on the investment case and influencing donors and the government to fund inclusion. More urgent given accelerated cuts by donors and UN agencies. - Fits within larger efforts to expand the fiscal space of the MLSP, but this will take time, and is dependent on election outcomes. - Dual focus of inclusion activities at the central and local level, aligned with each other. - Use best practice of the RESTART reform and social assistance developments to help leverage further inclusion - Current TPR legal framework does not guarantee access to all MLSP programs. - Where access is guaranteed in law, actual access is challenged by rising poverty rates and the lack of MLSP coverage of the most vulnerable Moldovans. - Reinforcing coverage of Moldovans opens up inclusion opportunities for refugees. The Road Map proposal is a summary of the main objectives included in the Social Protection and Economic Inclusion template developed by UNHCR in 2024 and two workshops run by the European Union and facilitated by UNHCR, WFP, UNDP and UNICEF – the Nexus Workshops – the last one taking place in January 2025 producing an indicative framework for	

	transitioning. There are a total of 6 objectives, 5 derived from the initial RRP and an additional one dedicated to the advocacy and investment case for supporting funding for inclusion. The chair presented the Road Map objectives and sub-objectives proposal: 1. Promote access to formal employment, entrepreneurship, and financial services for refugee economic inclusion. - Enhance self-employment opportunities - Expand access to formal employment - Promote private sector opportunities - Secure access to banking and credit facilities - Support access to NEA employment services, training and professional education 2. Strengthen refugee inclusion into the national social protection system - Support the MLSP sectoral plans and annual budgeting processes to integrate refugee-inclusion programmes into the National Inclusion Strategy for Foreigners, backed by coordination structure - Advocate for legal amendments and carry out costing estimations to improve the inclusion of refugees into social security and social assistance programmes - Maximise the efficiency and coverage of the MLSP social services via RESTART - Apply best practice Case Management trialed by MLSP to inform an integrated referral model for refugees	

	3. Deliver targeted Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance to vulnerable refugees to meet their essential needs and reduce protection risks whilst strengthening refugee inclusion into national social assistance programs and shock-responsive mechanisms. - Provide transitional cash transfers to newly arrived and existing refugee populations in preparation for inclusion into government led social assistance programmes - Offer alternative avenues of support for essential needs as MPCA is progressively targeted - Directly support the enhancement of government flagship social assistance cash transfer programmes to ensure comprehenisve coverage of vulnerable Moldovans and the expansion of refugee coverage. - Expand shock-responsive capacities to enable scaleable social cash transfers and social services for newly arrived and existing refugee populations linking this to the national Disater Risk Management system and accompanying efforts to cover Moldovan populations at risk. 4. Provide access to essential services and infrastructure, including housing, food, water, and sanitation, for refugees and vulnerable host communities. - Support the controlled closure of Refugee Accommodation Centers - Offer transitional rental support and other affordable housing options for economically integrated refugees, ensuring safe and affordable solutions. - Ensure safe sanitation through temporary infrastructure investments 5. Promote localization and community-driven solutions.	

	- Support access to local government managed social assistance, social care services and employment services via the Cities of Solidarity Initiative - Promote localisation initiatives that empower accredited CSO and Refugee-Led Organisations to directly partner with the MLSP to make up for gaps in local social workforce capacity - Expand and upgrade social service infrastructure investments such as community centres and vocational facilities. 6. Support access to development funding, strengthen refugee inclusion investment case, and engage in advocacy on positive impact of refugee inclusion - Promote a MLSP investment case for reducing poverty whilst providing social cohesion, political stabilisation and countering foreign disinformation - Ensure budgetary space is earmarked for refugee inclusion in the annual MLSP budget exercise - Create and promote an investment case to the government and international development cooperation for refugee inclusion Clarifying on whether partners can share suggestions to indicators, UNHCR co-lead explained that there will be an opportunity to update indicators for 2026. UNHCR Inter-agency Coordination Officer added that the updated RRP will reflect organizations having phased out of Moldova, and done in consultations with the partners. MLSP intervened in response to what was presented by the chair: Law 270/2008 on Asylum clearly provides for monetary support for refugee status holders and international protection	

	status holders and are included in the legal integration program and so it is important to understand the Republic of Moldova has not made a commitment towards Temporary Protection holders. This is a challenge that persists and clarity from IGM on the model for 2026 is needed. MLSP recommended IGM to join ISWG meetings and for the group to focus on unwrapping the National Program for the Phased Integration of Foreigners. ISWG chair noted the MLSP's recommendation of aligning the inclusion efforts with the newly adopted National Program for the Phased Integration of Foreigners and proposed using the Education Road Map as a reference as it was coordinated closely with the Government. IOM suggested involving development partners to ensure a coherent transition post RRP, to the UNSDCF. UN Women suggested the ISWG Road Map must address the 4 barriers encountered by Ukrainian women refugees in the process of integration into the labor market, the biggest challenge being the language barrier. More than half of women who have care giving responsibilities expressed the need to have part-time employment options. Additionally, financing options and business education are also very much needed for economic integration. ISWG chair proposed organizing a working group event that focuses on unwrapping the series of sub-objectives which form the Road Map objectives for the group, and all the activities that go with it in order to produce a deliverable to inform an advocacy deadline. The action plan would allow ISWG as a group to monitor where the group progress is. A clear proposition for this will be sent out to support the organization of a 3-4 hour workshop session.	
National Program for Phased Integration of Foreigners update	Moving onto the next agenda topic, UNHCR Senior Development Officer began an update on the National Program for the Phased Integration of Foreigners. Considering that humanitarian actors will soon be leaving the Republic of Moldova, the RRP must transition to the National	

	Program and hand over programs to the Government, which will involve sector-wide planning and budgeting cycles carried out by the line ministries and local authorities. The National Development Plan 2025-2027 is the highest government document in terms of development planning. To facilitate refugee inclusion, there will be a significant legal framework amendment, including on the law on inclusion of foreigners. The National Program will be implemented through state budget allocation, supported by international development actors. Each Ministry will be submitting their annual budget proposal to the Ministry of Finance, which following agreements with the international community, must make firm commitments to allocate certain budgets. One example, is the inclusion of refugees into government cash programs, or the inclusion of Romanian language courses for Ukrainian refugees into programs at the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Health have already agreed to include refugees into the national health system in 2026.	
RACs update	Continuing onto the next agenda topic, UNHCR Shelter Officer updated on the remaining RACs. There are 20 active RACs hosting 1126 people – 5 in the North, 7 in the Center, 7 in Chisinau and 1 in the South of the country. The demographic groups are: 98 people with disabilities, 253 people aged 60+, 35 children aged 0-2, 385 children aged 2-18. The first consolidation group G has completed the closures. From the 1st closed RAC, 7 individuals moved into rental assistance programs, 9 individuals in private accommodation and 2 individuals returned to Ukraine. From the 2nd RAC, 2 individuals were relocated to another RAC, 12 individuals went into private accommodation, 36 individuals returned to Ukraine, 44 individuals departed from Moldova. Several challenges affected the process, some families had children enrolled in schools and it delayed the relocation. 4 RACs will be closing in the next group, H. In terms of maintenance works needed in remaining RACs, an assessment was conducted by ACTED in collaboration with UNHCR. 22 RACs participated, of which 3 are in critical condition, 9 in moderate condition, 9 had minimal needs for repairs and 1 in adequate condition. The 2024 assessment report will be shared with ISWG members.	

Cash updates	Continuing with an update on the Multi Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), UNHCR CBI Officer explained that an impact analysis was conducted following the reduction of the Transfer Value for the MPCA due to funding constraints. 17000 individuals are now targeted, who are highly vulnerable: 45% older person-headed households, 32% with chronic disease, 28% single parents, 20% with disabilities. Their income is 876 MDL - 75% lower than Moldova's absolute poverty line. 83% of the current population is using at least one negative coping mechanism. UNHCR conducted an ad hoc post-distribution monitoring exercise to determine indicators that are used to measure the impact of the cash assistance. A decrease on the impact of the cash-based interventions was noted. The proportion of respondents reporting that the assistance: - Improved their living conditions - decreased from 91% to 79%; - Reduced financial burden – decreased from 90% to 81%; - Reduced feelings of stress – decreased from 86% to 58%. Regarding coping strategies, the proportion of households adopting coping strategies rose from 60% to 80%. Begging has increased from 0% to 5% as a negative coping strategy. Moving to a poor quality shelter has also increased from 0% to 4%. A decrease was observed in people reporting that all their basic needs are covered and an increase in people reporting having debts.	
AOB	The ISWG interagency coordinator reminded members that the ISWG support options questionnaire link will remain open for participation and an anonymous feedback option is also.	

	Participants were invited to join the next meeting which will formalize the merging of the ISWG group with the Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods Working Group and will be chaired by UNICEF.	