Health Working Group HWG) Meeting
10 February 2023
1.30 – 2.30 PM (Zoom)

Meeting notes:
Chair, Ms. Popescu welcomed the participants to the first HWG meeting of 2023 and introduced Ms. Coonghe as Co-Chair temporarily covering, for Dr. Cassandra Butu (currently on medical leave).

Ms. Popescu made a presentation to the audience on the latest data on the Ukrainian refugee response data complied with the information received from the Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance House. She presented information on services, trends, and gaps in the provision of support to refugees.

UNICEF Health Specialist, Oana Motea, raised the point on administrative data reflecting only the public health services registered, which do not reflect the real image or needs and local practices. A note should be made on private sector and CSOs services.

The Chair introduced WHO’s Cultural Mediators to the HWG members. There are seven Cultural Mediators contracted by WHO through the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program and deployed them in five cities with a high number of refugees: Bucharest, Galați, Cluj, Târgu Mureș, and Brașov. The mediators work in WHO refugees clinics (2 clinics, one in Bucharest and one in Galati) and in GPs’ offices and in the wider community to facilitate communication between healthcare providers and refugees. Their work is focused on strengthened Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). They are Ukrainian speaking and have a background in medical, psychology or social research.

Each of the Cultural Mediators introduced themselves, their region and a summary of the activities they are undertaking.

Ms Oana Motea, Health Specialist (UNICEF), shared their organizational set up where they have Zone Coordinators (5) - Brasov/Sibiu, Bucuresti, Galati/Issacea, Iasi & Vaslui, Suceava. UNICEF and WHO to discuss coordination at a local level between Zone Coordinators and Cultural Mediators.

The Chair presented several plans of the WHO for 2023.

- WHO will be recruiting several County Coordinators to collaborate with Cultural Mediators, and requested the support of the HWG members to identify suitable candidates.
- With the engagement of the County Coordinators develop strong working collaboration at the county/sub regional level.
- Shared the Government of Romania’s plans to set up a call center with the support of the WHO and UN agencies, which is near operational. More information to follow to HWG members to promote this facility among their network.
- In terms of upcoming plans, led by UNHCR and with contribution by WHO, the Romania Refugee Response plan 2023 will be launched in mid-February in coordination with the Government of Romania.
• The HWG members discussed the unification of the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) working group and the MPSS working groups, and it was decided among members that the working groups will function separately and HWG monthly.

UNICEF Health representative proposed to schedule a joint WHO-UNICEF meeting with MoH led working group to solve outstanding issues on access to care for refugees.

The Chair requested the HWG members to share their key requests and information needs to call for a meeting with the MoH. Main issues raised are below:

Main issues:

1/ Registration - Registration by family doctors (FDs) is not solved; many family doctors are not interested, willing or refusing to care for UKR children and families; FDs are not reimbursed per capita, (ex. Children), health partners are difficulties in referring patients to FDs. Potential solution – automatic registration by GII of UKR persons in all national databases, including healthcare.

2/ Language - Ukrainian speaking interpreters are scarce and no national common database. Potential solutions: MoH to designate medical facilities to care for refugees in high density counties (ambulatories with good referrals to hospital and PHC; scheduled appointments; hired interpreters) which has the downside of creating a separate service; setting up a telephone interpretation service.

3/ Prescribing practices – Sometimes ERs are not issuing medicine prescriptions or medical papers requiring additional efforts from UKR patients or NGOs to be able to fill in the prescription or follow up on the treatment. Potential solution: raising the issue at the level of MoH and NHIH to reinforce this regulation. Hospitals are required by the contract signed with NHIH to issue patient related documentation. Establish complain channels.

4/ Referral mechanism - Ambulatories ask for referrals from FDs. Potential solution: NHIH issuing another information note to service providers & establish channels for complaints.

5/ Antenatal care services

6/ Data collection and reporting – NGOs and UN agencies supported FDs service provision which are not reflected and captured in the NHIH data shared with WHO. For example, WHO provided over 1,000 consultations in 2023 (1 Jan to 10 FEB), UNICEF provided over 16,000 health services in 2022 (including PHC consultations and specialized care) and many NGOs also help FDs to register patients. Another question was if WHO can ask NHIH to share disaggregated data for service utilization per age (adults vs minors).

Action points

• Schedule a meeting with MoH to discuss and solve issues raised by HWG partners
• Share WHO dashboard once finalized, note UNICEF team would like to provide feedback on the infographic;
• Next meeting is proposed for Wednesday, 15 March, starting at 1.30 PM

Participants:

WHO

Ms. Andreea Popescu, National Professional Officer (Chair)
Ms. Avanti Coonghe, Expert Communication, Data Management and Reporting (Co-Chair)
Dr. Vadym Zavatskyi, Expert in Data Management and Reporting - Refugee Relations Consultant
Dr. Nicola Morgan, Advisor
Mr. John Joseph Cordey, United Nations Volunteer
Ms. Andreea Georgiana Afumateanu, WHO coordinator and Clinic Manager, Romexpo
Ms. Nataliia Borodin, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Olena Koval, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Inna Kovalenko, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Irinia Mateescu, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Irena Kaskova, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Liliia Huzeieva, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Inna Biliaieva, Cultural Mediator
Ms. Oksana Liutak, Cultural Mediator

External:
Mihai Horga, NFPA
Adina Manea, Youth for Youth
Sylvia Burcea, Save the Children
Oana Motea, Health Specialist UNICEF
Raluca Zaharia, SBC Specialist UNICEF
Nela Stan, midwife WHO clinic Galati
Iris Ursea, Regina Maria Foundation
Diana Chiriacescu, FONSS
Florentina, FONSS
Marina Feher, UNV Galati/Isaccea UNICEF
Hourya Lekhal, Médecins du Monde - France
Interpreters: Anca Moldovan, Dana Timotin