

Moldova Refugee Coordination Forum

Meeting Minutes – 10 August 2023

1. Meeting Details

Date	10 August 2023
Time	15:00 - 17:00
Chair	Francesca Bonelli, Representative, UNHCR Diego Nardi, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, UNHCR
Reporting	Kyrylo Prykhodko, Inter-Agency Coordination Associate
Email	mdachrcf@unhcr.org

2. Agenda

- 15h00 – 15h05: Welcoming (Ms. Francesca Bonelli, UNHCR Representative)
- 15h00 - 15h15: Refugee Response Plan Updated - Mid Year Figures (IAC TEAM)
- 15h15 - 15h45: Temporary Protection Updates (RCF Sector Leads)
- 15h45 - 16h15: Plenary Discussion on Temporary Protection
- 16h15 - 16h30: Update - RAC Consolidation Process (Basic Needs and Protection WG)
- 16h30 - 16h45: Plenary Discussion on RAC Consolidation Process
- 16h45 - 16h55: Update on the 2023 Winterization Planning (IAC Team)
- 16h55 - 17h00: Wrap-up

3. Information collection and relevant links

Moldova operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>
 Local Refugee Coordination operational data portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/search?>
 Moldova Services Advisor Log in: [Services Advisor](#)
 Moldova Services Advisor Public view: <https://moldova.servicesadvisor.net/>
 Presentation delivered during the RCF Meeting: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102724>

4. Participants (Name, Position, Organization)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Sachiko Kumazawa, AAR Japan
- Athina Nalmpanti, ACTED
- Girleanu Andrei, ADRA
- Carvat Veronica, AO Casa Marioarei
- Vitalie, AO Platforma Robota
- Andrei Hincu, CARE&SERA Romanic
- Oleg Palii, CDA
- Iulia Gheorghies, CNPAC
- Tatiana Balta, Concordia P.S.
- Constanta Clavet, Concordia P.S.
- Davide Bernocchi, CRS
- Natalia Sorbala, Dorcas Moldova
- Alma Tabakovic, DRC
- Pippa Bown, FCDO
- Yulia Yanchevko, HELVETAS
- Andrei Curararu, HIAS MD
- Ross McDonald, IMPACT / REACH
- Bleita Mario, INTERSOS
- Christina Khown, INTERSOS
- Kunze Martin, Jugend Eine Welt
- Ludmila McLeoc, Keystone Moldova
- Rebecca Oswago, Medecins du Monde
- Irina Basiul, NCUM
- Rachel Fairhurst, NRC
- Corina Ovcearenco, Oxfam
- Ciocan Marin, Peace Winds Japan

Governmental Organizations

- Karima Hammadi, ECHO
- Vicente Palacios, ECHO
- Svetlana Bebic, ICRC
- Catarina Nilsson, Sweden Embassy

UN Agencies

- Selma Elkhawad, IOM
- Ersilia Apreda, IOM
- Martina Gastaldello, OHCHR
- Simon Springett, Resident Coordinator
- Severin Lilian, UNAIDS
- Diego N. Nardi, Refugee Coordination Forum
- Francesca Bonelli, UNHCR
- Andrew Painter, UNHCR
- Yurii Arnautov, UNHCR
- Yigit Gurer, UNHCR
- Monica Vazquez, UNHCR
- Catalina Sampaio, UNHCR
- Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR
- Iana Pituscan, UNHCR
- Kyrylo Prykhodko, UNHCR
- Hideaki Kojima, UNHCR
- Alberto Tonon, UNHCR/OHCHR
- Stas Dymkovkyy, UNICEF
- Flore Rossi, UNICEF
- Laura Fiorotto, UNRCO
- Giulia di Porcia, WHO
- Vitalii Stetsyk, WHO

- Lavrov Mihaela, Peace Winds Japan
- Reilean Denis, Peace Winds Japan
- Luciana Bollati, People in need
- Erica Zucec, Pestalozzi
- Lilia Nenescu, Platforma
- Veaceslav Mofricola, Project Hope
- Doina Cosfiu, Societatea Invalizilor din Republica Moldova
- Mircea Bustiuc, Societatea Invalizilor din Republica Moldova
- Cernioglo Ivan, Solidarites International
- Tatiana Zalaj, Terre des hommes Moldova
- Mihaela Ajder

5. Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
<p>Welcoming Remark</p> <p>Francesca Bonelli, Representative, UNHCR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Francesca Bonelli, the UNHCR Representative, commenced the meeting with welcoming remarks to express gratitude for the collective support provided by the attending organizations, acknowledging the presence of Mr. Simon Springett, Moldova UN Resident Coordinator. She acknowledged the value of the online format for the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) but emphasized the effectiveness of in-person meetings. She mentioned the intention to prioritize more in-person RCF meetings in the future. ● It was outlined that the ongoing transition from an emergency phase. Francesca quickly explained the three main focuses for the day's RCF discussions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporary Protection (TP): The importance of TP for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova was emphasized, especially in areas of access to healthcare, education, and the necessity of obtaining legal status. The efforts should be centered around finding effective solutions to address these aspects within the context of TP. 2. RAC Consolidation: The second focus involved consultations with the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Moldova and the general approach regarding the optimization 	

	<p>of the Refugee Accommodation Centers (RAC). Consolidation strategy for RACs was presented as the meeting point.</p> <p>3. Winterization Plan: The third focus pertained to the development of a winterization plan, ensuring that refugees and affected host community members are adequately prepared for the upcoming winter months. This plan aims to address essential needs and provisions to mitigate the challenges associated with winter conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francesca emphasized the importance of collaboration within the humanitarian nexus and encouraged participants to work hand in hand with development partners to ensure the well-being and rights of refugees. 	
<p>Refugee Response Plan Updated - Mid Year Figures (IAC TEAM)</p> <p>Diego Nardi, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, UNHCR</p> <p>nardid@unhcr.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diego Nardi (Inter-Agency Coordination Officer) provided an overview of the mid-year figures pertaining to the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) Inter-Agency efforts. The current funding coverage stands at 37% according to the available data since some partners had not reported their contributions in the refugee funding tracker, resulting in insufficient reflections of actual figures. In total, 117,000 refugees were assisted by humanitarian actors so far in 2023. • Yurii Arnautov (UNHCR) emphasized that, despite the inadequate representation in the funding tracker, more funding had been received according to the data available on the refugee funding tracker, which allows RRP partners to report their contributions. All organizations, whether RRP partners or not, are strongly encouraged to report their activities and achievements in Activity Info. At the moment, there are 75 partners in total reporting on AI, with the majority included in the RRP. However, non-RRP partners are also encouraged to report. UNHCR is ready to offer technical assistance to those requiring support with the tracker. The Q1 Inter-Agency report had been shared a month earlier. • Yigit Anil Gurer (UNHCR) delivered a presentation on the Cash Assistance Program (CBI), indicating that 52,000 refugees and over 5,700 Moldovan host families were benefiting from MPCA provided by partners, with the total amount of \$55 million distributed under this initiative. Discussions are ongoing regarding the specificities of Winterization 	<p>Partners are requested to reach-out to the Inter-Agency Coordination Team (mdachrcf@unhcr.org) in case they need further support or face challenges when reporting through Activity Info and/or Refugee Funding Tracker.</p>

	<p>assistance cash interventions, drawing from positive feedback from previous years' experience.</p>	
<p>Temporary Protection Updates (RCF Sector Leads)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Painter (UNHCR, Protection WG) delivered a presentation on developments regarding TP for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deadline is approaching on August 13th for refugees to register for TP, particularly for those who have spent more than 90 days in the country. There are approximately 109,000 refugees from Ukraine currently in the country, with over 50,000 receiving cash assistance. • As for the benchmark for TP application, the realistic target is at around 50,000 refugees receiving TP rather than the entire 109,000. As of 9 August, some 11,600 individuals had received TP status and over 7,000 had obtained residence permits. Additionally, some refugees are undergoing naturalization and acquiring other forms of legal status. • PWG have been conducting a survey of TP intentions and experiences among Ukrainian refugees. Of those surveyed after 15 May (when the 90-day clock to legalize status began), approximately 80% stated that they had either applied or planned to apply for TP. Early on, around 50% of refugees who said they did not plan to apply for TP cited as reasons uncertainties about remaining in Moldova. By July, none cited this as a reason for not applying, indicating they had made their decisions in this regard. Proof of residency remains to be a major barrier for those who have not applied for TP but wish to do so, as many landlords and property owners are unwilling to provide the necessary documentation. As well, despite the efforts of the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) in conducting an information campaign, there are still refugees, particularly in rural areas, who remain unaware of TP. • The Moldovan government's coordination bodies, including the Governmental Commission on Migration and Asylum, engaged in discussions with partners in Chisinau, Balti, and Ocnita to strategize on legalizing refugees and fostering TP efforts. The need to pay particular attention to refugees with disabilities and other vulnerable 	<p>Partners are requested to support with awareness raising activities on TP. Those interested can request information materials (posters, leaflets) by writing to the Inter-Agency Coordination Team (mdachrcf@unhcr.org)</p>

	<p>groups was raised by partners throughout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges identified in implementing TP include information dissemination, proof of residence, lack of awareness, mobile team schedules, challenges in Transnistria, unaccompanied and separated children, and refugees with disabilities. Further efforts are needed in outreach and continued advocacy. • Andrew concluded by addressing broader protection issues beyond TP, noting that refugees without legal status face obstacles in accessing services and may have difficulties re-entering the country if they leave. • A participant asked questions regarding TP as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Q] What is the status of advocacy concerning the limitation of TP, specifically the restriction preventing refugees from leaving the country for more than 45 days under TP. • [A] Refugees exceeding 45 days outside the country still have the opportunity to reapply for TP. Partners can advocate for a longer period of time to be outside the country as part of discussions around the possible extension of TP in March 2024. • Flore Rossi (UNICEF, Child Protection/Education Sub-WG) presented on child protection and education as follows:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UASCs are registered through the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) and guardianship authorities. Activities are ongoing to reach UASC, verify the lists and proceed to the registration. There is a need to c <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some challenges remain to register UASC in Transnistrian Region. Unregistered refugee children face difficulties in accessing basic services. • UNICEF, UNHCR and child protection actors are actively engaged in awareness-raising efforts among the government and civil society organizations to ensure children's access to services and rights. All children, whether registered or not, have the right to education, healthcare, and protection services. • On education, UNICEF, together with MER, launched a Back to School Campaign. 	
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- Tech labs are in the process of being set up in around 70 schools across different regions
- There is an urgent need for clarification from MER for caregivers and schools on the procedures to enroll children with and without TP.
- For partners, activities should focus on school based settings. Activities in community learning spaces can be set up after school support.

Challenges remain in tracking children accessing Ukrainian education online within Moldova.

- **Vitalii Stetsyk (WHO, Health WG)** presented on healthcare and TP:
 - TP is a prominent topic in Health WG as well and there is a lack of clarity among refugees and service providers regarding the free services package for TP holders. Public funding in the healthcare system is limited and it is important to quantify the gap.
 - TP Scope of service is limited to primary healthcare, emergency medical and surgical care, dialysis and emergency dental care. Health WG is currently conducting policy dialogue to understand the limitation of the current benefit package. Further activities are planned to revisit the package of benefits and look into the financial mechanisms to cover the package of service. Ongoing advocacy efforts are essential to ensure policies and procedures for refugees within the national healthcare system.
 - An awareness campaign is under development to help refugees understand the link between TP and healthcare services. Further communication efforts will be streamlined for the health services providers, ensuring the unified understanding of policies and practices for financial coverage of health benefits under TP. The Ministry of Healthcare is working on healthcare materials for the information campaign, which will be available soon. Partners are requested to support dissemination of the materials.
 - The next health WG meeting is scheduled for 16 August 2023, with key focus on TP implementation and its influence on access to healthcare among refugees.
- **Diego Nardi (Inter-Agency)** provided an update on employment and livelihood on behalf

	<p>of the Socio-Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods WG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government data indicates that 1,139 refugees are officially employed in Moldova, with TP being a swift pathway to employment. Many refugees still rely on humanitarian assistance and/or savings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to accessing the labour market and other livelihoods opportunities remain. In this regard, efforts are being made by the Livelihoods and Inclusion Working Group (LWIG) to increase livelihoods opportunities, including in identifying refugees' skills profiles that would enable better job matching and inclusion in the labour market. Continuous financial support for socioeconomic activities for the long term is crucial. • The advocacy points emphasized the role of TP in facilitating refugee employment in Moldova. 	
<p>15h45 - 16h15: Plenary Discussion on Temporary Protection</p>	<p><u>Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oleg Palii (CDA) suggested that medical services should encompass both TP holders and asylum seekers. • Lia Apreada (IOM) inquired about the availability of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services provided by the World Health Organization (WHO). • Karima Hammadi (ECHO) sought clarification on the healthcare package available under TP, particularly for refugees and refugee children with disabilities, and on the recognition of disability certificates issued in Ukraine within the Moldovan context. • Doina Cosfiu (Societatea Invalizilor din Republica Moldova) sought clarification on whether there exists clear statistical data at the national level regarding refugees with disabilities. • Vitalii Stetsyk (WHO, Health WG) confirmed that policy dialogue is in process to revisit the current list of TP services in line with WHO Global EHS compendium. WHO's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) update is scheduled for 16 August 2023. He clarified that disability certificates issued in Ukraine are recognized in Moldova until they expire, but more clarifications will be requested from the national experts on disability. He 	

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- **Alberto Tonon (OHCHR/UNHCR)** highlighted that Ukrainian refugees holding Moldovan disability certificates also face non-recognition in Ukraine, adding that ongoing efforts are being made by the Disability and Age Task force to address this issue. According to a study supported by UNHCR and a CDPD (Centrul pentru Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități) study, around 10% of refugees have a disability, while the data from cash assistance programs shows 7%. Information on disability from IGM is not yet available.

Child Protection and Education

- **Lia Apreda (IOM)** highlighted challenges faced by unaccompanied children in Transnistrian Region and requested insights into addressing these issues.
- **Kunze Martin (Jugend Eine Welt)** raised concerns about the capacity of Moldovan schools to absorb Ukrainian refugee children. During the initial year of the refugee crisis, the challenges were understandable given the emergency situation. However, he questioned whether Moldovan schools are currently equipped to handle the influx of refugee children.
- **Flore Rossi (UNICEF, Child Protection Sub-WG)** answered questions as follows:
 - UNICEF and UNHCR collaborate with CDA, CP actors and guardianship authorities on cases of unaccompanied and separated children, a topic that extends beyond the scope of TP-related discussions.
 - Various assessments are being conducted to identify barriers to enrolling refugee children in schools. She noted that school capacity does not appear to be a significant hurdle, and new tech labs are being established in schools. The Ministry of Education and Research has not disclosed the costs associated with accommodating refugee children in education facilities, but as soon as findings are available, they will be shared.

Legal



- **Martina Gastaldello (OHCHR)** asked how the extension of the Emergency State by the government might impact the legal status of refugees, particularly those seeking TP or other forms of legal recognition, and whether refugees under TP have access to family doctors and healthcare services.
- **Lia Apreda (IOM)** asked a question on potential simplification of the proof of residency process under TP, aiming to streamline administrative procedures.
- **Athina Nalmpanti (ACTED, Basic Needs WG)** pointed out a situation where a Moldovan mother with Ukrainian refugee children is facing challenges in obtaining TP, raising concerns about the Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) where refugees are accommodated.
- **Andrew Painter (UNHCR, Protection WG)** addressed queries as follows:
 - He shared insights from recent discussions between RCF partners and the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) regarding challenges with proof of residency under TP. UNHCR and partners proposed different options to simplify the proof of residence requirement, including self-declarations. To date, IGM's policy remained unchanged.
 - He clarified that the extension of the State of Emergency does not impact refugees' right to stay in Moldova, as the CES decision allowing refugees to remain in Moldova beyond 90 days was withdrawn in mid-May.
 - Regarding Ukrainians who are entitled to Moldovan citizenship, IGM has stated that they are not eligible for TP. The ability of these individuals to access/remain in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) is uncertain.

Fraud case

- **Lia Apreda (IOM)** from IOM inquired about cases of fraud or abuse against refugees, both related and unrelated to TP. She sought to understand whether there have been instances of mistreatment by landlords or any other parties.
- **Andrew Painter (UNHCR, Protection WG)** mentioned instances where landlords refused to provide proof of residence, hindering the legal status of refugees.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diego Nardi (Inter-Agency) added that women-led organizations have reported power dynamics between landlords and refugees, particularly concerning proof of residence. • Monica Vazquez (UNHCR, AAP TF) highlighted a concerning practice, where Moldovan nationals are offering to complete proof of residence documents, acting as landlords or property owners, for 1000 MDL, raising concerns about the conditions under which this is occurring. <p><u>Temporary Protection Fairs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diego Nardi (Inter-Agency) informed the participants about upcoming TP fairs and encouraged organizations to share their initiatives and efforts related to TP promotion and outreach. He highlighted the importance of collecting data to comprehensively gauge the scope of the ongoing campaign. <p><u>Summary of the discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Painter (UNHCR, Protection WG) summarized key points, emphasizing that refugees without TP lack access to major rights and services. There is no expectation that those failing to acquire a legal status will face removal procedures. If refugees without a formal legal status leave Moldova for Ukraine, though, and then seek to return, they may need to request asylum at the border to access the territory. 	
<p>16h15 to 16h30: Update - RAC Consolidation Process (Basic Needs and Protection WG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francesca Bonelli (UNHCR) provided an update on the topic of Refugee Accommodation Centers (RAC) consolidation. UNHCR is collaborating with both partners and the government to address this issue. While the number of people in RACs has decreased, it's important to recognize that the individuals remaining are vulnerable. An exit strategy has been put in place to manage this process. • Andrea Cuisana (UNHCR, Basic Needs WG) provided further explanations as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two assessments have been conducted since March, with the support of the Ministry of Social Protection. These assessments evaluated the cost-effectiveness and the approximate cost per person in RACs, which is around \$700 per month. Additionally, a 	

	<p>qualitative assessment was performed to identify protection concerns. A total of 53 RACs are currently operational and were divided into categories for short-term closure, mid-term closure, and long-term continuation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For 2023, 20 RACs have been identified for closure before the end of 2023, while others will remain operational until 2024. The closures are grouped into five categories. UNHCR had advocated for providing families with a two-month notice before the RAC closure, and efforts are made to offer alternative accommodation solutions, such as rental assistance by ACTED, IOM and CRS, or relocating individuals to another RAC. – The Basic Needs WG is actively engaged in these efforts, along with collaboration from Protection WG. Info sessions are conducted for RAC residents, and multifunctional teams have been established to support families in finding new homes. These teams includes representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, UNHCR, experts on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), legal counselors and rental assistance partners. – Andrew Painter (UNHCR, Protection WG) emphasized that the process of RAC closures is a complex process that requires careful consideration. In the past, RAC closures were often sudden. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are being developed to ensure that the closure process is as systematic as possible. UNHCR is working with partners who have long-standing involvement in RACs to ensure that the process is personalized and rights-sensitive. The focus is particularly on the vulnerable Roma community, older refugees, and individuals with disabilities. 	
<p>16h30 - 16h45: Plenary Discussion on RAC Consolidation Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selma Elkhawad [IOM] asked about the coordination regarding the closure of Refugee and Accommodation Centers (RACs) and how it would be operationalized, while Kunze Martin [Jugend Eine Welt] asked about plans in case of future emergency and additional needs of RAC capacity, and the situation concerning informal RACs. – Andrea (UNHCR, Basic Needs WG) provided answers as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Under the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), a Relocation Technical Group will be established to oversee the closure process, bringing together relevant sectors. A 	

	<p>contingency plan identifies certain buildings that have been renovated in case RAC capacity is needed again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As for informal RACs, a mapping is being done and there are plans for joint visits to these locations. 	
<p>16h45 - 16h55: Update on the 2023 Winterization Planning (IAC Team)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR Inter-Agency team explained the ongoing efforts of Winterization Planning as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UNHCR Cash-based intervention (CBI) team performed a rapid socio-economic assessment, where the data indicated that refugees had utilized the provided cash assistance effectively for winterization purposes, leading to a positive response during the previous winter. While acknowledging the importance of Non-Food Items distributions for the most vulnerable, the most preferred modality of winter support among refugees was the cash assistance. – Winterization Taskforce took into consideration a survey related to winterization conducted by ACTED and on international NGOs. Results are supporting the calculation of people in need together with data coming from Protection Monitoring, Rapid Socio-Economic Profiling and ongoing Winter Accommodation Survey. – Through the Local Refugee Coordination Forums (LRCFs), community infrastructures in diverse localities were identified, with a priority on 12 of them to facilitate the winterization process. – Sectors are asked to identify main activities and targets for winterization at sector levels, which shall guide organizations to outline their winter activities by the end of the month through Activity Info. – The government, through the parliament, would decide how to allocate vulnerability funds, with consideration for refugees' needs. 	<p>Sector leads will collaborate with partners to develop the sectoral winterization strategies. This will guide the submission of activities by partners through Activity Info in the last week of August or early September.</p>
<p>16h55 - 17h00: Wrap-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elena Chernicova (Laolalta) extended an invitation to all participants for Laolalta Back to School event scheduled for Saturday (12 August 2023). 	<p>As agreed with partners, RCF meetings will be held in person, while arrangements will be done to ensure online</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalina Sampaio (UNHCR) informed the attendees that TP Fairs would soon be organized in nine localities by UNHCR and the partners. She encouraged everyone to share information about these events with all the refugee communities possible. • Diego Nardi (Inter-Agency) reminded participants to reach out to UNHCR Inter-Agency team to obtain TP information materials. • Francesca Bonelli (UNHCR) expressed her gratitude to all participants and took the opportunity to acknowledge Karima Hammadi from ECO for her dedicated work and commitment to defending humanitarian principles. Although she would be leaving her position, her efforts were recognized and appreciated by the UNHCR and the Refugee Coordination Forum. 	<p>participation every other meeting.</p>
6. Details of the Next Meeting		
Date	TBC	
Time	TBC	
Venue	TBC	