Meeting subject: Moldova Protection Working Group Meeting

Time & location: 16 March 2022

Chaired by: Alice Farmer, UNHCR, Senior Protection Coordinator

Participants: AVE Copii, Caritas, CERI, CNPAC, CRS, DFID, ECHO, Faros Elpidas, UK FCDO, HelpAge, HI, IOM, IsraAid, Keystone, LCA, Motivatie, NRC, OHCHR, Palladium, PPFC, SDC, Tdh, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNWomen, USAID, War Child, Weword

AGENDA

1. Operational Updates
2. Discussion on gaps
3. Discussion on joint tasks

AGENDA POINT | DISCUSSION
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1 | **Operational Updates**
**Green corridor**
UNHCR – A train from Causeni-Chisinau-Iasi was used within the Green Corridor; however, currently the transfers are conducted with busses from Palanca to Iasi or to Husi in Romania. There is a need for stronger coordination on people being transferred especially with regard to adequate vulnerability screening and identification of people in need. UNHCR wants to inform colleagues in Romania to help the preparations across the border.
CP and Blue Dots
UNHCR – The Child Protection SWG will have its first meeting on 16 March at 16:00. The Blue Dots (BDs) established in collaboration with UNHCR, and UNICEF are up and running. An initial concept note on BDs is coming up.
**Trends on border crossings**
LCA observed an increase in the number of persons with specific needs and older persons entering Moldova. 90% of the refugees express willingness to transit Moldova and reach an EU country. Half of those remaining in Moldova don’t have an idea of their future options. The other half wants to integrate, find employment, and enroll their children in schools. The arrival of single mothers with children continues, persons with severe medical conditions, children at risk, unaccompanied and separated children cases were observed. Yesterday, the Guardianship Authority had an intervention for an unaccompanied child. At the Romanian border, the same categories of cases are observed. The main destinations of refugees
are Germany, Poland, Czech Republic. Some also expressed willingness to go to the USA, Canada, and Australia. There is an increase in the returns to Ukraine, due to the lowered security risks in Odesa. In fear of losing their jobs, some Ukrainians prefer to return to their country. Some Ukrainian women are commuting between Ukraine and Moldova for fuel and grocery shopping in Moldova. An evacuation mission was conducted in Nikolaev; hence, the majority of the people approaching Palanca were from that region. Refugee accommodation center monitoring of LCA shows that there is an increase in the number of persons willing to stay in Moldova. Some members of the Roma community were observed to use one birth certificate to cross many children into Moldova. Trafficking risk is present and cases of child loss were reported.

**Border Monitoring**

**OHCHR** – Mirnoe and Vulcaniest Border Gates, which have few crossings, were visited. The Head of the Border Police expects overnight attacks, and these border gates are not prepared for a high number of entries. There is only a tent, and the services are based on volunteers, whose number is not consistent. The distance between the Ukrainian and Moldovan border gates in Vulcaniest is 3 km, which is a long walking distance. The Vulcaniest Border Gate is ill-equipped and slow. According to the Border Police, Frontex will deploy 2 employees in Criva, Otaci, Palanca and Tudora to look into trafficking and child risks. Border Police also asked for information about the disaggregated data collection models used in other countries.

**Updates on Palanca**

**UNHCR** – Significant improvement has been observed at the Border Gate and the bus station compared to the early days of the refugee crisis. The queue in front of the gate and the waiting period for buses is reduced. UNHCR in partnership with INTERSOS and Acted, installed heaters, information desks, and organized buses from Palanca to Chisinau and Husi. The Blue Dot tents are operational providing child-friendly and nursing spaces for the refugees. Food distribution by faith-based organizations is also available. UNHCR will provide wheelchairs to border locations including Palanca, and 5 containers are expected to be placed at the bus station site.

**Transfers**

**UNHCR** - Approximately 10,000 individuals’ transfer to the receiving EU countries is planned. UNHCR is rapidly identifying vulnerable people in a protection-sensitive manner.

| 2 |

**Discussion on gaps**

**Trafficking**

**UNHCR** - Prevention, risk mitigation, and response activities are needed for victims of trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation. Counselling at the reception facilities, monitoring, identification, and establishment of referral pathways are key considerations. At the regional level, UNHCR is working on ‘Stay Safe’ campaign which will be shared via social media to raise awareness on risk factors. At the national level, UNHCR is adjusting the available information materials to the situation. An ad hoc meeting on trafficking is planned in the coming days. UNHCR will flag the disability-friendly information sharing and inclusion of Roma language aspects in the material preparation process.
Inter-Agency Coordination
Moldova

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<th>IOM – A functioning referral mechanism is in place and there are available information materials prepared by La Strada. IOM will share them with UNHCR. UNODC is working on the criminal aspect of it and is the preparation of a new program to assess the trafficking aspect of the refugee movement.</th>
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<td>Disability</td>
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<td>Keystone Moldova – 7/24 hotline for persons with disabilities (PWDs) is available which can be used by the refugees. Registration is a big challenge. The number of persons with disabilities, disability types, and needs are not known. The majority of them are hosted by families. Placement of PWDs to refugee accommodation centers is not a good option. Medication for persons with chronic diseases (such as diabetes and cancer) is needed. Special nutrition and assistive devices are needed for certain cases. There are only 2 PWD-friendly vehicles in Moldova. Hygiene kits and diapers are needed. A sub-working group on disabilities is needed. A community center was renovated for PWDs and now it is used for mothers with children.</td>
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<td>SDC – Switzerland can finance NGOs to provide disability-friendly latrines and showers or to renovate the available ones in a disability-friendly way.</td>
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<td>UNHCR – The organizations willing to join the prospective Disability &amp; Inclusion Task Force may fill out the Disability TF tab on this link: <a href="https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sOB_1185E54CNeDVNVgVmG0aopXcEAqb/edit#gid=612452913">https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sOB_1185E54CNeDVNVgVmG0aopXcEAqb/edit#gid=612452913</a></td>
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<td>Other gaps</td>
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<td>UNHCR - MHPSS and mine risk education are also gaps to be considered.</td>
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<td>UNHCR – Under the PWG, UNHCR suggests the establishment of (1) data collection, (2) referral pathways and (3) PWG workplan task forces (TF). Under the umbrella of accountability to affected persons and to prevent assessment fatigue on refugees and authorities, UNHCR proposes to coordinate data collection with other actors. The organizations willing to join this effort are welcome to a meeting dedicated to this topic. The referral pathways TF will create a referral pathway for the Protection sector, while the PWG workplan TF will determine and prioritize the topics to be discussed at PWG meetings. Please use the PWG Task Forces tab in the following link to join the relevant TFs: <a href="https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sOB_1185E54CNeDVNVgVmG0aopXcEAqb/edit#gid=1954892806">https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sOB_1185E54CNeDVNVgVmG0aopXcEAqb/edit#gid=1954892806</a></td>
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