Platforma pentru Egalitate de Gen
ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

UN WOMEN

Photo credit: UN Women

IN BRIEF

MOLDOVA GENDER TASK FORCE FOR THE UKRAINE REFUGEE RESPONSE: 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Gender Task Force (hereafter referred to as GTF) is a network of actors working to mainstream gender[1] across the Moldova refugee response with the aim of ensuring that all persons in the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) affected by the Ukrainian refugee crisis, have equitable access to quality and targeted humanitarian assistance, and can meaningfully participate in an equitable, effective, and efficient response.

The GTF operates under the framework of the Refugee Coordination Forum led by the Government of Moldova and UNHCR in line with the Refugee Coordination Model, which provides the overarching framework for humanitarian coordination. Humanitarian actors have an obligation to promote gender equality through humanitarian actions in line with the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 'Gender Equality Policy Statement' (2008), the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action (2024), UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy (2019), the Agenda for Humanity from the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), and the Grand Bargain. Humanitarian actors also have an obligation to support women's and girls' protection, participation and empowerment through targeted actions, as articulated in the Women, Peace and Security thematic agenda as outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The Annual Report aims to take stock of the results achieved by the GTF, show the impact that individual GTF members and the collective made on the response, acknowledge gaps and identify how to best focus shared efforts moving forward.

STRUCTURE

The Task Force has been established in April 2022 and is co-chaired by UN Women and the Platform for Gender Equality[2] under the framework of the Refugee Coordination Forum and comprises representatives from Government, UN, INGOS and local women's organizations, including grassroots. It serves as a platform to discuss gender-related issues and considerations in the refugee response and has been active in the areas of coordination, technical support, capacity development, and information sharing as a cross-sector task force under refugee response architecture in Moldova.

VISION

Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity affected by the Ukraine refugee crisis in Moldova have equitable access to and benefit from humanitarian relief, services and information, specifically the most marginalized and at heightened risk groups.

MISSION

To strengthen accountability on mainstreaming gender in the refugee response, by ensuring that humanitarian actors understand and address the different needs, priorities and capacities of affected refugees and host community populations of all genders, ages and diversities,including the most marginalized population groups

1 References to gender, where not already explicit, is understood to refer to intersectional gender, which recognizes that people's lives shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors i.e. to include age, disability and other forms of diversity relevant to the context, such as member of a minority group, GBTQIA+ persons, etc.

2 The Platform for Gender Equality is a voluntary association of gender activists and women's rights organizations that act as a unified voice for active promotion of gender equality, improving the legal framework and ensuring its proper implementation. The platform was launched in 2015 and has currently 51 members.

and those at heightened risk[3], when designing, planning, costing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the refugee response efforts. This includes ensuring that the strengths, capacities and expertise, of refugees and host communities – including women and girls – as well as women-led organizations, are factored in protection responses, participation, decision-making and leadership structures through meaningful participation and active engagement.

This Year in Review highlights the accomplishments achieved by the GTF, acknowledges impact and outlines challenges and ways forward.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

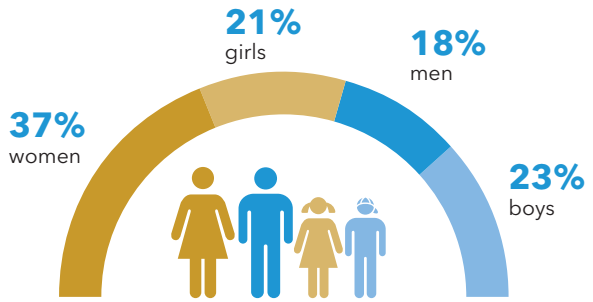
974,151 REFUGEES

Have fled Ukraine into Moldova since late February 2022

113,183 REFUGEES

have chosen to stay in Moldova as of November 2023

(ca. 4,3% of Moldovan's total population[4])



46% REFUGEES are under the age of 18 years

10% REFUGEES are persons with disabilities, although the estimated value is at 16%[5]

32,269 INDIVIDUALS

have received Temporary Protection

180,000 INDIVIDUALS

from host communities affected[6]

2% REFUGEES

2,256 refugees are accommodated in Refugee Accommodation Centers

98% REFUGEES

staying in private accommodation including with host communities

3 Including unaccompanied and separated children; persons with serious health conditions; persons with special legal or physical protection needs; single women; women-headed households; older persons; persons with disabilities; and persons of diverse sex, sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQIA+ individuals).

4 https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/248?sv=0&geo=680

5 https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/republic-moldova-needs-assessment-ukrainian-refugees-disabilities-january-2023

6 https://data.unhcr.org/ar/dataviz/276?sv=0&geo=0

AREAS OF ACTION

1. COORDINATION

Objective:

Increased coordination on gender in humanitarian action with relevant stakeholders including addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, economic resilience and localization.

Key results:

- **Continued facilitation of** coordination meetings[7] that served as platform for information exchange on situational updates, presentation of assessments and projects, discussion on strategies for advocacy efforts in gender mainstreaming across sectors and the response. Additionally, participation and engagement of GTF members in other working groups (WGs) and Task Forces (TFs), including Protection WG, Gender-based Violence (GBV) SWG, Inclusion and Livelihoods WG, Information Management WG, Cash WG, Education WG, Roma TF, Disability and Age TF, change psea to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) TF, as well as in the Regional Gender Task Force enhanced coordination on gender in humanitarian action.

- Created **space for dialogue for women organizations** around gender issues within the frames of the GTF and channeled refugee women and girls' voices in the refugee response. Facilitated dedicated consultations with 45 local women organizations to promote community-driven solutions and localization of the response in view of formulation of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2024.

- Facilitated **inclusion and participation of refugee women** and channeled their perspectives into local coordination meetings through contracting of three refugee women coordinators in Balti (North region), Cahul (South region) and Ungheni (West region) to support local change CSOs to civil society organizations (CSOs) and refugee communities in their regions, as well as participate in the Local Refugee Coordination Forums.

- Ensured **regular engagement and information sharing** with Protection WG, GBV SWG, Inclusion and Livelihoods WG, Information Management WG, Cash WG, Education WG, Roma TF, Disability and Age TF and PSEA TF to mainstream gender and diversity throughout the response. In addition, provided regular communication in three languages[8] to members of GTF, 51 members of the Platform for Gender Equality and circa 200 organizations across the country identified as the results of the CSO mapping and ensured timely publication of relevant GTF documents on the Operational Data Portal.

7 In 2023, GTF organized 6 ordinary meetings.

8 Romanian, Russian, English

2. TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Objective:

Increased technical support and capacity building for relevant stakeholders on gender in humanitarian action including through attention to humanitarian-development-peace nexus, economic resilience and localization.

Key results:

- Provided **technical support** across sectors to mainstream gender and increase the gender-sensitivity of RRP planning tools, assessments, and gender knowledge products, including but not limited to inputs for socio-economic assessment, Refugee Accommodation Centre monitoring assessment, in-depth educational assessment, area-based assessment, multi-sectoral needs assessment, temporary protection survey, SADDD factsheet, support for integration of gender in RRP sector narratives and plans, and review of the RRP narrative from the gender perspective.
- Delivered **capacity building** to a varied profile[9] of 233 humanitarian actors (195 women, 37 men, 1 intersex) from north, south, center and Transnistrian regions through comprehensive trainings and awareness-raising sessions, increasing their knowledge, and strengthening understanding of gender equality in humanitarian action, including but not limited to intersectionality, gender equality programming, collection and analysis of Sex, Age, Disability Disaggregated Data (SADDD), GBV and PSEA.

3. ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Objective:

Increased advocacy, communication and knowledge building on gender in humanitarian action including through focus on humanitarian-development-peace nexus, economic resilience and localization.

Key results:

- Elaborated and socialized specific **evidence, data, and gender analysis** to inform the development of RRP2024 and related strategies, incorporate the insights of refugee women and women's organizations thereto, and ensure that they address gender-specific needs and promote equity and inclusiveness: Gender and Diversity Assessment of Refugees from Ukraine in Moldova After One Year of Forced Displacement, comprehensive set of overarching and sector-specific recommendations for winterizations strategy, comprehensive report on consultations with refugee women and women organizations for RRP2024.
- Regularly **advocated for the collection and use of Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated Data** in WGs and TFs to ensure visibility of diverse populations and ensure effective, equitable and inclusive programming.
- In addition, the GTF in collaboration with the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) conducted a comprehensive Mapping of Local CSOs in Refugee Response with the specific focus on women's organizations to highlight their significant contribution in the refugee response, provide recommendations and advocate for targeted support.
- In collaboration with the RCF produced a localized Gender in Humanitarian Action Accountability Framework Report to strengthen accountability to gender equality commitments in the refugee response in Moldova, to inform the RRP2024 planning efforts, to feed into global monitoring efforts, as well as to showcase best practices and provide recommendations for improvements.
- Continued to **engage with donors and share funding opportunities** for local CSOs across all information channels.

KEY TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE GTF IN 2023[10]

- **Women voices and perspectives:** Refugee women from Soroca, Ungheni, Balti and Cahul, as well as representatives of women organizations regularly presented refugee women and girls challenges in humanitarian action and main priorities for gender-sensitive refugee response. Among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups were mentioned women with disabilities and their caregivers, Roma women, women with more than three children and/or infants, pregnant women, single mothers, older women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. The issues span across challenges in housing related to closure of Refugee Accommodation Centres and reluctance of landlords to provide accommodate Roma families and families with many children, difficulties in enrolling children in schools and kindergartens, barriers to internet access for online education, lack of childcare, challenges in obtaining employment, unofficial employment, limited healthcare, verbal aggression and limited access to information in rural areas. The discussions also highlighted the importance of support tailored to the specific needs.
- **Gender-sensitive refugee response initiatives:** Experience of Gender Centru in provision of gender-responsive leadership project "Women Leaders for Peace Academy" for refugee women, experience of Institutum Virtutes Civilis in enhancement of public-private partnership for efficient refugee response in Moldova, and experience of National Association of Companies in IT Sector in provision of gender-sensitive livelihood opportunities to refugee women and women from the host community.

9 Including local and international CSOs, UN agencies, local government.

10 Minutes of Meetings can be seen here: https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/341?sv=0&geo=680

- **Data and evidence:**
  - Presentations of Gender and Diversity Assessment of Refugees from Ukraine in Moldova After One Year of Forced Displacement,
  - Regional Gender Brief: Livelihoods and access to work of refugees from Ukraine in neighboring host countries,
  - Mapping of CSO in Refugee Response, Report on Consultations with Women Organizations and Refugee Women for RRP24,
  - Gender Accountability Framework Report for 2023.
- **Updates and presentations from sectors and operating agencies** on Temporary Protection, RAC consolidation, data disaggregation, gendered disinformation, cash policy update, Gender in Humanitarian Action trainings, validation workshop for mapping of GBV services in the refugee response.

GTF PERFORMANCE

In early 2024, the GTF initiated a survey among its members[11] to collect feedback, assess its performance, pinpoint areas for improvement, and align its activities with the changing needs and priorities of both its members and the ongoing refugee response efforts.

Respondents generally perceived the GTF as effective in promoting gender-sensitive humanitarian response[12]. They primarily attended GTF meetings to stay updated on gender mainstreaming and developments in the refugee response[13]. Meetings were found relevant and useful[14], contributing to effective coordination among GTF members and other stakeholders[15]. The technical support on gender mainstreaming provided to humanitarian actors, particularly in the area of advocacy for and collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD), was deemed successful[16]. Moreover, advocacy and information-sharing efforts were also well-received, especially in view of creation of spaces for dialogue and elaboration of gender analysis, facilitating better understanding of gender mainstreaming principles across various organizations involved in the refugee response[17].

Members of the GTF put forward several recommendations aimed at enhancing its effectiveness and impact as follows:

- Begin meetings with a brief orientation for new members, clearly articulating the meeting's specific objectives and how they differ from other working groups and provide guidance on how new members can actively participate. Additionally, limit presentations to a maximum of ten minutes to allow for more interactive discussions, and regularly summarize action items.
- Regularly channel refugee women's voices and perspectives from the capital and regions to illustrate specific challenges and issues that happened since the last meeting and require attention.
- Develop a common annual work plan with shared responsibilities among GTF members to improve collaboration and streamline efforts.
- Provide trainings on gender equality for new members and ongoing capacity-building for the existing members. Expand the range of training topics to include areas such as legal literacy, emotional and mental health, and communication skills.
- Strengthen coordination with other Working Groups and Task Forces, particularly the Roma TF and the PSEA Network.
- Increase engagement with local and grassroots organizations, particularly with grassroots women and LGBTQIA+ organizations, to promote inclusivity within the GTF.
- Ensure consistency with broader developments within the refugee response, such as focusing more on the full integration of refugees and livelihood support.
- Advocate for greater consideration of gender in sector analysis and assessments, increase documentation efforts, and facilitate the sharing of lessons learned among GTF members to foster continuous improvement and knowledge exchange[18].
- Ensure translation of GTF-related documents to Russian.

11 Profile of respondents (9) included representatives from International NGO (4 persons, 44,4%), local NGO (2 persons, 22,2%), Government (2 persons, 22,2%) and independent expert (1 person, 11.1%), mainly representing Director or Head of Organization (44,4%) or Gender Focal Point (33,3%).

12 All respondents believe that the GTF effectively (44,4% very effectively, 55,6% somewhat effectively) promotes a gender sensitive humanitarian response.

13 Main reasons for participation: receive information on gender mainstreaming in the refugee response (55,6%), contribute with gender mainstreaming expertise (22,2%), and flag gender mainstreaming issues from the ground (11,1%).

14 55,6% found the meetings useful for their work, 44,4% found them partially useful but with potential for improvement, 11,1% potentially useful but with substantial improvements.

15 Coordination among GTF members and with other task forces and working groups was deemed successful at a rate of 77.78%, coordination with local civil society organizations and women-led organizations at 66.67%, and coordination with government actors at 33.33%.

16 Technical support to sectors on advocacy for and collection of SADDD was rated successful at 88.89%, on gender mainstreaming, including in assessments and analysis, capacity building on Gender in Humanitarian Action and documentation and dissemination of good practices at the rate of 77.78%.

17 Elaboration of gender analysis and creation of spaces for dialogue were rated successful at 77.78%, mainstreaming gender analysis into sector products at 66.67% and joint GTF advocacy campaigns at 55.56%.

18 Only 56% of respondents reported satisfaction with the GTF's achievement in coordinating joint advocacy campaigns.

PRIORITIES FOR 2024

As the Refugee Response and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia progress into their third year, the GTF remains committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls within the Moldovan Refugee Response. Collaborating closely with working groups, RRP partners, and local and national organizations, the GTF will continue to address and advocate for the specific needs and challenges faced by women and girls in the response efforts, ensuring their empowerment throughout the process. By persisting in this approach, the GTF continues its efforts toward the overarching goal of enabling all refugees as well as affected host community to access basic needs, services, livelihood opportunities and information equitably and effectively, while upholding and promoting fundamental human rights.

FUNDING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

The funding gaps for 2024 mirror those of 2023 and include the need for flexible funding to support women's organizations in delivering gender-responsive programs within refugee response efforts. Additionally, dedicated funding is required for coordination of gender equality in humanitarian action, gender expertise, capacity building in Gender in Humanitarian Action, as well as for gender and diversity analysis.

ACTIVE GTF MEMBERS 2023

In 2023, the GTF saw active participation of a diverse array of stakeholders. These stakeholders included refugee women and representatives from governmental bodies, international and local non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, as well as UN agencies[19]:

Afina, ATIC, Baştină Frasinesti, Biaz Gul, CALM, Church World Service, Danish Refugee Council, Gender Centru, HelgAge, Helmut Wolf, IMPACT Initiatives, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Institutum Virtutes Civilis, INTERSOS, IOM, Keystone Moldova, Laolalta, Memoria, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Moldova Pentru Pace, Motivatie, OHCHR, Onoarea şi Dreptul Femeii Contemporane, Project Hope, REACH, ROMNI, Tandemediation, Ukrainians in Soroca, UNDP, UNHCR, UN Volunteer Local Coordinators, UNPRPD, Vivere, VOICE, WFP, WHO, WeWorld, Women for Women, Women Political Club 50/50, Youth One World.

Their involvement in the GTF meetings contributed to a rich exchange of information, experiences, and perspectives, enhancing the collaborative efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the refugee response in Moldova.

19 This list comprises organizations mentioned by participants during the meetings and may not encompass all organizations that were present.

Photo credit: Platform for Gender Equality

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