Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

Terms of Reference for the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Working Group
Refugee Coordination Forum Moldova
January 2025

I. Background

Since 24 February 2022, when the Ukrainian conflict began, Moldova has received over 1,236,350[1] refugees, with the majority traveling directly onwards to other destinations in Europe. By 31 December 2024, 135,861 refugees had remained in Moldova, of whom 59% are women and girls[2]. Considering its own population size[3], Moldova hosts the highest number of refugees per capita.

The risks of multiple forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) increase in conflict and refugee settings, with women and girls disproportionately affected by displacement. According to a GBV Safety Audit conducted by the GBV sub-sector in 2024, risks of GBV remain in Moldova, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, street harassment, and technology-facilitated GBV. Trafficking risks persist in the country and mostly affect women from the Roma community.[4] Adolescent girls, Roma women, women with disabilities and sex workers face disproportionate risks. Potential decrease in humanitarian assistance, uncertainty about the future in Moldova, risks related to unsafe conditions in accommodation, reduced ability to meet basic needs, separation from protective networks, and limited access to protection support, significantly impact women's safety and wellbeing. Although information about GBV services is usually available and accessible for refugees, GBV survivors continue to face barriers, mainly due to stigma and fear of exposure and lack of confidentiality when seeking services. Institutional barriers often result in procedures that are not survivor-centred, hampering women's access to life-saving information and services.[5]

Recent audits, assessments and studies highlighted a few recommendations:

- Diversification of safe and confidential entry points for GBV survivors, in for at-risk groups.
- GBV risk mitigation measures should include training on GBV safe referrals.
- Adolescent girls, persons with disabilities and members of the Roma community face heightened risks requiring tailored approaches.
- Ad-hoc and broader GBV safety audits are needed to ensure the proactive engagement of all stakeholders for the efficient establishment of risk mitigation measures.

II. Coordination modality

The GBV sub-working group functions under the coordination framework of the Refugee Coordination Forum, specifically under the Protection Working Group.

Objective

The GBV sub-working group aims to ensure a coherent, coordinated, and effective GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response approach through the mobilization of relevant government agencies, civil-society organizations (CSOs) and networks, international organizations, UN Agencies, national refugee-led organizations, and refugee women-led organizations. The GBV sub-working group will deliver on the six core functions of GBV coordination: support

[1] UNHCR Operational Data Portal Daily Population Trends - Republic of Moldova, data as of 31 December 2024.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Total population of 2,620,495 in 2020
[4] GBV Sub-Working Group: 2024 GBV Safety Audit Moldova
[5] Barriers to the Disclosure of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

service delivery, inform high-level humanitarian decision-making, develop and implement strategies, monitor and evaluation, capacity sharing, preparedness and contingency planning, and advocacy.

The GBV sub-working group develops and implements the GBV workplan and ensures the integration of GBV into the Refugee Response Plan (RRP).

Guiding Principles and Approaches

The members of the GBV sub-working group are guided by and must adhere to GBV guiding principles[6]:

- **Respect** by treating survivors with dignity, ensuring their participation, and respecting their decisions.
- **Confidentiality** by respecting survivors' right to privacy and ensuring that any information about them should only be shared with their informed consent, and in line with data protection principles.
- **Safety** of the survivor and others, such as her/his children and people who have assisted her/him, being of primary concern at all times.
- **Non-discrimination** by treating everyone based on their needs alone.

III. Core Functions[7]

Responsibilities of GBV SWG members include but are not limited to:

Coordination platform, Assessment, Decision, and Planning processes

- Provide a platform for sharing information, coordination, and support on activities, gaps, and immediate needs.
- Coordinate GBV activities and act as an advisory body for all newly initiated and ongoing GBV activities to ensure complementary programming and avoid duplication.
- Conduct specific GBV needs assessments, gap analysis and safety audits to inform priorities and identify gaps, including in service delivery, engage in field missions, and ensure inclusion of GBV considerations in planning and implementation of interagency assessments.
- Liaise with relevant working groups and other bodies to ensure that GBV issues are integrated into their strategies and programming.
- Inform higher-level decision-making and contribute to planning processes, such as the RRP.
- Ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed during planning, policy development, and programming.
- Liaise with task-forces to ensure the inclusion of GBV into other actors' strategies and activities.

Prevention and response

- Conduct regular service mapping of national and local actors engaged in the GBV response.
- Establish and update GBV referral pathways.
- Advocate for safe and ethical collection, management, and dissemination of case management data according to global GBV information management standards, including establishing Information-Sharing protocols (ISPs).
- Provide technical guidance to partners to ensure a case management system in line with standards is in place to enable GBV and SEA survivors to access services that address their physical, emotional, psychological, social, legal, and protection needs.

[6] GBV Minimum Standards, supra note 15, pp. xi; 2-9

[7] At the onset of an emergency, TORs may focus on urgent responsibilities and can be reviewed after six months.

- Develop and update communication materials to ensure access to information
- Coordinate awareness-raising and information-sharing activities on GBV.
- Promote and coordinate GBV prevention activities.
- Support monitoring and evaluation frameworks for GBV prevention and response.

Capacity Development and Technical Guidance

- Assist in providing and creating relevant tools.
- Provide technical support, guidance, and training on GBV, focusing on national and local capacity, in line with localization priorities.

Advocacy

- Collect and raise GBV issues and trends regularly to inform the GBV sub-working group advocacy strategy.
- Advocate for designated funding for GBV, including planning joint advocacy activities.
- Develop and disseminate key advocacy messages on GBV.
- Deliver systematic leadership on GBV in strategic decision-making and advocacy fora at all levels by coordinating with different partners, including donors and government counterparts, to ensure that GBV services are recognized as life-saving and prioritized in funding decisions and response planning.

IV. Response strategy and priorities

Engagement with the government, women-led organizations and localization of the GBV response

The Government of Moldova has proactively worked to improve its GBV system to include refugees across interventions. The National GBV Programme, its Action Plan, and the establishment of the National Agency to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, along with several commitments made at the national and international level, including a GBV pledge at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2023, are some examples. The role of the GBV Sub-Sector in 2025 consists in enhancing the engagement of key government GBV stakeholders in refugee issues to allow for a sustainable transition as well as full ownership and advocacy capacity.

Women-led Organizations (WLOs) have been actively involved in GBV service provision and capacity building since the onset of the response, adapting and scaling up their programmes and activities to meet the needs of refugees. Furthermore, WLOs have been key partners at advocating for refugee issues at all levels. Much of the focus of the GBV sub-sector has been strengthening coordination and collaboration with WLOs, including by capacity sharing and through small grants to improve their internal systems aiming at the sustainability of their programmes and projects.

Continued coordination for GBV prevention and response

The GBV sub-working group will continue coordinating GBV prevention and response programmes to aiming at quality and impactful interventions, and comprehensive geographical coverage. Seeking to ensure complementary and avoid overlapping of activities and service provision, the GBV sub-working group is a participatory platform, where partners can understand who is doing what and where. This will create synergy and further impact, addressing gaps for life-saving service provision. The GBV sub-working group is also a space for sharing good practices and capacity, and for gathering tools and resources that can support partners implement their projects in line with GBV standards.

GBV risk mitigation

Proactive coordination with other sectors on GBV risk mitigation will remain a priority of the GBV sub-sector. This has been a key area of intervention since the beginning of the response, and major efforts from partners across sectors has been made to reduce risks of GBV and SEA, including information sharing, safety audits, visits to accommodation centres, and development of tools that identify GBV-related risks, among others. These activities will continue given their life-saving impact. Several trainings and practice-oriented workshops were conducted on GBV risk mitigation and more are planned, as these have been fruitful spaces for coordination and risk reduction.

V. GBV sub-working group structure

Leadership Arrangement

The GBV sub-working group has a co-leadership structure of UNHCR and UNFPA, with the active engagement of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the National Agency to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. UNHCR, as the global lead on coordination in refugee settings, is responsible for supporting the GBV sub-sector in line with the refugee coordination model, and UNFPA as the global lead of the GBV Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) is responsible for providing technical guidance on GBV. The co-chairs will oversee the development, endorsement, and implementation of the GBV Workplan, ensure close and effective collaboration with other working groups, and represent the sector at the Protection working group.

Secretariat

The co-chairs will jointly serve as the secretariat for the sub-working group. The co-chairs will agree on a division of labour in providing secretarial support and in the implementation of coordination work of the GBV sub-working group. Both UNHCR and UNFPA will appoint/designate staff to undertake or support the coordination structure.

Membership

Membership is recognized for each organization that has formally expressed interest to join the GBV sub-working group and that follows GBV guiding principles. Membership is open to all government counterparts and organizations working on prevention and response to GBV. National NGOs and local organizations, in particular those led by women and refugees, are encouraged to actively participate on it. Member organizations should identify primary and alternate focal points who will attend the meetings. Other sectors should appoint focal points to coordinate with the sub-sector to ensure that risk mitigation measures are integrated into their programming.

VI. Arrangements of meetings

The GBV SWG will meet on a bi-monthly basis on a hybrid modality (online/in person). “Ad hoc” meetings may be called by the co-chairs, or at the request of other members of the GBV SWG, when necessary to address urgent issues. A draft agenda will be circulated to members at least one day in advance, giving the members the opportunity to suggest additional agenda items. Draft minutes of meetings will be circulated within five days of the meeting.

VII. Amendments

These Terms of Reference are a working document and may be altered to meet the emerging needs of all members by the agreement of the majority of the members. It is recommended to be reviewed every six months.

For further information regarding the GBV sub-working group please contact:
Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR - bordin@unhcr.org
Violeta Terguta, UNFPA - terguta@unfpa.org