The Child Protection Sub-Working Group
For coordination of child protection issues for the refugee response in Moldova

Terms of Reference: 2025

Background:
Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022, a large-scale movement of people, mostly women and children, has taken place towards neighboring countries, including the Republic of Moldova. Currently, children comprise approximately 42% of the refugee population living in Moldova. Children and their families require access to basic services and medical care, as well as systematic protection services including addressing gender-based violence, violence against children and access to psychosocial care. Key child protection considerations include safeguarding of unaccompanied and separated children and support to children with disabilities and children from the Roma community. Children and female caregivers have also experienced or witnessed violence and the stress and uncertainty of displacement, resulting in high levels of psychosocial distress.

In April 2022, the Government of the Republic of Moldova put in place mechanisms to facilitate the identification and referral to the Guardianship Authority of unaccompanied children and some categories of separated children who are entering Moldova. However, with the expiration of the state of emergency in 2023, in 2024 this referral mechanism became less systematic. Moldova has incorporated refugee children into their national child protection system, though capacity issues persist. The humanitarian sector is working to support the Government of Moldova in providing supplemental services to refugee children and ensuring that the best interests of children are always upheld.

In order to support the coordination of the child protection actors in the humanitarian sector and ensure smooth collaboration with the national child protection system, the Child Protection Sub Working Group (CP SWG), a sub working group of the Protection Working Group, was formed in spring of 2022.

The CP SWG is a forum through which organizations with child protection programs in Moldova can **undertake strategic planning on child protection, coordination interventions, seek consensus on issues, and create partnerships and linkages** for better prioritization of available resources and commitment to minimum standards of response with an overall goal of enhancing the protection of affected children. The SWG has the objective of attaining an effective and predictable response to child protection issues in Moldova through improved coordination among agencies involved in child protection programming.

Membership and responsibilities
The CP SWG is co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR, with support and engagement from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP).

For 2025, the CP SWG will work to more actively engage MLSP in coordination functions. The CP SWG will continue to meet every other month, with the exact timing of the meetings subject to change. Some meetings will be online only, while others will be in person only. Interpretation will be provided for both modalities.

The membership of the CP SWG includes relevant national child protection authorities, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and Guardianship Authorities, local government representatives, UN agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations, donors, networks, and other institutions, responding to the child protection needs of refugee and other affected children.

The coordinators are responsible for:

- Ensuring the sector activities align with the government's identified priorities and needs
- Ensuring effective implementation of the child protection response and addressing identified gaps
- Leading the child protection coordination and information management efforts, including advocacy
- Chairing coordination meetings
- Representing the CP SWG in protection planning and strategic meetings, and other in-country platforms, as appropriate
- Ensuring that refugee child protection strategies and priorities are integrated into national plans and policies.

The members are responsible for:

- Representing and taking decisions on behalf of their organizations
- Regularly attending the CP SWG meetings and sharing information about activities, available and expected funding, trends and gaps, including geographical and programmatic gaps
- Coordinating planning and assessments with the CP SWG members to avoid duplication and address gaps
- Providing their inputs and reporting their activities in ActivityInfo on a quarterly basis
- Actively taking part in the implementation of the CP SWG's responsibilities and work plan, including leading and or participating in the thematic taskforces, and any other child protection coordination mechanism
- Representing the CP SWG in other sector meetings, if required
- Endorsing and disseminating interagency standards, guidelines and tools
- Contributing to the implementation of learning plans including through mentoring, providing technical support and learning opportunities

Purpose and focus of the working group:

The Refugee Child Protection Sub-Working Group sits within the refugee Protection Working Group and leads the child protection coordination efforts at the national level. Its main aim is to ensure that children exercise their rights without discrimination, are protected from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and attain solutions that are in their best interests. These are the benchmarks against which the effectiveness and efficiency of child protection coordination are measured.

The CP SWG is a coordination forum through which the child protection actors responding to the child protection needs of refugee and other vulnerable children affected by displacement can:

1. Ensure that refugee child protection prevention and response activities are well-coordinated, efficient, responsive, and inclusive, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, the Refugee Coordination Model and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.
2. Assess and monitor child protection concerns and undertake advocacy and programming to address them
3. Collate and disseminate relevant information on child protection issues and responses
4. Update and share on a quarterly basis child protection referral pathways

5. Coordinate interventions, avoid duplication and address gaps to ensure a timely response
6. Support national and local children protection authorities' child protection strategies and funding plans for child protection, advocate for appropriate resources and coordinate resource mobilization for the child protection sub-sector
7. The CP SWG will also support contingency planning and preparedness for new emergencies if such work starts within the lifespan of the SWG.
8. Ensure synergy with the institutional response to strengthen existing systems and services and promote inclusion of asylum-seeker and refugee children into national systems and ensure financial and technical support to local child protection actors
9. Develop harmonized approaches, tools and messages and seek consensus on emerging issues including SOPs and referral pathways
10. Establish partnerships and linkages for better prioritization of available resources
11. Commit to and align to minimum standards for child protection interventions as well as relevant refugee specific child protection standards including the Best Interests Procedures
12. Monitor progress and report on activities and needs
13. Promote and enhance local and community-led initiatives that empower children, families, communities and society and strengthen their capacities to protect children.
14. Collaborate with the Refugee Protection Working Group and sectors to mainstream child protection into their planning processes and response.
15. Enhance the technical capacity of child protection actors involved in the response and coordinate capacity building efforts

Annex 1 provides a more detailed description of key responsibilities.

Meeting schedule:
For 2025, the CP SWG will meet every other month, with the exact timing of the meetings subject to change. Some meetings will be held online only, others in person only, and some may be in hybrid format.

Ad-hoc meetings and task forces are established upon consultation with the members of the SWG, when this is considered necessary to address an urgent issue.

Structure
The CP SWG reports to the Protection Working Group and may establish sub national CP coordination mechanisms, to coordinate efforts based on specific coordination needs. The CP SWG may establish taskforces or technical groups to work on inter-actor processes, guidance and tools.

Linkages with other working groups/coordination forums:
The CP SWG will establish and maintain close links with other working groups and coordination bodies including UN Inter-agency Refugee Coordination working group.

Endorsement and revisions
The CP SWG's Terms of Reference will be endorsed by the members. The ToR is a working document that can be revised to address emerging needs with the approval of a majority of the members. It should at minimum be reviewed every year.

Confidentiality:
The CP SWG is *not a forum for discussion of individual cases*. In the event that individual cases are

discussed, the cases must be treated in a confidential manner. No documentation related to such cases should be shared within these forums or with others. No information on such cases should be shared externally, unless in the best interest of the people affected.

Registering

Email Carolina Sclifos to be added to the CP SWG distribution list: sclifos@unhcr.org

Annex 1: Detailed description of responsibilities

The Refugee CP SWG will perform the following responsibilities to achieve the defined objectives, in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model and guided by the Guiding Principles:

→ **Situational analysis**:

- ✓ Conduct/ update desk reviews to identify child protection risks and capacities and determine the information gaps, including mapping relevant stakeholders and their capacity.
- ✓ Map existing formal and customary laws, procedures and services for children and identify barriers to access for refugees
- ✓ Integrate child protection into inter-agency and multisectoral needs assessments and if the need arises, conduct child protection inter-agency assessments
- ✓ Incorporate current and anticipated protection needs of children and existing gaps in services into the protection analysis and other sectors, as relevant, including analysis of the impact of protection risks facing families/caregivers on children.
- ✓ Assess the learning needs of child protection actors

→ **Strategic planning**:

- ✓ Define child protection strategies and advocacy required to address the identified protection needs of refugee children, including mainstreaming activities,
- ✓ Develop child protection strategic objectives and result indicators, disaggregated by gender and age and specify funding required for the planned child protection programmes
- ✓ Develop the child protection sector's detailed work plan, advocacy plan and learning activities to address technical and institutional capacity needs,
- ✓ Incorporate child protection analysis, overarching objectives, key indicators and funding into the Protection and Solutions Strategy and the Refugee Response Plan as a sub-sector of Protection.
- ✓ Set the minimum standards for child protection activities in accordance with the Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS), UNHCR's policy and guidance, and national legislation.
- ✓ Include child protection into inter-agency preparedness and contingency plans.

→ **Implementation:**

- ✓ In implementing the child protection response, work with State actors, UN agencies, international organisation and civil society, and refugee-led initiatives to facilitate access of refugee children to appropriate protection services.
- ✓ Develop or adapt and disseminate relevant child protection guidelines and standards.
- ✓ Develop/adapt standard operating procedures and referral pathways in collaboration with Refugee Protection Working Group, the GBV Sub-Working Group and other services such as cash.
- ✓ Provide technical guidance to Refugee Protection Working Group, its sub-working groups and sectors to integrate child protection considerations in planning and services.
- ✓ Put in place feedback and complaints mechanisms that are appropriate, accessible, and safe for children;
- ✓ Coordinate with the Refugee Protection Working Group and others in undertaking joint advocacy activities to address identified concerns and gaps
- ✓ Collaborate with relevant actors to enable full access to key national services for refugee children and families, including health, education, child protection services and refugee protection procedures within the national systems and strengthen the capacity of these services to address the specific needs of refugee and other children of concern

→ **Monitoring, reporting and information sharing**

- ✓ Maintain and disseminate a mapping of child protection actors and their programmatic and geographic reach to eliminate duplication and identify gaps.
- ✓ Harmonize monitoring and reporting process and tools (e.g. Activity info, protection monitoring) and systematically monitor the child protection response and situation to determine:
    - Whether the child protection programmes are implemented as planned
    - Whether the expected results are being achieved.
    - Whether adjustments need to be made to the child protection strategies to ensure that expected results are achieved.
- ✓ Track and report funds received by child protection through interagency funding reporting mechanisms.
- ✓ Regularly share information with the Refugee protection Working Group, GBV Sub-Working Group and relevant in-country forums on progress, gaps and advocacy priorities
- ✓ Compile and publish information on child protection response and gaps in a timely manner, including monthly dashboards, operational presence, and contribute to in- country and regional refugee protection coordination updates and advocacy efforts.
- ✓ Document and disseminate good practices in child protection