# Understanding information preferences, barriers, and needs of Roma refugees in Moldova

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Roma Women Platform "ROMNI" from Republic of Moldova
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# Introduction and overview to collaboration

Three actors participated in this assessment.

One focus group and 4 KII were held by Internews.

In addition, two focus groups were held by Roma Women's Platform 'ROMNI' in Moldova, as a part of the project supported by IRC Balkan's office.

The decision was made to join efforts thus the assessment framework relies on two methodologies developed by the Internews and IRC's Signpost.

# Assessment framework

This assessment leans on Internews' Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) approach which is a framework to understand the information supply, demand, and dynamics in this environment.

The IEA assesses the 'health' of an information ecosystem by investigating three main elements:

1) **Information supply** (suppliers, creators, or broadcasters of information);

2) **Information demand** (the information needed from the community);

3) **The gap between the two** (information gaps and barriers to information access).

# Assessment framework

The assessment also benefited from the part of an emergency response project ’To Inform is to Safeguard’ implemented by the Roma Women’s Platform ‘ROMNI’ in Moldova, supported by the International Rescue Committee Balkans.

The Information Needs Assessment conducted by ROMNI relies on the experience and trust that they have established within the Roma refugee community and the IRC’s Signpost methodology.

The Signpost approach provides the basis so that relevant information can be provided to refugees enabling them to make informed decisions, be safe and acquire services to meet their needs.

# Data collection comprised:

1) **Rapid desk/literature review**: a review of existing research on information needs/preferences for hosts and refugees in the Republic of Moldova and stakeholder mapping

2) **Key informant interviews**: four 45-minute discussions were held with individual stakeholders representing the Roma non-governmental organizations and the Roma Taskforce – a coordinating body of relief organizations working to address Roma refugee needs.

3) **Focus Group Discussions**: three focus group discussions were held. One included a group of five Roma community Cultural Mediators and two sessions with 20 Roma refugees.

# Main findings

- Roma refugees are the most important information source
- Trust is heavily influenced by the information carriers
- Unavailability of information in their mother tongue language is seen as one barrier.
- Illiteracy as an obstacle to receiving written information.
- Digital access is shared
- Roma refugees in private accommodation are mostly more disconnected from the information relevant to them.
- Low access to TV or Radio prevent Roma refugees from accessing information provided through the media.

# More detailed: Information Preferences

- **Roma refugees prefer in-person information provision** – Face-to-face communication is the most preferred way to obtain information.
- **Low use of official informational channels** - Just three participants mentioned using Dopomoha.md as a source of information - no respondents mentioned Government websites or the websites of other relief organizations.

# More detailed: Information Barriers

- **Discrimination** - There have already been reports suggesting discrimination towards Roma refugees in access to relief services.
- **Language, illiteracy, and cultural preferences might be barriers** - Language and illiteracy are major barriers to information access for many Roma refugees in Moldova.
- **Digital Access** - most people in the community would have access to an android phone owned by someone else.
- **Internet access** - levels of access to the internet appear to be mostly influenced by three factors: device ownership, available income, and location of the accommodation.

# More detailed: Information needs

- **Education** - access to education and which schools are accommodating children that do not speak Ukrainian, Russian or Romanian languages.
- **Health Services** - participants were interested in receiving more information about where they can access free healthcare.
- **Legal Information** - Participants expressed difficulties in understanding the information about legal procedures regarding their rights to stay in Moldova.

# Recommendations

- **Work with the refugees -** Cultural mediators should be involved in advocating community preferences, being an important inroad to collecting rumors and misinformation circulating within the Roma community, enabling factual information provision.
- **Building trust** - Organizations wishing to provide services to Roma refugees specifically or as part of wider response efforts should work through mediators to garner greater trust and support from the community.
- **Diversify communication -** mediators in the response should always consider delivering information in multiple formats and languages.

# Recommendations

- **Promote access to Roma media platforms -** Media should also consider and respond to the short, medium, and long-term information needs of Roma refugees.
- **Consider distributing TV, radios, and phones** - A key barrier preventing the Roma refugee community from accessing the media information channels specifically designed for them is the lack of devices.
- **Media as relief actors -** Create opportunities for media to connect with Roma refugee representatives to understand cultural sensitivities as well as community preferences and needs.

*See here the Internews guide to Radio Distributions and a UNHCR guide to distributing mobile phones in humanitarian settings.

# Thank you for Your attention!

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