

Republic of Moldova

Multi-year Strategy 2024 – 2026



Table of Contents Section

1. Strategy

- 1.1 Executive Summary
- 1.2 Situation Analysis
- 1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation
- 1.4 Age, gender, and diversity

2. Impact Statements

3. Republic of Moldova 2025 Indicators and Targets

1.1 Executive Summary

The Republic of Moldova's (hereinafter "Moldova") refugee response is shifting from emergency relief to a more sustainable protection environment focused on the gradual inclusion of refugees in government programs. UNHCR's 2024-2026 strategy aims to facilitate this transition by strengthening government systems and ensuring fundamental rights for all.

UNHCR's strategy encompasses establishing a comprehensive, government-led refugee response that leverages the financial and operational strengths of all stakeholders by promoting sustainable programming, effective refugee inclusion, and the socio-economic development of host communities in a 'whole-of-society' approach, involving refugees themselves, government agencies, development actors, UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and the private sector.

As of September, 2024, Moldova hosts over 124,000 refugees – of whom 58% are women, 43% are children, 18% are older people and 6% are people with disabilities. In the coming years, the refugee population in Moldova is expected to remain relatively stable.

UNHCR works with the Government and partners to protect refugees and ensure access to territory, safety, and rights. This includes activities such as border monitoring, supporting accommodation centres for the most vulnerable, and providing protection services to those in need.

From 2024 to 2026, UNHCR will invest resources and expertise in the national asylum and statelessness systems to ensure that case processing is fair and efficient, and legal assistance available.

The profile of refugees in Moldova indicates that serious protection needs, including child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) risks, are expected to persist, if not increase. UNHCR will strengthen the government capacity at national and local levels to assist refugees and will also support national civil society organizations to fill protection gaps where needed.

Particular attention will be given to the most vulnerable people. UNHCR's engagement with Roma refugees includes direct partnership agreements with Roma NGOs as well as ensuring access to rights, services, and social inclusion. Ensuring that older refugees

and refugees with disabilities are seen and heard will also remain a priority, as obstacles and social stigma remain. UNHCR will also continue to support refugees living with HIV and key populations – including sex workers and individuals using drugs - by partnering with local civil society organizations to enhance outreach, facilitate their integration into the national systems and host communities, and mitigate protection risks. Finally, continued efforts will be needed to ensure that LGBTIQ+ refugees are able to lodge asylum claims and have them fairly adjudicated, and have access protection services by all without discrimination.

UNHCR will continue to meet basic needs through multi-purpose cash assistance, and a gradual transition towards government social assistance programmes, promoting long-term sustainability and self-reliance for refugees. In 2024, UNHCR in collaboration with the Cash Working Group, targeted its assistance to those found to be most vulnerable based on a number of criteria. These will also assist in the identification and prioritization of those potentially eligible for government social assistance schemes in the future. Other ongoing socio-economic assessments conducted in collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank, will also guide UNHCR's programming in terms of refugee inclusion into social protection mechanisms.

UNHCR will work closely with both the Government and development stakeholders to strengthen social protection services for refugees. With the expected extension of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine until March 2026, aligning with the EU, UNHCR will advocate for an extended package of rights and for refugees to have a more durable legal status in the future. With regards to statelessness, efforts will focus on securing citizenship where possible, or, at a minimum, ensuring that a person's status as "stateless" is duly recognized.

UNHCR will collaborate with the Government and partners to facilitate access to affordable housing for those in need, while promoting decent work opportunities, skills, language training and increased day care options. Continued efforts to enrol Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools will be vital, while supporting local school capacity to accommodate their needs and promote inclusive education. Expanding access to pre-school and higher education will also be promoted to empower refugees and equip them to contribute to the Ukrainian economy if and when they choose to return.

As displacement continues, the strain on social cohesion may rise. UNHCR Moldova will continue to adopt a community-based approach through support to projects for and from the community itself. Under the framework of Cities of Solidarity, UNHCR will work

with municipal governments, local actors, refugees, and host communities to enhance reception, protection, and local integration in order to strengthen access to rights and services through an area-based approach that promotes inclusive and resilient cities and communities. These efforts will be extended to the Transnistrian region where international support is more limited.

For refugees with close family in the European Union or who are unable to remain in Moldova (e.g. due to serious medical conditions), UNHCR will continue to pursue relocation through the EU+ Air Transfer Programme or other complementary pathways that may become available.

UNHCR and Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) partners will address specific humanitarian needs caused or exacerbated by the cold season. Furthermore, UNHCR will continue investing in preparedness and contingency planning, ensuring coordination with the authorities at the central and local levels.

The achievement of UNHCR's 2024-2026 strategic objectives will largely depend on the ongoing operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in Moldova through predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing to support the inclusion of refugees. The RCF has effectively promoted a whole-of-society approach in Moldova's response to refugees. Over the next years, UNHCR envisions a phased transition which will include enhancing the engagement and mobilization of development actors through collaboration with multilateral banks, financial institutions, and the UN Country Team under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, ensuring that refugees are not left behind in Moldova's development efforts.

1.2 Situation Analysis

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine saw the arrival of over 1.5 million people in Moldova as of September 2024. Though most continued onward to the EU, over 124,000 refugees from Ukraine remain in Moldova, the vast majority of which are women, children, and older people. Despite their own challenges, the people and Government of Moldova have welcomed them – fulfilling the vision of the Global Compact for Refugees.

This exemplary refugee response exists amid significant challenges. Moldova has Europe's smallest GDP. Its economy is faced with the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 drought, and the 2021 gas crisis, as well as massive socio-economic and security disruptions as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. One in three

Moldovans live in poverty, with low living standards fuelling large-scale emigration. Structural and resource limits hinder national systems for social protection, health, and education, among others. Nonetheless, Moldova draws upon significant strengths in confronting these challenges.

The Government's quick response to the refugee influx included activating an inter-ministerial Joint Crisis Management Centre to coordinate the response, later transitioned to the Commission on the Coordination of Activities in the Field of Migration and Asylum, chaired by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and amending key laws to allow access to the territory and basic services for refugees from Ukraine. Such leadership facilitated close engagement with a broad coalition of national and international partners under the RCF, co-led by the government and UNHCR, and bolstered by robust international support. The EU granted Moldova candidate status in June 2022, with formal negotiations beginning in December 2023, demonstrating confidence in the Government's commitment to democracy and reform. Public solidarity with refugees from Ukraine remains strong. The current UN Cooperation Framework prioritizes support to national systems for social protection, health, and education, among others.

The RCF coordinates humanitarian actors across all sectors. In 2023, the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) in Moldova brought together 73 international and national partners, seeking \$427 million for the response. In 2024, UNHCR continues to co-lead the RCF with the government to coordinate the support to refugees and vulnerable Moldovans in areas affected by the refugee influx. The 2024 RRP brings together 82 partners, out of which 42 are national or local CSOs. There is close collaboration between the humanitarian and development actors under the framework of the RRP and the Cooperation Framework, with the two frameworks aligned in terms of goals but with clearly differentiated target groups and criteria.

With RCF support, the Government oversees great efforts to protect refugees from Ukraine. Reception facilities at the main border crossing points offer a range of services. A network of accommodation centres for new arrivals and the most vulnerable refugees provides free accommodation, food, and, in some locations, services; however, most refugees live in private accommodations, either with family, acquaintances, or under rental arrangements.

UNHCR and partners provide multi-purpose cash assistance to vulnerable refugees from Ukraine and certain third country nationals, aligned with government social assistance to facilitate eventual inclusion into national system, a key activity considering the significant economic vulnerability of the refugee population in Moldova, with 41% of adult refugees outside the labour force due to caregiving responsibilities, health conditions, or other vulnerabilities.

Protection remains the cornerstone of Moldova's refugee response. Refugees face multiple vulnerabilities, with 80% of the population consisting of women and children,

including female-headed households and unaccompanied or separated children. These profiles are at heightened risks related to child protection, GBV and trafficking. Other at-risk groups including people with disabilities and older people face obstacles in accessing services across sectors, as do LGBTIQ+ refugees and refugees living with HIV who may be reluctant to come forward for support, as well as members of key populations, including sex workers and people who use drugs. Roma refugees face higher risks of social exclusion and marginalization, requiring targeted outreach.

Intention surveys indicate that around two-thirds of refugees intend to stay until it is safe to return home. Since 1 March 2023, the Government has granted temporary protection (TP) to Ukrainians and their families. It is expected that the government will extend TP for at least another year, until March 2026, provided the necessary changes to legislation are passed by Parliament. While TP is in effect, UNHCR will advocate for expanded services for TP beneficiaries, including in such areas as social protection and health care. Looking forward, however, UNHCR will also advocate, for the provision of a more secure legal status for those displaced from Ukraine, eliminating the need for yearly renewals, with a broad package of associated rights that will further promote refugee inclusion in the country. As of September 2024, around 60,000 individuals had been granted TP, while over 7,000 citizens of Ukraine had been granted resident permits, either permanent or temporary. Those forcibly displaced who are ineligible for TP are able to apply for asylum or stateless status. While support for voluntary repatriation to Ukraine is currently not foreseen, it may be revisited in the future as conditions allow.

Access to rights and services for TP beneficiaries will require close monitoring. Access to various forms of social assistance is inconsistent; Ukrainian families with children and unaccompanied children have access under TP, but others do not, including pregnant women, those with disabilities and older persons. While TP beneficiaries have access to a range of health services, they do not qualify for public medical insurance unless they are formally employed.

Education for Ukrainian children is an ongoing challenge, complicated by uncertainty about length of stay, a preference for online schooling from Ukraine, and language barriers. Additionally, the narrowing of cash assistance has increased the need for livelihoods support. Obstacles to formal employment persist, including skills mismatching, low salaries, and language. Women face additional obstacles, including limited access to childcare and overall gender biases.

Social cohesion with host communities remains positive, with the Government consistently signalling support and solidarity. This stance relies on international support for vulnerable Moldovans and refugees alike.

Refugee inclusion in government services is a priority in the pursuit of solutions. The Government, UN, development partners, international financial institutions and the

private sector are working together to operationalize the humanitarian-development Nexus with refugees and Moldovans alike. This work will continue through the close coordination between the RRP and the UN Cooperation Framework, operationalizing pledges from the Global Refugee Forum, as well as continued promotion of GCR principles. Moreover, Moldova is setting up a government-led Mechanism for the Phased Integration for Foreigners, including displaced persons from Ukraine in Moldova. This mechanism, part of the National Development Plan 2025-2027, aims to integrate refugees into national development plans and public services. It will enhance the legal and policy framework, ensuring refugees' access to education, healthcare, social protection, and employment.

Moldova has acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and both UN conventions on statelessness. Its asylum system largely meets international standards, though overburdened by last year's surge in applications. Its statelessness determination procedure has also been globally recognized.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

By 2026, UNHCR's vision is that refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people in Moldova will have equitable access to protection, rights, and socio-economic opportunities. Government and civil society capacities at all levels will be enhanced, enabling the people we serve to lead safe, dignified, and self-reliant lives in an inclusive environment. At the same time, they will be able to actively contribute to Moldova's sustainable development goals.

Government institutions are expected to continue to work closely with civil society, UN agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to create an enabling environment that prioritizes the well-being and inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people. To support Moldova in this regard, UNHCR will help reinforce capacities of the Government and civil society to address the needs and rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people, and to ensure their inclusion in the national protection systems. Through UNHCR's technical expertise, support will be provided to develop policies and strategies that promote protection and inclusion.

UNHCR will support Moldova to adopt a rights-based approach that ensures refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people enjoy fundamental rights, including access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. This entails removing legal and administrative barriers to services and creating mechanisms that facilitate socio-economic inclusion at all levels. Emphasis will also be placed on addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities and ensuring that women, children, and other marginalized categories of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people are protected and empowered.

To ensure the self-reliance of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people, sustainable livelihood opportunities are needed. UNHCR will continue supporting Moldova to address this need through vocational training, entrepreneurship support, financial services, and access to job markets, as well as fostering partnerships with local businesses, banks, international financial institutions, and development-focused UN agencies. Solutions for improved childcare to promote women inclusion into the labour market will also be explored. These efforts will empower forcibly displaced and stateless people to contribute to Moldova's broader socio-economic development, and to support the community that surrounds them.

UNHCR will help foster inclusive and protective communities in Moldova where refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people feel welcomed, respected, and supported. UNHCR will raise awareness and promote social cohesion among host communities, and combat discrimination and intolerance. It will also prioritize dialogue, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding between refugees and Moldovans in common spaces and activities to create a conducive environment for inclusion. This will be possible through various initiatives with civil society and the private sector such as the One Minute Film Festival. Recognizing that refugees and stateless people bring valuable skills, knowledge, and perspectives to Moldova, UNHCR will work with the government to promote their involvement in decision-making, community development initiatives, and local governance.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

In Moldova, UNHCR will continue to advance AGD-inclusive (Age, Gender, and Diversity) programming, with a focus on gender equality, children's rights, disability inclusion, diversity, and context-specific social inclusion issues. These efforts aim to ensure that no one is left behind. A rights-based approach and clear accountability to affected people will be ensured in all stages of UNHCR's programmes.

Gender equality will be mainstreamed across all programmes, with a focus on addressing gender-based violence, promoting women's empowerment, and advancing gender-sensitive policies and practices. Disability inclusion will also be mainstreamed with a focus on promoting accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and inclusive participation for people with disabilities. Children's rights will also be a priority, with efforts to ensure that children, regardless of status or background, enjoy fundamental rights including access to education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation and abuse. Additionally, sensitive programming will be developed for specific needs and vulnerabilities of other diversity groups, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ+ people, people living with HIV, and older people.

Refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people of all ages, genders, and diversities will be actively engaged in the development of UNHCR's strategy, monitoring and

implementation of programmes. Accessible two-way communication channels will be maintained and strengthened to collect, analyse, and operationalize their feedback. This will be done through community consultations, focus group discussions, the Refugee Green Line, rumour tracking and surveys, which are inclusive and sensitive to their diverse needs and perspectives. UNHCR will also encourage Government and civil society to include refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people in decision-making processes, community development initiatives, and social inclusion efforts. This will involve promoting their participation in local governance structures, community forums, and other relevant platforms to help ensure their inputs are taken into account in Government and community programme design, implementation, and evaluation.

Capacity-building efforts on AGD-inclusive programming will also be prioritized to enhance the skills and knowledge of government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. A particular focus will be placed on addressing the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people. This will include training on human rights, gender equality, children's rights, disability inclusion, and sensitivity towards other diversity groups, as well as building skills for community engagement and accountability, accessible communication, feedback collection, and analysis.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

By 2026, Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless individuals have access to territory, international protection and assistance without discrimination and are safe in the communities where they live

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

People in need of international protection have access to the territory and adequate reception conditions and are issued documentation confirming their legal status

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

National asylum and statelessness systems are strengthened, temporary protection procedures are fair and efficient, and the quality of refugee and statelessness status determination procedures is improved

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

Refugees have full access to quality gender-based violence services provided within the public system in complementarity with other service providers, with risk mitigation mainstreamed across sectors

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Refugee children are included in national child protection systems and have non-discriminatory and child-friendly access to a full range of prevention and protection services, including best interest determination procedures

Outcome area: Child protection

Refugees have access to cash and in-kind assistance to mitigate protection risks and promote their inclusion to state owned social assistance mechanisms

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Impact statement

By 2026, refugees and stateless persons are able to access solutions in Moldova, either through socio-economic inclusion or through relocation to third countries

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

Refugees meaningfully participate in decision making processes that affect their lives, collaborating with local authorities and host communities development goals and to foster social cohesion

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Refugees are included in national and local services in Moldova, with government systems strengthened, and have access to decent livelihood opportunities, actively contributing to local development

Outcome area: Local integration and other local solutions

3. Republic of Moldova 2025 Indicators and Targets

Country	Results Level	Result Area	Indicator	Population Type	Baseline	Target 2025
Moldova	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	Not applicable

Moldova	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	94%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Stateless Persons	94%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Stateless Persons	67%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Stateless Persons	100%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	89%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96%	Not applicable
Moldova	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	466	Not applicable
Moldova	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24%	68%
Moldova	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose	Refugees and	100%	100%

			births have been registered with a civil authority	Asylum-seekers		
Moldova	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Stateless Persons	100%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	217	217
Moldova	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	None	Broadly aligned: ≥90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥90 points
Moldova	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Broadly aligned: ≥90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥90 points
Moldova	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Stateless Persons	98%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	70%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA5:	5.2 Proportion of children who	Refugees	42%	100%

		Children	participate in community-based child protection programmes	and Asylum-seekers		
Moldova	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Stateless Persons	Moderate: 40-69 points	Moderate: 40-69 points
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	88%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Stateless Persons	97%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	70%	80%
Moldova	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Stateless Persons	70%	80%
Moldova	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	71%	86%
Moldova	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Moldova	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11%	80%

Moldova	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Stateless Persons	53%	80%
---------	---------	--------------------	---	-------------------	-----	-----