

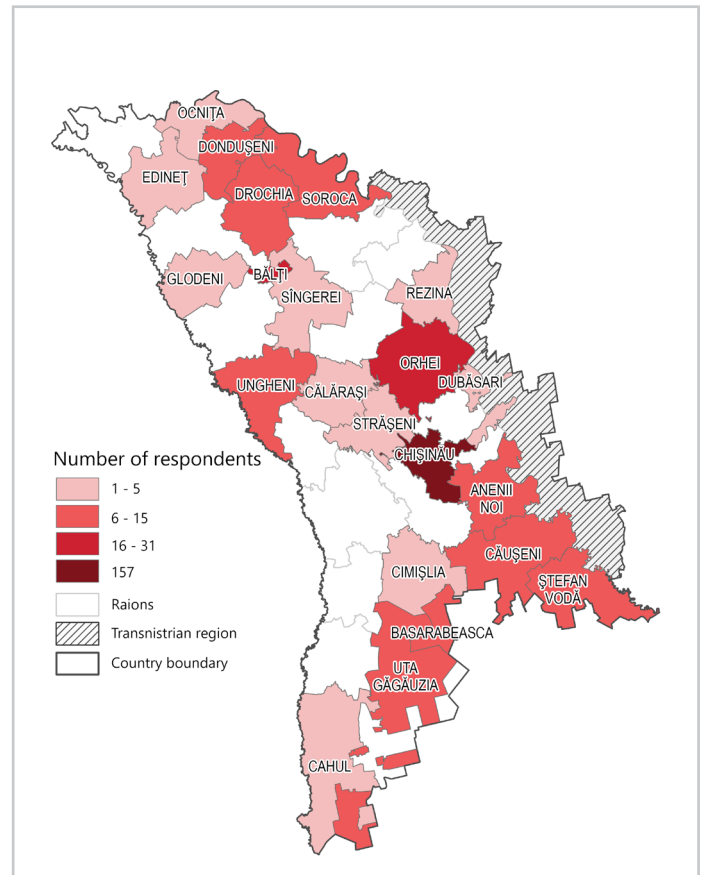
Accountability to Affected Populations in the Moldova Refugee Response

March 2026 | Republic of Moldova

Context & Rationale

Four years since the escalation of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Republic of Moldova remains a key host country for refugees fleeing the conflict. As the response transitions from emergency assistance towards a long-term, durable solutions approach, ensuring accountability to affected populations (AAP) remains central to effective and inclusive programming. Since 2022, AAP coordination has been facilitated through the AAP Task Force, alongside participatory assessments, social listening initiatives, and sectoral monitoring exercises. While existing assessments, including the Socio-Economic Insights Survey¹ and the Information Ecosystem Assessment, have captured selected AAP-related indicators, findings point to limited engagement with feedback mechanisms and highlight gaps in understanding perceptions of fairness, relevance, participation, and trust.

Moreover, most assessments have focused primarily on affected populations, with limited exploration of challenges faced by service providers. At the same time, the significant shifts in the funding landscape over the past year have led to programme scale-downs, stricter targeting, and adjustments in assistance modalities. These changes have directly influenced coverage levels, eligibility criteria, and perceptions of exclusion. In this evolving context, the AAP assessment seeks to address these gaps through a mixed-method approach, generating evidence to inform a more transparent, inclusive, and community-centred refugee response.



Map 1: Geographical coverage of quantitative component

Key Messages

- Aid is generally perceived as relevant, particularly among beneficiaries, showing alignment with priority needs. However, qualitative findings indicate that relevance varies by assistance type and timing, with cash assistance and voucher support seen as more effective due to their flexibility, while reductions in coverage and consistency limited overall effectiveness.
- While understanding of targeting criteria is high, perceptions of fairness were divided, particularly among non-beneficiaries, who report lower trust in how assistance is allocated. Findings suggest this is driven less by the criteria themselves and more by their inconsistent application and limited transparency in how decisions are made and communicated.
- Respondents reported limited involvement in decisions about the assistance they receive, indicating weak participation across programmes. Qualitative findings show that participation is often informal or limited to information sharing.
- While awareness of complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) is relatively high, most respondents had not used them in the year prior to data collection, indicating low engagement. Qualitative findings point to limited trust in responsiveness and unclear feedback loops.
- About half of respondents reported facing integration challenges, most commonly related to financial constraints. Qualitative findings show that challenges are not only financial, but also include administrative barriers and difficulties accessing services and information, with many respondents relying on their own coping strategies, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.

Methodology Overview

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating an individual level survey and qualitative interviews, with data collection taking place between 25 August and 3 October 2025.

The quantitative component consisted of a structured survey conducted over the phone or in person with refugees from Ukraine, including both active beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of humanitarian aid. Respondents registered through an online form to participate in the assessment, and were selected through a stratified purposive sampling approach, with stratification by geographic area (Chişinău municipality and the rest of Moldova, excluding the Transnistrian region) and respondent profile (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries). In total, 321 surveys were conducted (209 beneficiaries and 112 non-beneficiaries), broadly reflecting the planned geographic distribution (see map 1).

The qualitative component included in-depth individual interviews (IIs) with Ukrainian refugees and key informant interviews (KIIs). Thirteen IIs were conducted, including 9 with beneficiaries and 4 with non-beneficiaries. Participants for the IIs were purposively selected from survey respondents who expressed willingness to be contacted for follow-up discussions. The KIIs were carried out with 9 representatives of humanitarian organisations and coordination structures to capture perspectives from the aid delivery side.

Limitations

Representativeness: The assessment relied on voluntary registration and purposive elements in sampling. As a result, findings are indicative and cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire refugee population in Moldova.

Recruitment Channel Bias: Participants were recruited through online platforms and public advertisements, which may have limited participation among individuals less active online or less likely to encounter such outreach, including older persons and other potentially marginalised groups.

Selection Bias: In some cases, snowball sampling was applied to identify non-beneficiary respondents, which may have led to the overrepresentation of individuals with similar backgrounds or experiences.

Subjectivity of Responses: Findings are based on self-reported perceptions and lived experiences. As such, responses may be influenced by individual expectations, recall bias, or limited awareness of existing accountability mechanisms.

Non-Beneficiary Sample Limitations: Lower participation among non-beneficiaries resulted in a smaller and less diverse qualitative sample for this group. Findings related to non-beneficiaries should therefore be interpreted with caution.

For a more detailed overview of the methodology and its limitations, please refer to the *Terms of Reference (ToR)*.

Survey Demographics

Respondent profile



50 years old average age of beneficiary respondents

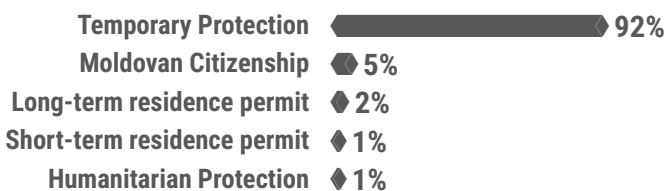


38 years old average age of non-beneficiary respondents

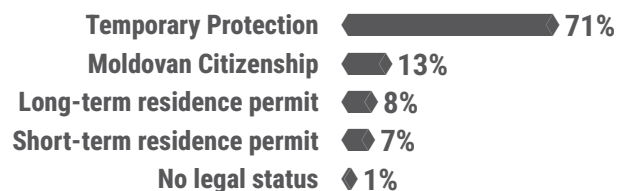
8% of beneficiary respondents reported having a disability

1% of non-beneficiary respondents reported having a disability

% of beneficiary respondents, by their legal status at the time of data collection



% of non-beneficiary respondents, by their legal status at the time of data collection



63% of beneficiary respondents reported caring for children, older adults, or individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses at the time of data collection (n=209)

67% of non-beneficiary respondents reported caring for children, older adults, or individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses at the time of data collection (n=112)

Humanitarian aid: Access & Relevance

Awareness and access to humanitarian assistance

Findings show that cash assistance, including both multi-purpose cash and sector-specific cash support (e.g. winterisation, housing, education) remains the most prominent form of support within the humanitarian response in Moldova, and also perceived as the most appropriate form of aid. Most beneficiaries (91%) reported receiving cash in the three months prior to data collection, and 61% identified it as the most important form of aid, a perception similarly expressed by non-beneficiaries (58%). Awareness of cash assistance* was widespread, particularly among beneficiaries (97%), though lower among non-beneficiaries (69%), suggesting that access to information may differ between those currently reached by programming and those outside it. In addition to cash, beneficiaries also reported receiving vouchers, food assistance, non-food items (NFIs), and health-related support in recent months prior to data collection (see figure X). In terms of aid providers*, beneficiaries most frequently cited United Nations (UN) agencies (91%), followed by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (41%) and local NGOs (14%), with smaller shares reporting religious organisations and local authorities, suggesting continued limited reliance on governmental actors.

Figure 1. Top 5 most commonly reported types of humanitarian aid received within the last 3 months prior to data collection, by strata, (n=209)*

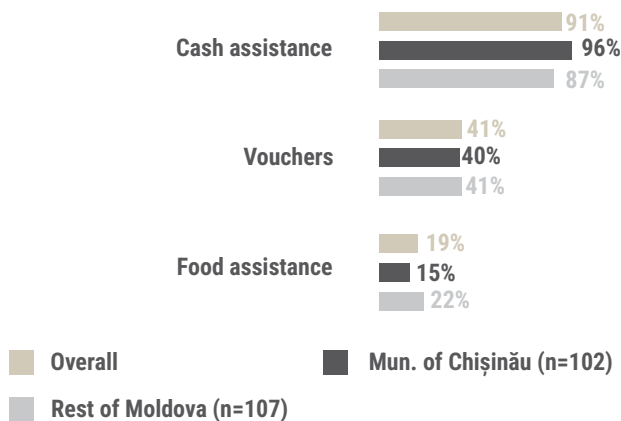
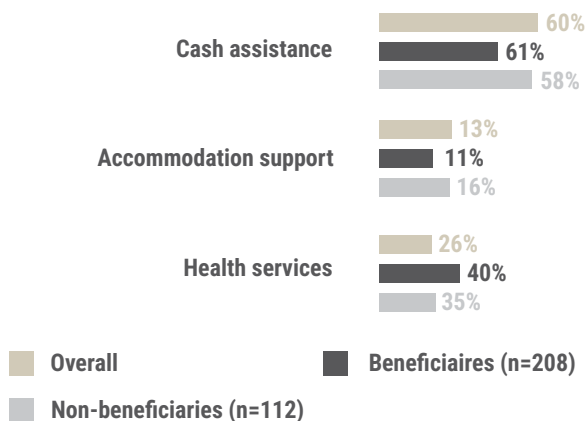


Figure 2. Top 3 most commonly reported type of humanitarian aid perceived as most important for the beneficiary respondents at the time of data collection, by beneficiary status (n=320)*,***



Perceived relevance and effectiveness of assistance

Survey results also show a high level of perceived relevance of aid*, with most beneficiaries reporting that aid matched their needs well or very well (97%), and that programmes meet community needs (87%). Qualitative interviews further suggest that perceptions of relevance are closely linked to adequacy, timeliness, and predictability². While some beneficiary respondents described winterisation or school-related support as arriving at appropriate times, others reported delays in receiving other types of assistance, including cash and in-kind items, which reduced their usefulness. In line with quantitative findings, interviewed beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries both indicated cash and voucher support as the most effective type of aid, describing it as more flexible and thus better able to address diverse or specific needs. However, rising rent prices, chronic medical expenses, and increasing utility costs were frequently cited as pressures that current aid levels do not fully offset.

Funding constraints and shifts in humanitarian programming

The impact of the shift in funding was apparent across both quantitative and qualitative findings. Key informants pointed to system-level constraints that have led to reduced coverage, frequency, and continuity of assistance. They consistently identified funding shortages as the primary challenge affecting humanitarian programming, compounded by staffing gaps – particularly outside Chişinău. These limitations were reported to narrow programme scope and coverage, decrease the frequency of distributions, and lead to the cancellation or scaling down of activities, including cash assistance and outreach missions. Informants also underscored sustainability risks, especially for placement centres and services dependent on external funding, and stressed the need for stronger coordination between humanitarian partners, more efficient resource use, and clear transition planning to safeguard service continuity.

Access to assistance and perceived barriers

The changes in humanitarian programming were also noted in reports by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In individual interviews, beneficiaries indicated that while assistance continued across sectors and actors, its volume and consistency had shifted over time. Many described a reduction in transfer values compared to earlier phases of the response, alongside programme closures or changes in distribution modalities. The challenges in programming were further reflected in survey findings, highlighting limited access and high perceived instability regarding the continuity of aid. Non-beneficiaries largely reported they had chosen not to apply for aid in the previous 3 months (57%) or that they had applied but had been rejected (39%). Among those who had not applied (n=63), most noted they did not do so because they did not meet eligibility criteria (78%). Furthermore, over half of the beneficiaries surveyed (66%) described not having much or any visibility on how long they would continue to receive aid. Reported uncertainty was higher in the rest

of Moldova (73%) than in Chişinău (59%), mirroring the coverage challenges described by service providers. Respondents also described operational and procedural challenges creating barriers to access. High competition for registration slots, repeated documentation described as barriers that disrupted the continuity of access to aid for beneficiaries. They also noted delays, differences in the frequency, availability, and amounts of assistance received, and physical obstacles such as health conditions or distance that restricted access to entitled aid. Non-beneficiaries highlighted eligibility, documentation barriers, and logistical challenges – including distance and limited digital access – and perceived inconsistencies across organisations, such as discretionary practices and abrupt programme closures. Interviews also suggest that outside the capital, refugees faced greater logistical barriers to registration and verification processes. Key informants similarly noted stronger coordination density in Chişinău and described mobile outreach as a mechanism to compensate for regional access gaps, indicating structural differences in proximity to services.

Overall, humanitarian assistance is generally perceived as relevant and helpful in addressing immediate needs, particularly through cash modalities. At the same time, uncertainty around continuation and distribution challenges, especially outside Chişinău, increasingly shape how the response is experienced. As the refugee response is evolving, predictability, clarity in communication, and integration-oriented support appear central to sustaining trust and effectiveness.

Targeting and fairness in aid delivery

Understanding of eligibility criteria

Overall respondents reported good understanding of eligibility criteria, but perceptions on targeting and fairness were more nuanced and more split, particularly between those who were accessing aid and those who were not.

Reported understanding of eligibility criteria was high with most of beneficiaries (97%) reporting that the eligibility criteria for the aid they received was clearly explained and easy to understand. A majority of both beneficiaries (87% of n=207)*** and non-beneficiaries (72% of n=78) also described they were very or well informed about the eligibility criteria of humanitarian aid available in their area. However, individual interviews show that understanding the criteria did not always prevent uncertainty. Respondents described multiple eligibility pathways operating simultaneously, including status-based eligibility linked to Temporary Protection (TP), first-come-first-served registration, list-based verification, and in some cases lottery mechanisms. The presence of multiple approaches sometimes created confusion or a sense that similar situations were treated differently.

Awareness and perceptions of selection processes

When it came to how selection operated in the context of limited resources, the share of those considering themselves very well or well informed (83% of beneficiaries and 62% of non-beneficiaries), while overall high, was lower compared to awareness on general eligibility. An even smaller share described selection criteria as fair – 67% of beneficiaries and only 13% of non-beneficiaries. Most non-beneficiaries described selection as partially fair (44%) or unfair (34%). Among those who considered the criteria partially fair or unfair, most indicated this was due to targeting models excluding a significant number of those who were in need and that aid was provided to groups who are not vulnerable (see figure 4). Communication on eligibility emerged as another reason for perceived unfairness, with smaller shares noting that the selection process lacked transparency or that information was shared selectively.

Figure 3. % of respondents who perceive the selection criteria as fair, in the last 3 months prior to data collection (n=321)

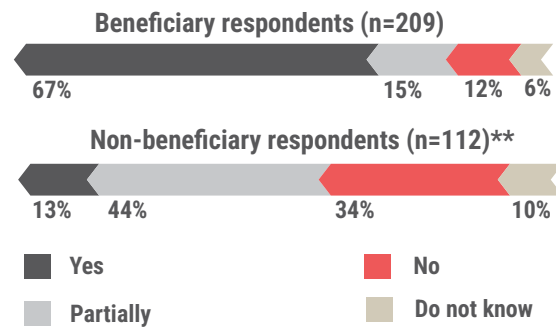


Figure 4. Top 3 most commonly reported reasons for perceiving selection criteria as unfair, among beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents who perceived it as partially or not fair (n=143)*



Drivers of perceived fairness and trust

Survey findings show low perceived fairness, particularly among non-beneficiaries, with qualitative interviews provide more context to these findings. Interviews indicate that perceptions among beneficiaries were shaped by personal experience and community-level observations. In contrast, non-beneficiaries' perceptions were more often influenced by experiences of exclusion without explanation, inconsistent application of criteria, and limited transparency. These factors contributed to reduced trust in humanitarian actors, despite general recognition of resource constraints. Notably, respondents who received assistance and observed support being provided to vulnerable households reported higher levels of trust and some interviewees described the targeting system as clear and better organised than in earlier phases of the response.

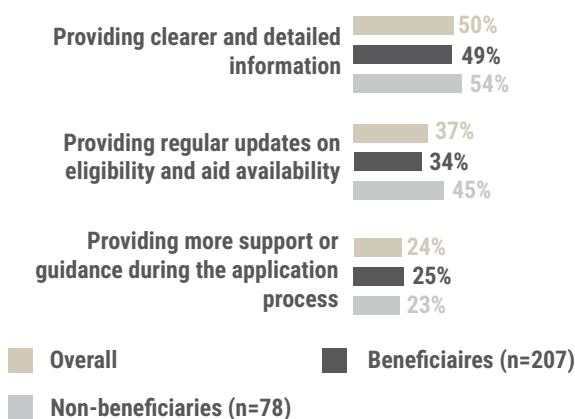
Challenges and inconsistencies in targeting and selection

Interviewed beneficiaries commonly described vulnerability-based targeting and many acknowledged the need for prioritisation under limited funding. However, they also reported discontinuation without explanation and observed cases where seemingly eligible households were excluded. Interviewed non-beneficiaries also generally recognised the intent to prioritise the most vulnerable, and several described cases where applications were rejected despite documentation being submitted, sometimes without receiving clear justification. Key informant interviews contextualised these experiences by describing the sector-wide shift from blanket assistance to stricter vulnerability-based targeting shaped by funding reductions, donor requirements, and sector mandates. They noted that eligibility thresholds vary across sectors and may be adjusted over time, which may not always be clearly understood at community level.

Suggested improvements to targeting and communication

Interviewed respondents emphasized the need for fairer and more systematic targeting and selection processes, particularly to ensure vulnerable individuals are not excluded. Suggestions included refining eligibility criteria to capture profiles beyond formal categories, prioritizing those residing and integrating in Moldova, and adopting community-informed approaches with clearer verification to reduce favouritism or errors. At the same time, respondents highlighted the importance of improving information and communication: clearer and earlier messaging, accessible public channels with language considerations, and transparent explanations of eligibility, decisions, and outcomes were seen as critical for fairness and trust. Older respondents and Refugee Accommodation Centre (RAC) residents especially valued in-person explanations when rules or modalities changed.

Figure 5. Top 3 most suggested changes to improve accessibility and understanding of eligibility criteria, by beneficiary status (n=285)*, **



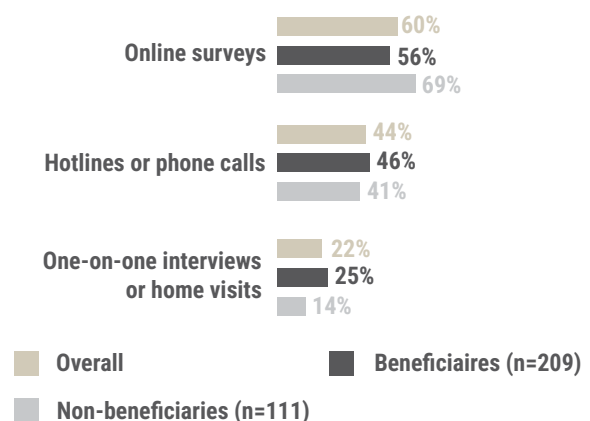
Overall, the findings highlight that while eligibility and selection rules are generally well understood, perceptions of fairness hinge less on knowing the criteria and more on whether decisions are applied consistently and communicated transparently. Improving information and feedback processes – particularly around rejection, discontinuation, and prioritisation – is therefore as vital as refining eligibility criteria, to strengthen accountability and trust in humanitarian actors through clear, consistent, and timely communication.

Participation in decision-making

Access to participation in decision-making

Findings indicate that participation in decision-making was relatively limited, with consultations perceived as more meaningful when followed by visible actions and clear communication on decisions. Fewer than half of beneficiaries (41%) reported being asked about the type of aid they preferred in the 12 months prior to data collection, and only 13% of non-beneficiaries. Among those consulted (n=101), most described taking part in individual interviews or surveys (81%), while smaller shares noted attending community meetings or focus group discussions, or completing online forms (11% each). Qualitative interviews reflected these patterns: many beneficiaries recalled being contacted through phone surveys, in-person questionnaires, post-distribution monitoring, or online forms, where they were mainly asked about household needs, accommodation, medicines, and future plans. RAC residents reported more direct, in-person engagement, particularly around food assistance and distribution arrangements, though accounts of more interactive participation were limited and inconsistent across respondent groups. In contrast, non-beneficiaries more often said they had never been approached or had only experienced one-off interactions without follow-up. At the community level, engagement appeared significantly lower, with the vast majority of respondents (88% of beneficiaries and 90% of non-beneficiaries) unaware of any community input activities organised by humanitarian organisations in their area.

Figure 6. Top 3 most commonly preferred methods of involvement in decision-making, by beneficiary status (n=320)*, ***



Perceived responsiveness of participation in decision-making

Consultations were reported to yield mixed outcomes. While some interviewed beneficiaries noted that participation did not always translate into choices regarding aid, survey data showed that among those consulted (n=86), two-thirds (66%) received the assistance they had requested. Similarly, 56% felt organisations completely considered community views, while a further 14% felt this occurred a lot. Interviews echoed these findings, with participants linking positive experiences of participation to tangible outcomes such as adjustments in food provision at reception centres or receipt of requested household items. However, 21% of consulted respondents reported not receiving the aid they had requested, and interviews suggested that when feedback was not followed by visible change or communicated back, participation was perceived as symbolic. This view was more pronounced among non-beneficiaries, only half of whom felt organisations took community perspectives into account completely (33%) or to a large extent (17%).

Perceived gaps in consultation processes

Survey findings indicate that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries felt consultations were not always truly valued by humanitarian actors. Among respondents who believed community input was not fully considered (n=126), the majority (67%) attributed this to decisions having already been made by organisations. Many also reported that while organisations solicited feedback, they did not act on it – an issue more frequently raised by non-beneficiaries (59%) compared to beneficiaries (25%). Interview accounts align with these findings, with participants describing consultations that failed to result in follow-up action or visible changes. Exclusion from consultations was also noted: 22% of beneficiaries said their opinions had not been requested, while 19% of non-beneficiaries reported that humanitarian actors consulted only specific groups rather than the wider community. Mirroring these gaps, key informants described that while participatory assessments and consultations were widely used, engagement was not always systematic across all groups and locations, and outreach capacity had been affected by funding and logistical constraints.

Perceived importance of participation

Respondents generally valued being involved in decisions that affected them, with 66% of surveyed participants describing participation as very important and 29% as somewhat important. Qualitative findings showed that beneficiaries were more likely to view consultations as significant, though for both groups the perceived importance depended on whether input led to visible action. Beneficiaries noted that

beneficiaries were more likely to view consultations as significant, though for both groups the perceived importance depended on whether input led to visible action. Beneficiaries noted that limited feedback on how their views were used reduced the perceived impact of participation and weakened motivation to engage further. Many non-beneficiaries similarly described consultations as symbolic, citing limited feedback or follow-up, particularly when excluded from assistance. Where feedback resulted in concrete support, however, participation was viewed more positively. Key informants acknowledged similar challenges, noting that refugees are not consistently consulted at the programme design or coordination level and that communication of results back to communities could be strengthened.

Barriers to participation

Interviews revealed that beneficiaries also faced logistical barriers. Beneficiaries described time constraints as a key barrier to participation, particularly in Chişinău, where respondents balanced childcare, work, and household responsibilities. Preferred modes of involvement, with surveys showing a preference for remote options like online surveys (60%) and hotlines or phone calls (44%), as well as locally accessible formats such as home visits (22%) or community meetings (16%). Key informants, however, perceived a reluctance to engage—driven by fear of consequences or distrust of institutions—as the main obstacle, though survey findings suggest these were less significant, with only 11% of non-beneficiaries indicating a preference for anonymous feedback.

Suggested improvements to participation

Suggested improvements were consistent across both groups, respondents highlighting the need for better communication and inclusion. Most respondents (76%) indicated that being informed in advance about consultations and meetings would help increase their engagement, mirroring interviews where participants also highlighted that being noticed in advance was critical to enable participation. Seeing how community input is used in decision-making (36%), alongside clearer information (11%) and stronger inclusion of vulnerable groups (11%) were also noted to aid participation. Interview findings help explain these priorities, as respondents emphasised that participation feels meaningful when consultations are predictable, accessible, and followed by visible feedback or action.

Overall, the findings suggest that while multiple participation mechanisms exist and are valued, their reach and perceived influence vary, particularly for non-beneficiaries. As such, strengthening systematic outreach and feedback loops would be critical to enhance meaningful engagement.

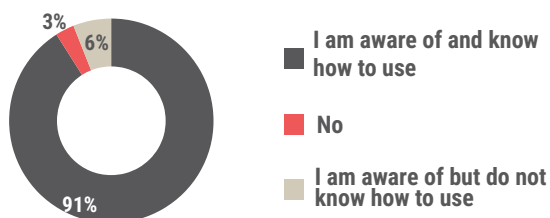


Complaint and feedback and mechanisms

Awareness and understanding of complaint and feedback mechanisms

Awareness of feedback and complaint mechanisms (CFMs) was high among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, with most respondents also reporting that they knew how to use them. Among beneficiaries, 89% were aware and able to use CFMs, rising to 96% among non-beneficiaries. Non-beneficiaries also reported slightly higher awareness of reporting channels for inappropriate behaviour by aid workers (86% compared to 80% of beneficiaries). The most frequently known CFMs were consistent across survey and interview findings, with hotlines or green lines cited as the primary channel (89% of n=292), followed by direct in-person communication with staff (34%), social media platforms (33%), and online forms (27%). In addition, interviewed beneficiaries mentioned feedback boxes located in organisational offices and RACs. Overall, both groups who were aware of CFMs (n=320) shared similar views on their use: most considered them a way to request information (81%) or make complaints (76%), while smaller shares saw them as channels to provide suggestions (61%) or report mistreatment or misconduct by aid workers (48%).

Figure 7. % of respondents aware of and know how to use feedback and complaints mechanisms (n=321)



Use of CFMs and engagement patterns

Despite high levels of awareness, actual use of CFMs was relatively limited. A majority of surveyed beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries reported not having used the mechanisms in the 12 months prior to the survey and had no feedback to share (76% overall of n=292). Only a small proportion (12%) indicated they had submitted a complaint, with active beneficiaries more likely to have engaged (17% of n=185) compared to non-beneficiaries (3% of n=107). Non-beneficiaries, however, were more likely to say they had feedback but chose not to share it (15% compared to 4% of beneficiaries). Interviews reinforced these findings: non-beneficiaries largely reported not using feedback or complaint channels, explaining this was primarily because they were not receiving humanitarian assistance. In contrast, beneficiaries described having used CFMs at least once, often to provide positive feedback or suggestions rather than complaints. Beneficiaries also highlighted personal motivations, such as wanting to improve processes or

feeling individually inclined to share feedback regardless of external incentives. This may explain why survey respondents commonly viewed engagement with CFMs as a matter of personal choice (62% overall).

Perceived effectiveness and barriers to use

Perceived effectiveness emerged as a key driver of whether respondents chose to use CFMs when raising issues. Among the few beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries who had feedback but did not submit a complaint (n=24), most explained their decision by believing their input would not make a difference (n=20). This perception was echoed by a fifth of respondents across both groups who had no feedback to share (21% of n=221), with non-beneficiaries more likely to report this (29% of n=80) compared to beneficiaries (17% of n=141). Interviews revealed mixed experiences with complaints: many beneficiaries described hotline staff as respectful and helpful, while others encountered challenges such as unclear information or disrespectful treatment. Respondents reported both cases where complaints were followed up and resolved, and cases where no response or closure occurred. Interviewed non-beneficiaries similarly described varied experiences, noting that positive outcomes were appreciated but lack of follow-up, particularly after multiple complaints, led to resignation. They also highlighted structural barriers, including unclear procedures, security checks at offices, or being told they were not eligible to complain. These findings suggest that limited use reflects not only the absence of complaints but also perceptions of relevance and access. At the same time, interviews underscored that positive interactions and effective action following reports strengthened motivation to engage with CFMs and improved trust in humanitarian actors.

Fear of retribution was also identified as a barrier in qualitative interviews. Some beneficiaries expressed concern about potential negative consequences or complaints being perceived as “snitching,” which they associated with risks such as exclusion from groups or reduced access to aid. One respondent noted that anonymity could help them feel safer when making complaints. These barriers were reflected in survey findings on enablers of engagement: the vast majority of respondents (91%) indicated that knowing their feedback would be acted upon would increase their willingness to use CFMs. Additional factors included greater accessibility (12%) and clearer communication of outcomes (10%). Assurance of protection against retaliatory actions was mentioned by only a small share (5%), suggesting that while fears of retribution exist, they were not a widespread concern overall.

Functionality and use of CFMs by humanitarian actors

Key informants from humanitarian organizations described that feedback and complaints were widely established, systematically recorded, and treated as valid, even when issues fell outside the organisation’s direct

scope. Structured case management systems – such as databases, logbooks, and tracking tools – were noted to support timely follow-up, documented closure, reinforcing accountability to beneficiaries. They also highlighted that sensitive complaints, particularly those related to staff misconduct, were handled impartially, with escalation to senior personnel not involved in the original case.

Feedback was described to inform programming across multiple levels, leading to referrals, implementation adjustments, and service redesigns, including adaptations in education, food provision, cash assistance, and language programming. Mirroring reports from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, key informants explained CFMs were designed to be visible and accessible, with multiple channels – hotlines, complaint boxes, social media, online forms, and in-person engagement. They noted these aimed to ensure inclusivity for diverse groups, though access challenges remained for the most vulnerable. Key informants also described monitoring practices which assessed trust, responsiveness, and impact through closure rates, social listening, satisfaction surveys, and outcome monitoring. These practices seem to lead to an overall positive engagement with affected populations, as survey respondents reported generally high levels of trust in humanitarian actors responding to CFMs mostly or completely (86%).

Overall findings suggest that awareness of CFMs was high among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, while actual use remained limited. Usage was noted to be strongly influenced by perceptions of effectiveness, with respondents generally expressing trust in humanitarian actors responding to feedback.

Integration needs and support for integration

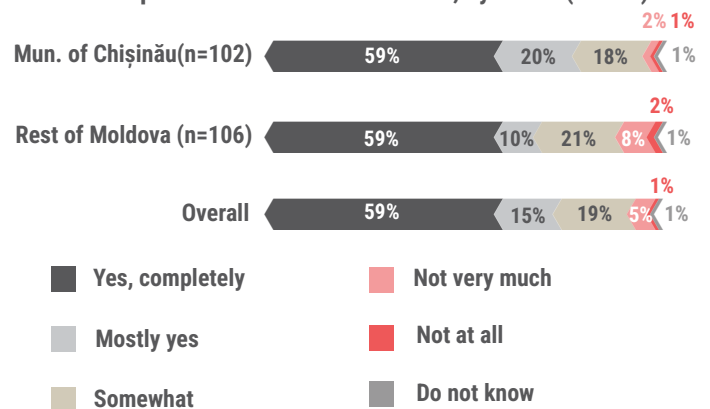
Sources of integration support

Preferences regarding sources of integration support were similar among beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents, and showed a similar distribution to those reported for humanitarian aid. Among those who reported needing support for integration (n=150), respondents most often indicated a preference to receive such support from humanitarian actors*. International NGOs (97%), UN agencies (89%), and local NGOs (88%) were mentioned most frequently, while government institutions or local authorities (69%) and religious organisations (55%) were reported less often. Individual interviews provide further context, indicating that respondents referred to several types of assistance they considered helpful for facilitating integration into the host community. Beneficiary respondents most often mentioned language learning opportunities, winter assistance, and in-kind (e.g. food and non-food items) support, while non-beneficiary respondents highlighted flexible forms of assistance and support related to housing and living conditions as helpful for settling and adapting to life in Moldova.

Contribution to autonomy

While assistance was often perceived as contributing to independence, some respondents reported that it does not fully support their autonomy. Overall, 59% of beneficiary respondents reported that the aid they receive helps them become autonomous completely. Among respondents who reported that assistance does not completely support autonomy (n=84)*, the most commonly reported suggestions for improving autonomy included improved access to healthcare (30%), access to affordable housing (24%), and better information about services and rights in the host country (20%).

Figure 8. % of beneficiary respondents who feel the aid they receive helps them become autonomous, by strata (n=290)**



Reported challenges to integration

Overall, 48% of respondents (n=321) reported experiencing at least one challenge to integration into the host country, compared with 51% who reported none. Challenges were reported slightly more frequently among beneficiaries (50%, n=209) than non-beneficiaries (44%, n=112). While the chart presents the most commonly reported challenges at the overall level, some differences emerged between groups. Beneficiaries more frequently reported limited access to healthcare (11%) compared with non-beneficiaries (2%), whereas non-beneficiaries slightly more often reported difficulties finding affordable housing (11% vs. 7% among beneficiaries). Qualitative interviews provide further insight into how these challenges shape integration experiences. Among beneficiaries, respondents most often described challenges related to meeting administrative requirements within existing systems, such as obtaining or renewing documentation, securing formal rental contracts, or completing recognition procedures needed to access services, housing, or employment. In contrast, non-beneficiaries more frequently reported broader difficulties accessing and navigating these systems in the first place, including unclear procedures and barriers to financial and public services. At the same time, other respondents across both groups reported relatively smooth access to services, language courses, or employment opportunities, suggesting that integration experiences vary depending on individuals' ability to navigate institutional systems, access information, and rely on existing support networks.

Figure 9. Top 5 most commonly reported challenges to integration into the host country (n=321)*

51%	None
36%	Financial difficulties
8%	Difficulty finding affordable housing
8%	Limited access to healthcare
7%	Language barriers

Coping strategies and support needs

Both beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents reported relying largely on individual or informal strategies to address integration challenges. Among those experiencing difficulties (n=154)*, the most common response was trying to manage independently (72%), followed by relying on friends or family for support (53%) and seeking help from humanitarian organisations (42%). Beneficiary respondents (n=105) were considerably more likely than non-beneficiaries (n=49) to report turning to humanitarian actors for support (59% compared with 6%). Among respondents reporting integration challenges (n=153)***, financial assistance was the most commonly reported type of support needed (80%), followed by access to affordable housing (20%), access to healthcare (18%), language training (14%), and support finding a job (12%). Qualitative interviews reflect similar dynamics, with respondents describing personal efforts to integrate—such as enrolling in language courses, seeking employment, or participating in education and training programmes—alongside reliance on support from relatives, neighbours, and local communities. Activities and programmes organised by humanitarian organisations, as well as community engagement opportunities, were also described as important sources of support in addressing ongoing needs and facilitating integration.

Information needs and preferred communication channels

Among respondents who reported integration support needs (n=150), preferred channels for receiving information combined direct outreach and digital communication*, with NGOs' staff or outreach volunteers (63%), social media (60%), and SMS messages (57%) most commonly reported overall, with similar patterns among beneficiaries (n=101) and non-beneficiaries (n=49). A comparable trend was observed among respondents who reported needing information about humanitarian aid (n=135), where social media (62%), SMS (53%), and NGO staff or outreach volunteers (43%) were most commonly preferred. Qualitative findings suggest that beneficiaries often accessed information through interpersonal networks or organisation-linked groups, reflecting closer interaction with humanitarian actors, while

non-beneficiaries more frequently described relying on publicly available information or incidental encounters, which may partly explain their stronger preference for digital and open communication channels. Among beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents who reported needing information about humanitarian aid (n=135), most indicated that they did not require additional information (58%). Among those who did, the most commonly mentioned needs related to types of aid available (32%) and changes to aid programmes (13%)*, suggesting that remaining gaps relate mainly to updates and clarity on available support.

Overall, the findings suggest that while many refugees perceive their integration in Moldova positively and continue to adapt to life in the host community, economic pressures remain a key constraint for a significant share of respondents. Financial difficulties, housing costs, healthcare expenses, language barriers, and administrative and documentation requirements continue to shape integration experiences, particularly for those with limited resources, highlighting the need for a durable solutions approach to integration supports.

Coordination, Sustainability and Integration

Key informant interviews indicate that coordination, localisation, and transition planning remain central to the refugee response in Moldova, though effectiveness varies across sectors and levels.

Humanitarian actors reported regular participation in multiple sectoral and thematic working groups, including protection, cash, education, AAP, disability and age, Roma inclusion, and solutions-oriented platforms. These mechanisms were described as important for aligning selection criteria, developing SOPs, informing Refugee Response Plan (RRP) priorities, sharing beneficiary needs, and coordinating referrals. Regional and municipal-level forums were often perceived as more practical and responsive than national platforms.

However, several challenges were highlighted. Coordination was described as participatory but not mandatory, leading to inconsistent reporting and occasional duplication of assistance, particularly in livelihoods programming. The absence of a common database and limited data-sharing were identified as key gaps. Some meetings were perceived as symbolic, with weak feedback loops between national decisions and local implementation. Reduced funding and coordination fatigue were also mentioned.

Regarding localisation and institutional engagement, key informant interviews emphasized efforts to integrate refugee support into national systems, with ministries acting as co-implementers in certain programmes and participating in working groups and policy discussions. Government institutions were described as generally open to collaboration, including with refugee-led and community-based organizations. Local CSOs, including

Roma-led and refugee-founded groups, were seen as essential partners in outreach and service delivery, although capacity gaps – especially outside urban areas – and limited long-term funding were noted. Overall, the transition from emergency response to more development-oriented programming was described as ongoing. Actors stressed the importance of complementing government systems rather than substituting them, strengthening institutional ownership, and improving coordination to avoid duplication and maximise impact despite shrinking resources.

Conclusion

Overall, findings show that while humanitarian assistance in Moldova continues to play a critical role – particularly through widely valued cash modalities – gaps in predictability, communication, and equitable access increasingly shape refugee experiences. Beneficiaries generally perceived aid as relevant and well aligned with needs, yet both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries reported challenges linked to shifting funding, stricter targeting, and procedural barriers that influence perceptions of fairness and inclusion. Participation mechanisms were present but unevenly applied, with meaningful engagement closely tied to visible follow-up and clear communication. Similarly, although awareness of feedback and complaint mechanisms was high, their use remained limited. Integration experiences varied, with economic pressures – particularly housing, healthcare, and living costs – remaining central barriers, and refugees largely navigating challenges through individual or informal strategies. Together, these findings underscore the importance of strengthening transparency, consistency, and two-way communication; investing in equitable access across locations; and ensuring that accountability mechanisms are responsive and visible. As the response transitions toward longer-term approaches, reinforcing trust, and integration-oriented support that fosters autonomy will be essential to meeting the evolving needs of refugees in Moldova.

Findings were also shared in a workshop where humanitarian and governmental actors were invited to reflect on the results and discuss best practices.

Endnotes

* Multiple options could be selected, therefore, findings can exceed 100%.

** Results do not add up to 100% due to rounding up.

*** Inconsistencies identified in responses to these specific questions were addressed during data cleaning, resulting in reduced sample sizes

¹ IMPACT Initiatives, Social Economic Insight Survey (SEIS) [Factsheet](#) November 2025, accessed: 10.03.2026 and [Situation Overview](#) December 2025, accessed: 10.03.2026

² For the purpose of this assessment, *adequacy* refers to the extent to which assistance meets households' needs and covers key expenses; *timeliness* refers to whether assistance is received at the appropriate time to address these needs; and *predictability* refers to the extent to which recipients are informed about the duration, frequency, and continuity of assistance.

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ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).



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