

# Accountability to Affected Populations in the Moldova Refugee Response

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## What is this document about?

This document presents the key findings from an assessment on accountability and humanitarian assistance for refugees from Ukraine living in Moldova. As the refugee response has continued to evolve since the start of the crisis in February 2022, understanding the experiences and needs of refugees remained important. In this context, IMPACT Initiatives, through its REACH Initiative, conducted this assessment to support organisations in Moldova in providing aid that reflects the preferences and needs of refugees.

The assessment looked at how refugees experienced humanitarian support, including whether assistance was seen as fair and relevant, how they were included in decisions that affect them, and how feedback was used in practice. It also explored how humanitarian organisations interacted with refugee communities and what lessons can inform future aid, as well as refugees' needs related to integration in Moldova.

This assessment brought together survey answers and interviews with refugees from Ukraine living in Moldova and humanitarian aid workers. Data was collected between 25 August and 3 October 2025. A total of 321 adult refugees living in Moldova took part in phone or face-to-face surveys in the municipality of Chişinău and other parts of Moldova, excluding the Transnistrian region. Respondents included those who had received humanitarian aid in the three months before the survey, referred to as beneficiaries, and refugees who had not received humanitarian aid in that period, referred to as non-beneficiaries. On average, beneficiary respondents were 50 years old, while non-beneficiary respondents were 38 years old. In addition, more in-depth interviews were conducted with 14 refugees, alongside interviews with 9 humanitarian workers, to capture both perspectives.

## Humanitarian aid in Moldova

### Aid received and providers

Almost all beneficiaries received cash assistance. This was the most common type of support and was widely seen as the most useful. Beneficiaries, as well as non-beneficiaries,

said cash was the most important form of aid because it allowed them to cover different needs. Alongside cash, some respondents said they had received vouchers, food, basic household items, and health-related support in the three months before the survey. Most aid was received from international humanitarian organisations, including United Nations agencies and other nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), with fewer respondents mentioning local organisations, religious groups, or authorities.

### Alignment of aid with respondents' needs

Most beneficiaries said that the aid matched their needs well or very well and helped their communities. In more in-depth interviews, many explained that aid was most helpful when it is enough to meet their needs, arrives on time, and is provided in a predictable way. Cash and vouchers were often described as especially useful because they gave respondents flexibility to cover different needs. At the same time, many respondents said that rising rent, medical costs, and utility bills made it difficult for current aid amounts to fully cover expenses.

*"It really helped before school started—we received 1500 lei per child for a bookstore. That was a big help, we're grateful. And in recent months, we also received pharmacy vouchers."*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

### Changes in aid over time

Respondents in in-depth interviews and humanitarian aid workers described changes in aid provision since the start of the refugee crisis. Some respondents explained that while support continued, amounts became smaller, distributions happened less often, or programmes changed or stopped. Humanitarian aid workers said that the funding had been reduced. This, combined with staffing gaps, especially outside the municipality of Chişinău, had led to smaller programmes, fewer distributions, and some activities being reduced or stopped.

*"At the beginning, the distribution was to all Ukrainian families here in Moldova. Now, due to the budget cuts, we need to reduce the caseload... we developed these criteria."*

– Key informant interview with humanitarian aid worker



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## Applying for aid and access barriers

Non-beneficiaries gave different reasons for not receiving aid in the three months before the survey. More than half said that they had chosen not to apply, while others said they applied but were not selected. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries described barriers that made it difficult to apply for aid. These include limited registration slots, repeated paperwork, missed messages, delays, unequal distribution, health-related challenges, and long distances to services. Some also mentioned limited internet literacy or access for older adults.

## Aid recipients and fairness of the process

### Rules for receiving aid and fairness of selection

Most respondents said they understood the rules used to decide who could receive humanitarian aid. A majority of beneficiaries said that the rules explaining who can apply for aid in their area were clear and easy to understand. About three quarters of non-beneficiaries also said they were generally informed about these rules.

Most respondents said they understood how aid decisions are made when resources are limited. However, non-beneficiaries said they had lower levels of understanding than beneficiaries, even though overall awareness remained high. Many respondents, especially non-beneficiaries, felt the process was not fair. Those who felt selection was partially fair or unfair described situations where some households in need were left out, while others who were seen as less vulnerable received help. Some also felt that information about decisions was not always clear or shared evenly.

*“What seemed unfair to me was that they didn’t say who was selected, because I would have liked to see the people who were chosen, to look at their business projects [...]. That would have been interesting to me from an experience point of view, to see how other people did their work, their project, and to understand where my mistakes were.”*

– In-depth individual interview with non-beneficiary

### Feeling prioritised or left out

Many beneficiaries recognised that not everyone could be supported and said that prioritising the most vulnerable was necessary. Still, some described situations where assistance stopped without explanation or where refugees who seemed to meet the rules for receiving aid were not selected. Non-beneficiaries also said they understood the aim of helping the most vulnerable, but some described submitting documents and then being rejected without clear reasons. Aid workers explained that rules on who can receive support have become stricter due to reduced funding and could differ or change over time.

In in-depth interviews, respondents shared their views on how support could be improved. They called for fairer and more consistent ways of deciding who receives support, so that vulnerable refugees are not left out. They also asked for clearer information about who can receive aid, how decisions are made, and when rules or decisions change.

*“Transparency and clarity in how information [on aid] is shared [...] would eliminate confusion, misunderstandings, and negative feelings.”*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

## Participation in decisions about humanitarian aid

### Being asked about aid preferences

Less than half of beneficiary respondents said they had been asked about their aid preferences in the past year before the survey, and very few non-beneficiary respondents said the same. Among those who were asked for their preferences, most said they took part through one to one interviews or surveys. At the community level, awareness of opportunities to take part in consultations about aid preferences was low. The vast majority of respondents said they were not aware of any meetings or activities organised to gather community input on aid in their area in the last year before the survey.

### Perceived meaningfulness and impact of participation

Respondents, including both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, shared mixed experiences regarding their participation in consultations about aid. Among those who were asked, more than half said they later received the type of support they had asked for. In in-depth interviews, respondents described participation more positively when it led to visible outcomes, such as changes in food arrangements or receiving specific household items.

When consultations did not result in visible change or explanation, participation was often seen as symbolic, especially by non-beneficiaries. More than half of respondents said participation in decisions affecting them is important.

*“I’m willing to participate in surveys if needed—as long as it leads to something.”*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

### Barriers to taking part in decisions about aid

In in-depth interviews, some beneficiaries described barriers to participation in consultation about aid, such as lack of time due to work, childcare, or household responsibilities. Respondents also shared that they preferred simple and accessible ways to provide feedback, such as online surveys, hotlines, or phone calls, as well as locally accessible formats such as home visits or community meetings, rather than formats that are difficult to attend, such as consultations requiring travel to other localities.



## Giving feedback and making complaints

### Knowing how to share feedback or complaints

Most respondents, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, said they knew how to give feedback or make complaints about humanitarian aid and were aware of ways to report inappropriate behaviour by aid workers. Commonly known options included phone hotlines or greenlines, speaking directly with staff, and online or digital channels.

### Use of feedback and complaints channels

Despite high understanding of how to give feedback or complaints, most respondents said they had not used feedback or complaints channels in the past year prior to the survey. Many said this was because they had no feedback to share. Beneficiaries were more likely to say they had used these channels at least once. When they did, this was often to share positive feedback or suggestions rather than complaints.

*“Usually, it wasn’t complaints—it was feedback and suggestions. And they always reached the intended recipient. Everything was well organised.”*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

In in-depth interviews, beneficiary respondents also mentioned personal reasons for giving feedback, such as wanting to improve how things work or feeling comfortable sharing their views on their own initiative. This may explain why many respondents said using feedback or complaints channels was a personal choice. Among the few respondents who had feedback or complaints but did not submit it, most explained their decision by believing their input would not make a difference. Non-beneficiaries more often said they did not use the channels because they were not receiving aid.

Despite limited use, the large majority of respondents said that they mostly or completely trust humanitarian organisations to respond to complaints or feedback.

### Handling feedback in aid organisations

Aid workers said that systems for receiving feedback and complaints were widely in place, recorded properly, and taken seriously. They described feedback as being used for referrals, service adjustments, and aid programme improvements, such as education, food, cash assistance, and language support.

*“We treat each complaint as valid, even if it’s outside our scope. If it’s not a service we provide, we refer it to the right actor.”*

– Key informant interview with humanitarian aid worker

## Reasons for giving feedback or complaints

Almost all respondents said they would be more likely to use feedback and complaints channels if they felt confident that their input would lead to action. Easier access to channels and clearer communication about what happens after feedback is given were also mentioned as factors that would encourage use. Positive experiences with follow-up were said to increase trust and willingness to engage again.

*“At least some result, some change. Or at minimum, a written reply or phone call saying, “Yes, we received your complaint.” Just like with the thank-you messages we send or suggestions—we get feedback. I think the same should apply to complaints.”*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

## Integration in Moldova: needs and challenges

### Settling into life in Moldova

Almost half of respondents said they faced at least one challenge related to integration in Moldova at the time of the survey, while others did not experience major difficulties. Most commonly shared challenges were financial difficulties, difficulty finding affordable housing, limited access to healthcare, and language barriers.

*“We found a place on our own, rented an apartment, even though it’s very hard for us. [...] It’s not free. And neighbors [in Moldova] helped a little [with settling in], and we are very grateful for that support.”*

– In-depth individual interview with non-beneficiary

Interviews showed that paperwork, administrative steps, and formal requirements made it harder for some respondents to secure housing, access services, or keep a job. For example, respondents reported difficulties registering cars, obtaining a disability certificate under Temporary Protection status, navigating medical documentation between Moldova and Ukraine, and securing housing due to landlords’ reluctance to sign official rental contracts. Others described smoother experiences, saying they were able to access services, language courses, or work opportunities without major barriers.

*“The healthcare system really helped me, because all medical tests and scans were fully covered”*

– In-depth individual interview with beneficiary

### Humanitarian aid and autonomy

Slightly more than half of beneficiaries said that aid they received helped them become more autonomous, though not everyone felt it supported full autonomy. Some explained that aid covered certain needs but did not address all aspects of daily life.



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## Coping with difficulties and support needs in Moldova

About three quarters of respondents said they tried to handle integration challenges on their own. Many also relied on friends, family, neighbours, or humanitarian organisations for help. Beneficiaries were much more likely than others to say they turned to humanitarian organisations for support.

When asked what kind of help they needed most, respondents most often said financial support, followed by affordable housing, healthcare, language learning, and help finding work. Respondents who said they need help to settle and adapt in Moldova most often shared they would prefer to receive such aid from humanitarian organisations, such as international NGOs, UN agencies, and local NGOs.

*"[We need] just a minimum to live on, so we can eat, have medical treatment for the child, and pay for rent and utilities."*

*– In-depth individual interview with non-beneficiary*

Respondents said they prefer to receive information about both integration support and humanitarian aid through a mix of direct contact and digital channels. Many mentioned outreach staff, social media, and SMS messages as useful ways to be informed.

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## ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative creates tools and information that help humanitarian organisations make better, evidence-based decisions during crises, recovery, and development efforts. It does this by collecting its own data and carrying out detailed analysis, working closely with different aid agencies to ensure coordination. REACH is a partnership between IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED, and the United Nations training and satellite applications program (UNITAR-UNOSAT).



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