

AT THE DIAMOND DAY CENTER IN TELENESTI, UKRAINIAN REFUGEES AND LOCAL MOLDOVAN FAMILIES ARE COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE A WELCOMING, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY THROUGH SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS—FROM BUILDING A CHILDREN'S MINI-LIBRARY TO DELIVERING HOMEMADE TREATS TO ELDERS.

Program Overview

Three Years Since the Invasion of Ukraine

Ukraine Response & Program Overview

March 2024 - June 2025



CONTEXT



The Russian invasion of Ukraine and full-scale war has caused the world's largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War,¹ with approximately 3.6 million people internally displaced in Ukraine² and over 5.6 million Ukrainian refugees recorded globally.³

Odeska Oblast, located in Southern Ukraine, is home to over 2.2 million people, of whom over 1.3 million have been directly affected by the war.⁴ Odeska is a crucial hub for returnees, Ukrainians who left and have since returned to Ukraine during the war, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are forced to flee their homes in Oblasts on the frontlines, including Kherson, Donetsk and Kharkiv. As a result, the region has absorbed a significant number of people, which puts a strain on its social and medical systems. As of January 2025, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicated that at least 41 percent of the current Odeska population is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.⁵

Recent escalations in the Odeska Oblast have largely involved Russian drone and missile strikes, targeting critical infrastructure. In August 2025, there were multiple reports of strikes on port and energy facilities, including an oil depot and a gas compressor station. These attacks not only cause physical destruction but also disrupt essential services, further complicating the humanitarian situation and creating a constant threat to the civilian population.

The Republic of Moldova is Ukraine's neighbor to the west and borders the Odeska Oblast. Between February 24, 2022 and June 30, 2025, a total of 1,132,031⁶ Ukrainian refugees have crossed into Moldova, with over 130,000⁷ finding ongoing refuge in the small Eastern European country of 2.5 million; only marginally larger in population than the Odeska Oblast. Despite being one of the poorest nations in Europe and not being a member of the European Union, the people of Moldova have opened their arms and homes to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Moldova has welcomed the highest number of Ukrainian refugees relative to its population size among all of Ukraine's neighboring countries. This response occurred despite Moldova's limited resources and lower levels of preparedness compared to European Union member states, and with significant strain on its own economy as well as its health, education, labor and social welfare systems.

In Ukraine, women and girls make up 57 percent of IDPs, with a majority being older women.⁸ Of the one million Ukrainians who have sought refuge in Moldova, over 89 percent are women and children.⁹ Women

and children, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons of Roma ethnicity and single mothers with children often face heightened protection risks and vulnerabilities that jeopardize safety and well-being. Disruptions in social networks and services, combined with an inability to cover basic needs, leaves vulnerable persons susceptible to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking. Physical and psychological well-being are further impacted by the immense stress that accompanies the struggle to secure safe housing, access medical assistance and reunite with loved ones.

CWS has responded to the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine since March 2022. In the 15 years preceding the conflict, CWS partnered with local organizations in Moldova to advance sustainable livelihoods, renewable energy and address rural poverty. The expanded programs built in the three years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine have continued that approach by working alongside host communities and local organizations to support Ukrainian refugees and socially vulnerable Moldovans, including Diaconia Social Mission, Crestina Titus Foundation-Diamond Day Center, the Roma Women's Platform "ROMNI", Healthy City, The Union for Equity and Health, Hope of the Earth, RCTV Memoria and Roma National Center. In October 2024, CWS renewed its commitment to alleviating suffering for people and communities impacted by conflict and disaster by launching a new office in Odesa, in the southern region of Odeska, Ukraine.¹⁰ In partnership with three longstanding organizations in Odesa—Positive Women, Culture of Democracy and Caritas Odesa—CWS supports IDPs, returnees and host communities with basic needs, medical, protection and mental health and psychosocial support.

Since March 2024, CWS programs have reached at least 5,150 unique refugees and host community members in Moldova and 6,500 IDPs, returnees and community members in Ukraine. In total, CWS has reached at least 52,000 individuals since the beginning of the response. From rapidly deploying assistance to those most in need in the first weeks of the crisis to ensuring continuous quality access to essential services and protection, CWS continues to prioritize supporting the most vulnerable and marginalized while investing in local partners' capacity and promoting social cohesion and integration.



SILVIA AND HER FAMILY WERE FORCED TO FLEE ODESA, UKRAINE WHEN WAR UPENDED THEIR LIVES. WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE ANASTASIS EDUCATIONAL CENTER IN BĂLȚI, MOLDOVA, THEY FOUND SAFETY, RESOURCES AND COUNSELING THAT HELPED THEM HEAL, REGAIN STABILITY AND REBUILD HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

CROSS CUTTING APPROACHES/PRIORITIES

Social Cohesion and Integration

Supporting the Full Community-Affected Persons and Host Communities

CWS is responding to a displacement crisis triggered by war against the backdrop of increasing financial and infrastructural challenges that are affecting refugees, IDPs, returnees and the communities who host them. Since the earliest days of our response, CWS has kept social cohesion and integration at the forefront of our programs. Integration is the process of incorporating newcomers into the fabric of society legally, economically and socially. Social cohesion is the bond that holds a society together. Together, these include fighting marginalization, creating a sense of belonging and promoting trust, opportunity and stability, all of which are only possible by assisting impacted persons with accessing their rights and services. This work is critical, especially as more refugees begin to shift from temporary stays to long term planning in Moldova—a process that comes with its own challenges around housing, education and employment, and makes supporting these transitions increasingly important.

CWS's commitment to this support is evident in its partnerships that bring Moldovans and Ukrainians together and advocate for those who are vulnerable and marginalized. This includes projects that provide legal counseling to assist refugees in registering for temporary protection (TP) or other legal status and accessing the benefits afforded by that status. The inclusion

of Moldovans into psychosocial and livelihoods activities, such as men's and women's clubs, masterclasses, children's summer camps and skills development sessions, offer safe environments that foster open-mindedness, understanding and positive relationship building. This approach extends to normalizing the inclusion of Moldovan and Ukrainian Roma families into programming and services by Roma-led and non-Roma-led partners.

To alleviate tensions and promote cohesion, CWS has worked to integrate the needs and priorities of Moldovan communities into our programs for refugees from Ukraine. Many Moldovan families are feeling a strain on their finances as a result of welcoming Ukrainians at the household, community and national levels. Whether distributing vouchers, winter items, food and hygiene items, or organizing meals for children at after-school and summer activities, CWS has consistently included vulnerable Moldovans.

In Ukraine's Odeska Oblast, the influx of a significant number of IDPs and returnees has placed a strain on local social and medical systems, contributing to a lack of housing and employment opportunities. This pressure on shared resources has created a degree of tension between the displaced population and native Odesans. Our programs are designed to specifically address and ease these tensions by promoting social cohesion

and integration. We do this by actively including IDPs and native Odesans—even those who never left—in our programs. By fostering shared activities and mutual support in our psychosocial activities, we ensure that our assistance not only meets humanitarian needs but also strengthens the entire community.

Partner Capacity Strengthening

Improving Local Organizations' Long-Term Impact

Civil society organizations are the cornerstone of CWS's Ukraine response. They've opened their doors, adjusted their services and stretched their budgets to address the immediate and ongoing needs of impacted persons in addition to maintaining existing programs for host communities. For many organizations, particularly those who are small and have minimal experience working with international non-governmental organizations, working in the humanitarian arena has involved a learning curve. CWS recognizes that local organizations are best positioned to identify needs and propose solutions—and that, with the right support, can do so with great effectiveness. While this support includes financial assistance through the allocation of grant funding, it also includes capacity strengthening.



CWS PARTNERS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS LIKE HOPE OF THE EARTH TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE IN UKRAINE, INCLUDING SERGHEI, WHO RECEIVED CRITICAL MEDICAL CARE THAT RESTORED HIS HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

From project ideation and proposal design to implementation, protection mainstreaming and monitoring and evaluation, CWS prioritizes each partnership by providing customized technical assistance and training. Since March 2022, CWS staff have worked with partners to build their understanding and competency in humanitarian assistance and protection through conversations and trainings on gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse, feedback and complaint mechanisms, case management and inclusion and equity.

This has included co-developing a case management system with a partner in northern Moldova. This system was designed to support more comprehensive and coordinated casework while also helping partners standardize the quality of their client interactions and prevent burnout. CWS emphasized that knowing how to help others starts with knowing how to take care of oneself and the team.

CWS has also supported partner organizations with monitoring and evaluation, financial reporting, database development and understanding the importance of and process behind collecting and analyzing vulnerability, sex, age and disability disaggregated data. Through regular monitoring visits, CWS creates a constructive space for communication, feedback and addressing challenges together. CWS's dedicated and ongoing engagement with local partners supports trust-building and real-time problem-solving, which are essential for ensuring an effective, locally-led and high-quality response.



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

PHOTO COURTESY OF CARITAS ODESA UGCC

Basic Needs

Warming the Homes of Displaced People in the Odeska Oblast, Ukraine: Caritas Odesa

Shortly after opening an office in Ukraine, CWS partnered with Caritas Odesa to deliver vital winterization support to older persons and families with children in the Odeska Oblast. This project focused on providing firewood as a critical intervention to ensure adequate heating and proper living conditions for IDPs amid freezing temperatures and heightened bombardment of Ukraine’s power grid.

From November 11, 2024 to February 28, 2025, CWS and Caritas Odesa delivered firewood to 129 households, supporting 241 IDPs, of whom 37 were individuals with disabilities. This strategic partnership combined Caritas Odesa’s deep local knowledge and reach with CWS’s humanitarian commitment to address urgent needs throughout 2024-2025.



WHEN WAR FORCED DIANA AND HER FAMILY TO FLEE THEIR HOME IN UKRAINE, THEY ARRIVED IN MOLDOVA WITH LITTLE BUT HOPE FOR A SAFE FUTURE. THANKS TO THE CWS WINTERIZATION PROJECT AND THE RESILIENCE OF A MOTHER’S LOVE, THEY’RE BUILDING A NEW LIFE—ONE STEP AND SEASON AT A TIME.

Supporting Basic Needs through Moldova’s Seasons: Diaconia Social Mission

CWS partnered with Diaconia Social Mission to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals from Ukraine in the early days of the war and has continued to support people’s access to basic needs. This has included the provision of food, hygiene items, medical support, winterization supplies and vouchers to offset housing and utilities costs.

Most Ukrainian refugees have now spent anywhere from one to three winters in Moldova and have, alongside Moldovan families, found themselves in a difficult financial situation due to high inflation and increasing heating and utility expenses. The winter season exacerbates the financial hardships that Ukrainian refugees already face outside of the winter months, including covering the costs for accommodation, utilities, food, clothes, health care and education.

From December 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025, CWS, in partnership with Diaconia Social Mission, supported 235 families (183 Ukrainian refugee families and 52 socially vulnerable Moldovan families), or 804 people. These families received winter clothing and footwear, medication, hygiene and food items. The support helped ease the financial burden on families by offsetting increased utility and heating costs.

In the first winter of the response, 3,822 families (1,858 Ukrainian families and 1964 Moldovan families), or about 15,000 people, were provided support under this project. In the second year of the response, 4,877 families (2,914 Ukrainian and 1,963 Moldovan), or 21,256 people, were supported.

It is not possible to completely deduplicate numbers across the three years, but we estimate at least 7,500 families, or 30,000 people, were supported since March 2022 with basic needs under this response.



IN 2023, OUR LOCAL PARTNER IN MOLDOVA, DIACONIA, DISTRIBUTED BLANKETS, WINTER CLOTHING AND VOUCHERS FOR FOOD AND HYGIENE ITEMS TO HELP FAMILIES STAY SAFE AND WARM THROUGH THE WINTER.

Responding to Multi-sectoral Needs

Delivering Care to Older Persons with Disabilities in Rural Odeska Oblast, Ukraine: Culture of Democracy

As part of the “Caring Hearts” project, CWS collaborates with a local organization, Culture of Democracy, to deliver humanitarian aid and essential services to older persons residing in remote villages in Odeska Oblast. Individuals residing in rural villages, particularly older persons, are confronted with loneliness and isolation as their loved ones have left due to conflict, health issues and greater difficulty covering basic needs. They are also less likely to be reached with humanitarian assistance due to the distance from city centers and transportation challenges.



SINCE RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE IN 2022, CWS HAS EXPANDED ITS SUPPORT TO REACH SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS. THROUGH THE CARING HEARTS PROJECT, WE'RE PARTNERING WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL AID AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN REMOTE VILLAGES OF ODESA OBLAST.

Therefore, this initiative includes the distribution of crucial food and hygiene items, the provision of on-site medical and psychosocial support via a dedicated mobile team and consultations and referrals which connect program participants to ongoing care through public services. Culture of Democracy's mobile team, which is comprised of a social worker, psychologist and medical assistant, skillfully manages the complex logistics involved in providing aid to vulnerable persons across ten rural communities.

Between September 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, CWS and Culture of Democracy distributed food and hygiene packages to 3,735 households, or approximately 4,980 individuals.

Providing Protection, Assistance and Inclusion at the Multifunctional Center in Balti, Moldova: Healthy City, The Union for Equity and Health and Hope of the Earth

Since October 2022, CWS has partnered with three organizations in a unique collaboration in the northern city of Balti, the second largest city in Moldova, to support refugees' access to comprehensive services: Healthy City, The Union for Equity and Health and Hope of the Earth. CWS

first partnered with Healthy City to support the Balti Distribution Center, where essential food, hygiene and household supplies were provided to Ukrainian refugees in Balti and the surrounding area. The distribution center established a relationship-based approach to create a safe and welcoming environment where refugees from Ukraine could talk about their needs, receive information and choose the items they need, rather than receiving a pre-packaged set of supplies.

In 2024, the Balti Distribution Center transitioned toward providing cash vouchers, allowing refugees more choice, flexibility and dignity in meeting their household needs. Through this support, newly arrived Ukrainians, single women with children, older persons and Roma families could access vouchers alongside information on how to connect to other available services and programs. These include mental health, psychosocial, medical and livelihoods support, which seeks to restore wellbeing, stability and social connection. To better coordinate this care, CWS worked with Healthy City to develop and implement a case management system that provides customized referrals and intensive integration support to especially vulnerable persons. Through this new programming, Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan Roma are not only supported by their own case manager but are also eligible for flexible funding. This creative and personalized approach can make a critical difference in addressing immediate financial needs—whether by securing affordable housing for one's family or gaining skills towards employment.

Two additional local partners, The Union for Equity and Health and Hope of the Earth, employ a variety of medical and psychological specialists that can provide psychosocial activities, individual psychological sessions and medical consultations and referrals. Psychosocial activities span masterclasses, workshops and sports tournaments for youth, serving as an opportunity to build community and social cohesion between Ukrainians and Moldovans.

Medical support includes specialized treatments for tuberculosis and other chronic illnesses and coverage for sexual and reproductive health. It also includes marginalized groups who experience discrimination in the Moldovan healthcare system, such as individuals with HIV and AIDS and Roma people. While each organization has its specialties, they work together to address needs and refer refugees to the appropriate service provided by the project's three partners or other service providers in Balti. The influx of Ukrainians in Moldova has led to additional pressures on an already limited health care system. CWS and partners follow national legislation and work with state-run medical facilities to ensure that refugees who are eligible for those services are connected to them, and that services provided by partners are available to fill in urgent gaps.

Since February 2024, around 3,450 Ukrainians and Moldovans have received at least one service from the Multifunctional Center project in Balti. Since the beginning of the response, at least 13,100 people have received support through this project.



CWS PARTNERS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS LIKE HEALTHY CITY AND THE UNION FOR EQUITY AND HEALTH TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE IN MOLDOVA, INCLUDING OKSANA AND HER DAUGHTER MASHA.

Education

Ensuring Access to Education and Psychosocial Support for Women and Children at the Anastasis Center in Balti, Moldova: Diaconia Social Mission

Diaconia established the Anastasis Educational Center in Balti to help address the educational, psychosocial and psychological needs of Ukrainian refugees in the area. In 2022, CWS provided modular classrooms to create space for the Center's activities. The new classrooms provide a friendly environment, equipped with laptops and internet, where children ages 7-16 could attend online Ukrainian school. Since then, the Anastasis Educational Center has transformed with the needs of the community, turning it into a hub for women and children in Balti. The Center offers a safe, structured and inclusive space for children ages 4-16 to participate in online schooling, after-school learning and non-formal education. By bringing together Ukrainian and Moldovan children through shared activities, the Center promotes inclusion and social cohesion. Women from both Moldovan and Ukrainian communities also benefit from psychosocial support, skill-building and social activities in a dedicated space. Structured psychological services help children and women strengthen emotional resilience and cope with challenges. A wide range of recreational events—including workshops, holiday celebrations and theater visits—are regularly held, with many supported by 33 active youth volunteers. In 2024, the Anastasis Center also launched the "Respiro" service, which provided supervised care for refugee children aged 4-6, allowing mothers to attend to medical, legal or personal matters.



THROUGH OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATION DIACONIA, CWS IS CREATING SAFE, SUPPORTIVE SPACES AT THE ANASTASIS EDUCATIONAL CENTER IN MOLDOVA WHERE CHILDREN CAN LEARN, HEAL AND DREAM AGAIN.

Since July 2024, 148 youth and children, including 93 Ukrainians and 55 Moldovans, participated in the Anastasis Center's school and recreational activities. The Center has brought together 71 Ukrainian and 24 Moldovan women, including mothers, grandmothers and women without children, to engage in parenting strengthening and psychosocial activities. Through these activities, the women can form relationships with their peers, strengthen their relationship with their children and access one-on-one psychological consultations and referrals.

Since the beginning of the response, Diaconia's Anastasis Center has reached at least 398 children (280 from Ukraine and 118 from Moldova) and 158 women (112 from Ukraine and 46 from Moldova).

Creating a Safe Place for Connection and After-School Support for Children and Families at the Diamond Day Center in Telenesti, Moldova: Crestina Titus Foundation

Since April 2023, CWS has partnered with the Diamond Day Center to provide a child-safe space for children ages 6-17 in Telenesti, in central Moldova. These children benefit from age-specific homework assistance and recreational activities such as arts, crafts and games and receive meals provided by a team of attentive staff and volunteers. Activities are divided by age and include both daytime and after-school hours. The Center welcomes both socially vulnerable Moldovan children, who are referred by the local social assistance agency, and Ukrainian children. In June 2023, the Diamond Day Center organized a summer camp for Ukrainian and Moldovan children and involved Ukrainian mothers to support activities and translate camp materials into the Ukrainian language. The summer camp had an entrepreneurial theme based on the international Aflatoun course on social and entrepreneurial development for children and

adolescents. During the camp, children discovered their skills and applied their knowledge by engaging in small entrepreneurial activities, such as preparing and selling popcorn, cotton candy and lemonade. They also learned life principles through stories of historical figures from different time periods.

While the Center has long established itself as a trusted space for vulnerable Moldovan children and their families, it has become a key support in Telenesti in fostering psychosocial wellbeing for Ukrainian families. On a bi-weekly basis, the Diamond Day Center facilitates an hour-long gathering for Ukrainian men and women to decompress from the challenges they face and find support in one another. Those who attend can find solace over hot tea, warm conversation and a full food package to bring home to their families.

Hygiene kits were provided to refugee individuals and parents of children attending the Diamond Day Center. Twice, vouchers worth 300 MDL were distributed to both refugees and Moldovan residents, allowing recipients to purchase the hygiene products they needed in the quantities they preferred. Given the rising number of refugees and resource limitations, the frequency of distributing hygiene products was adjusted accordingly.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, CWS and the Diamond Day Center provided services to 325 Ukrainian and socially vulnerable Moldovan families and children. In total, at least 400 people have participated in this project to date.

Protection

Improving Health and Wellbeing for Women and Children in the City of Odesa, Ukraine: Positive Women

Since September 2024, CWS has actively supported women living with HIV in Odesa, Ukraine, through our partnership with local organization, Positive Women Odesa.

This partnership provides critical services to acutely vulnerable women and children in Odesa City, with a specific focus on those living with HIV, sex workers, displaced people, older women and women in the LGBTQ+ community.



WHEN THE WAR IN UKRAINE UPENDED OLENA'S LIFE—COSTING HER A JOB, THREATENING HER HOME, AND WORSENING HER HEALTH—SHE FOUND HOPE THROUGH CWS'S LOCAL PARTNER, POSITIVE WOMEN, WHO HELPED HER REGAIN STABILITY AND MOVE TOWARD A BRIGHTER, MORE HOPEFUL FUTURE.

Between September 2024 and June 2025, CWS and Positive Women Odesa distributed crucial material support in the form of supermarket and pharmacy vouchers to 180 women and provided legal consultations to help women navigate and resolve various legal issues.

This project also included informational group events led by an infectious disease doctor, empowering women with essential knowledge about disease prevention. Positive Women Odesa facilitated mutual support groups, which created a safe space for women to improve their mental well-being and build valuable social connections. Children of women living with HIV or at risk of HIV participated in group sessions with a child psychologist, which significantly enhanced their communication skills, concentration and overall social interactions. In a delightful enhancement to these sessions, children also enjoyed enriching outdoor activities, including visits to the circus, zoo and theatrical performances, alongside engaging master classes.

In June 2025, CWS expanded its operations in the Odeska Oblast, recognizing the ongoing needs of the population, including IDPs and returnees. Our work with Positive Women Odesa highlights a commitment to providing holistic support to women, empowering them to overcome challenges and improve their quality of life.

Supporting Survivors of Gender-Based and Other Forms of Violence in Chisinau, Moldova: RCTV Memoria

Between March and June 2024, and again between September 2024 and February 2025, CWS partnered with Memoria, a center for survivors of gender-based and state-sanctioned violence. Founded in 1999, Memoria provides mental health and psychosocial support, medical care and basic needs assistance to Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans impacted by violence. Participants received survivor-centered and trauma-informed services, ranging from trauma assessments and psychological counseling to medical screenings, treatments and referrals.

Memoria's approach to improving programming and program participant wellbeing and social connection led Memoria to include their program participants in the organizing of psychosocial activities. This included engaging former Ukrainian program participants as volunteers, who actively encourage and recruit other Ukrainian program participants to attend. Through each of these services, Memoria established rapport, giving people a safe space to disclose experiences of gender-based violence and be connected to support. One component of Memoria's comprehensive approach is the provision of emergency multi-purpose cash assistance for those who are vulnerable and have urgent needs. It supports access to food, hygiene and household items while maintaining choice and dignity of program participants. In the last year, CWS's partnership with Memoria has supported 777 people, with around 3,000 people reached since 2023.

Promoting Inclusion of Ukrainian and Moldovan Roma

The Roma people are an ethnic minority who have experienced severe discrimination in Europe for centuries. Roma families often live in a harsh cycle of poverty and discrimination fueled by highly negative misconceptions and stereotypes, mistreatment by governments and a widespread lack of identification documents. Around 1,665 Roma refugees from Ukraine are assessed to be seeking refuge in Moldova, though the actual number is hard to determine and likely higher, due to the mobility of Roma families.¹¹ Research indicated there was an estimated 11 percent increase in the Roma refugee population between 2023 and 2024. On top of the myriads of challenges that all refugees from Ukraine face, Roma refugees must also contend with hostile, discriminatory attitudes from other Ukrainian refugees, Moldovan citizens and government officials. This makes accessing safe housing, humanitarian support and services even more difficult. CWS has been addressing these challenges through multiple projects with two local Roma-led organizations; Romni and Roma National Center.

Romni

In response to the challenges that Roma refugees in Moldova from Ukraine have faced in accessing services and the deep-rooted bias and discrimination they endure, CWS partnered with Romni, a Roma woman-led organization, between September 2022 and October 2023, to develop a team of Roma mediators to support around 2,000 Roma refugees within central and northern Moldova as well as in the Transnistrian Region. They assisted Roma refugees in accessing services, including shelter, health care, education, food, clothing and transportation.

This team of mediators collected information on the needs of the Roma refugees and referred them to local authorities, civil society organizations and other service providers for medical and legal assistance. They also provide advocacy in cases of discrimination, transportation and service fees, following up with



PARTICIPANTS WITH CWS LOCAL PARTNER MEMORIA TAKE PART IN STRESS-RELIEF AND NATURE-BASED WORKSHOPS. MEMORIA SUPPORTS UKRAINIAN REFUGEES AND MOLDOVAN SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WITH LIFE-SAVING MEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE.

refugees to check that their needs have been adequately met. The team included women and men to ensure that Romni could navigate traditional family dynamics and adequately respond to the needs of female refugees in a culturally appropriate way. In Spring 2023, CWS supported Romni in expanding the project to include basic needs assistance specifically for women with children, which included strollers, diapers and vouchers for food and hygiene items.

As the Republic of Moldova and interagency response shifted toward requiring Temporary Protection (TP) legal status, Romni responded with CWS's support by hiring an additional female mediator in the Transnistrian Region to support Roma refugees with registering for TP. Roma refugees faced numerous challenges when registering for TP, including lack of documentation, low or no literacy, not having a mobile device or the technological literacy needed to navigate the online registration process. From November 2022 to October 2023, CWS and Romni supported at least 2,448 Roma refugees, of whom 2,063 were women and children. CWS will partner with Romni in Spring 2026 on a project to address gender-based violence.

Roma National Center

Between 2022-2023, CWS partnered with The Roma National Center (RNC). In the first year of the response, RNC undertook a mapping and needs assessment of Ukrainian Roma and provided humanitarian assistance to 218 Roma people. Based on the results of the first project in 2022, RNC operated a mobile team, which provided basic needs and legal, medical and psychological support to Roma families in six localities: Chisinau, Balti, Drochia, Glodeni, Ialoveni and Hincesti. Humanitarian aid for basic needs in the form of clothes, food and household items assisted large Roma families with settling into private accommodations. RNC's legal assistance guided Roma refugees in exercising their right to cash and other humanitarian assistance as well as registering for TP or other legal status, particularly as the Republic of Moldova transitioned out of its state of emergency. The mobile team was also equipped with a psychologist who could assist families during visits. Between April and September 2023, RNC assisted 1,238 Roma people, of whom 1,129 were Ukrainian.

Between April and September 2023, RNC assisted 1,238 Roma people, of whom 1,129 were Ukrainian.

In Ukraine: Human Rights Roma Center

During this period, CWS was also developing a new partner relationship with the Human Rights Roma Center in Odesa, Ukraine. Roma individuals, and especially IDPs, face many of the same challenges in Ukraine as Roma refugees do in Moldova. CWS's first project with this partner will begin in Spring 2026. This project will provide support and combat stigma through mental health and psychosocial activities for Roma children, livelihoods activities and compensating Roma mediators to assist their own communities.



STORIES FROM THE RESPONSE

AT THE DIAMOND DAY CENTER IN TELENESI, UKRAINIAN REFUGEES AND LOCAL MOLDOVAN FAMILIES ARE COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE A WELCOMING, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY THROUGH SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS—FROM BUILDING A CHILDREN'S MINI-LIBRARY TO DELIVERING HOMEMADE TREATS TO ELDERS.



Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to read stories of individuals impacted by CWS's response.

Donor Acknowledgment

Significant support for the response has been provided by grants from UMCOR. This response is also supported by major contributions from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Presbyterian Church (USA), Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), the United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, ABC International Ministries, ACT Alliance, Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ, Howard Gilman Foundation, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Global Impact, the Trull Foundation and Kearsarge Community Presbyterian Church, in addition to gifts from our compassionate community of individual and congregational supporters.

SINCE RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE IN 2022, CWS HAS EXPANDED ITS SUPPORT TO REACH SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS. THROUGH THE CARING HEARTS PROJECT, WE'RE PARTNERING WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL AID AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN REMOTE VILLAGES OF ODESSA OBLAST.

