

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

UNFPA Moldova

In the context of the ongoing humanitarian crisis, UNFPA continues to make sure that both Ukrainian and Moldovan women, youth and older persons can receive life-saving care to stay healthy and safe.

Ensuring safe births and life-saving reproductive health services:

1. Free access to quality sexual and reproductive health care for the refugees

Katya, Luhansk

“My mother-in-law must have felt that something was going to happen, because I caught the last evacuation train and the next day the train station was bombed.”

Katya delivered safely in Moldova after spending 11 days in cold basement back in her hometown and developing pregnancy complications.

All refugees are guaranteed a full package of health insurance coverage for reproductive health care with UNFPA’s financial support through the Moldova’s National Health Insurance Company. This includes free access to antenatal, postnatal care, delivery, cesareans, contraceptives, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) treatment, et al.



2. Saving lives of mothers and newborns through equal access to quality services

Alina, Kyiv

"We are the smallest in this hospital, my baby continues to breath thanks to this equipment. I visit him, talk to him while holding his hand. He squeezes my finger and opens his eyes, reinforcing my belief in his strength."

Considering the highest concentration of refugees in specific regions of Moldova, UNFPA upgraded seven perinatal centers and two specialized hospitals with lifesaving equipment, namely the delivery rooms, operating theatres, and intensive care units for women and newborns.

This will ensure 15,500 safe births annually, save lives of hundreds of premature babies, and significantly reduce the wait time for women with reproductive health cancers and other critical health conditions.



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Ensuring safe births and life-saving reproductive health services:

3. Saving women's lives through Cervical Cancer Screening

Irina, Moldova

“I urge all women to get checked at their family doctor and do the cervical screening test once in 3 years. When a mother is healthy, the whole family is happy. We do not have to be afraid. The later the diagnosis, the less is the chance for a successful treatment.”

In the Republic of Moldova, a woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer almost every day, and every three days, a woman dies from the disease. UNFPA works with the Government and other partners to strengthen cervical cancer prevention measures, including training family doctors, providing laboratories with modern equipment, and increasing the awareness about the prevention measures.



4. Preventing adolescent pregnancy

Maria, Moldova

“They told me that I needed to protect myself... but no one told me how to do that.”

Maria* gave birth to her first child when she was 16, an age when most of her peers were graduating from secondary school. Today, at 22 years old, she has three daughters.

Maria's story is not unique in the Republic of Moldova. More than a thousand girls of her age face early pregnancies in Moldova every year, forced to drop out education, fear prejudices, violence and poverty in the future. The biggest problem is among young, poor and rural girls.

UNFPA is working to help girls like Maria access reproductive health information in schools and services at youth friendly health clinics.

*Name changed



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Prevention, Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence:

1. Creating Safe Spaces for women, youth and older persons



Alla, Odesa

"The war destroyed half of our country, but it couldn't destroy our spirit – and only renewed our sense of national identity."

UNFPA Safe Space for Women is a place where Ukrainian refugees meet, build connections and receive support. Counselling services and referrals to reproductive health care and information are available here, as are specialized services for survivors of gender-based violence.



Sabina, Meritopol

"Art helps us all to cope with our pain, the injustice of losing friends and normal life. I am not the only one who lost friends or family in the war. Many of the young refugees here are struggling with stress and depression."

UNFPA Safe Space for Youth was set up to give young refugees – including Roma youth as well as other minority groups – the chance to talk, learn and escape their shared trauma of violence and upheaval. The Space offers psychosocial counselling and connects teenagers with local Youth Centers and Youth Health Clinics.



Elena, Mykolaiv

"Older refugees often struggle to adjust, so we amplify their voices, collectively find ways to help each other. The Safe Space is a good place for us to find peace, connect with each other and grow our community."

More than 21% of refugees staying in the Republic of Moldova are older persons and the impact on their health, rights and well-being has been dramatic. UNFPA Safe Spaces offers psychosocial support, health referral and promotes intergenerational dialogue.

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Valentina Calioflo Mobile Safe Space Psychologist

“People in remote areas rarely have timely access to information and services. We explain that in case a woman or a young girl was subjected to any type of violence, including sexual violence, what services she should get and where she can receive them.”

UNFPA Mobile Safe Spaces travel to all villages and towns in Northern, Central and Southern Moldova bringing information, referral and immediate services to both Moldovan and Ukrainian populations living in hard to reach areas.



Pavlina Cirimpei Train Station Safe Space Psychologist

“A woman arrived in a train, she looked lost. We invited her to the Safe Space, began to talk, and she burst into tears. She said that she was pregnant and she started bleeding.”

UNFPA established Safe Spaces at border areas and at Chisinau Railway Station. The Safe Space teams provides psychosocial first aid, dignity kits and essential items and provides information, support and referral services.



Tetyana, Odesa

“There is no dignity in suddenly getting your period while on the move. Getting this attention and care makes us feel safe and confident.”

UNFPA ensures access to dignity kits that contain menstruation hygiene items. Distribution of the kits as an entry point for sharing the information about GBV and SRH and building trust with the target population.

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Prevention, Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence:

2. Protect and support survivors of sexual violence



Dr. Victoria Cibotaru

Gynaecologist. Coordinator of the UNFPA-supported Hotline on Sexual Violence Response

"It is very important to consult with doctors as soon as possible, especially within the first 72 hours after the abuse occurs. The Ukrainian refugees should reach out to receive healthcare, emergency contraceptives, medicines that could prevent the risk of infection with certain sexually transmitted diseases, as well as post-exposure therapy to HIV infection."

UNFPA invests in strengthening the system to provide quality services on clinical management of rape, building a network among the healthcare providers, strengthening the health capacity through training and launching a hotline for the service-providers.

3. Protect and support survivors of domestic violence



Ioana, survivor of domestic violence, Moldova

„I am not afraid of him anymore." The first hit came when she was pregnant. The second came a week later. Many more followed. She didn't keep track of them during the 30 years she lived with an abuser. „I spent half of my life not knowing that I have the right to be happy", says Ioana*.

After 30 years of violence, she received the support from UNFPA and other partners and found the strength and courage to leave him. Now, at the age of 50, she went to a beauty salon for the first time. She put on make-up, did a manicure and also tattoos to cover the scars left by her ex-husband.

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Prevention, Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence:

4. Responding to domestic violence by working with perpetrators



Vitalie, Moldova

"I always tried to justify my violent behaviour. After a number of counselling sessions I was able to put myself in my wife's shoes and it dawned on me how much pain she had suffered. I realised that what I'm doing is wrong and that I won't go down these paths anymore. A family needs peace and communication," Vitalie says five years after he realised that there is no place for violence in a family.

Working with perpetrators is high on UNFPA's agenda in the fight against violence in Moldova, where we run counselling programs for perpetrators, and mentoring programs for multidisciplinary teams so they can respond jointly to cases of domestic violence.

5. Breaking stereotypes and promoting father's engagement



Adrian, young father from Moldova

"The joy of being a father starts with equal participation alongside the mother in taking care of the child. It wasn't easy at the beginning, but now I don't feel tired even when I change diapers during the night. This is my new lifestyle."

Adrian Băluțel is 29 years old, the father of a four-month baby boy and a Member of Parliament in Moldova. He promotes father's engagement in childcare and family life, breaking the stereotypes around traditional women's and men's role.

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CASH Assistance for Ukrainian and Moldovan women:

1. CASH Assistance for pregnant and breastfeeding refugee women

Inna, Odesa

"Every month, we receive cash support, which has been a godsend for us during my pregnancy. The extra money has allowed us to purchase pregnancy clothes, vitamins, and maintain a special diet, which can be quite expensive.."

As pregnant and lactating women have special nutritional and health needs, UNFPA joined the Emergency Cash Programme for Refugees to provide Cash Assistance and ensure that refugee pregnant women have access to antenatal care, facility-based delivery and post-natal care and are able to meet their nutritional needs.



2. CASH Assistance for vulnerable pregnant and breastfeeding Moldovan women

Nigina Abaszada

UNFPA Moldova
Resident Representative

"At least 11% of pregnant Moldovan women are identified as vulnerable, thus making around 3,300 pregnant women in need of financial support. In view of the ongoing energy and socio-economic crisis, the percentage of the most vulnerable families is expected to increase."

UNFPA joined Interagency efforts of WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR to provide Cash Assistance to pregnant and lactating women from most vulnerable Moldovan families.



2. CASH Assistance within the framework of GBV Case Management

Simion Sirbu

Director, NGO Artemida

"Women who became survivors of violence often don't have basic means to access medical or legal services essential for their recovery."

In the context of strengthening the GBV Case Management, UNFPA works on integrating CASH as a modality to support GBV survivors and groups at risk of GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure access to information and services.



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Demographic Resilience:

1. Family-friendly Policies and Desired Fertility

Diana, mother of triplets
with a full-time job, Moldova

“Motherhood and career can be reconciled when you have your family’s support and a job that takes into account the needs of each employee.”

Diana Donțu works as an Executive Director at a bakery in Moldova. She returned to work exactly two months after the birth of her three children, so she could realize her professional aspirations and desired fertility.

This was possible due to UNFPA’s support in Moldova, which works to expand choices for women through family friendly policies in the private sector.



2. Intergenerational dialogue and Active ageing

Elena, retired woman, Moldova

“It seemed to me that older people and digitalization were incompatible”

Retired teacher Elena Gobjila returned to the classroom to learn digital technologies from her former student Neghina.

This was possible due to UNFPA Moldova supported Program – Digital Technologies Connect Generations. Launched soon after the COVID19 pandemic, this program engages young volunteers and older persons in intergenerational activities, with a focus on the use of mobile phones, reducing digital divide, promoting active and healthy ageing, and building bonds between generations.



UNFPA appreciates the life-changing contribution from Australia, Kingdom of Denmark, the European Union, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA PRM, Ferring Company and Friends of UNFPA in ensuring that every woman, young or older person from Moldova and Ukraine are treated with dignity, especially in times of crisis.