

TERMS OF REFERENCE

THE PROVISION OF MARKET ASSESSMENT&MONITORING SERVICES

1. Rationale

1.1 Background

The conflict in Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, has caused unparalleled levels of displacement in Europe, impacting neighbouring countries to Ukraine. Since the beginning of the conflict reescalation, Moldova has received almost 600,000 refugees, with the majority travelling directly onwards to other destinations in Europe. By the beginning of August 2022, 88,780 refugees remained in the country, and more arrive each day. 85% of the Ukrainian refugees who remain in the country comprise of females, elderly persons and/or children.

Prior to the beginning of the conflict, Moldova had already been facing serious two-fold economic crisis related to post COVID-19 recovery challenges and the increases in energy prices. The war in Ukraine, its economic consequences as well as the sanctions imposed on Russia exacerbated the existent economic crisis. These factors deepened the poverty in the country with limited resources and the inflation rate reached over 30%. As a result, more than a quarter of the usual resident population of around 2,5 million became under absolute poverty and it is estimated that additional few hundred thousand will be under the poverty line in a few months.

For the last few years, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) has been making efforts to strengthen the social protection schemes in Moldova to respond the increasing needs of its citizens and to mitigate the adverse impact of inflation, energy prices and economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic and Ukrainian crisis. The Moldovan Government has been implementing two mainstreamed social assistance programmes: the means-tested anti-poverty programme “Ajutor Social”, and the cold-session benefit “APRA” (Ajutorul pentru Perioada Rece a Anului). However, the Government has been facing problems to increase the coverage of their assistance schemes both for refugees and vulnerable Moldovan families due to budget limitations and human resource capacities.

1.2 Intended Impact

After the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine back in February 2022, many humanitarian actors started increasing their presence in Moldova with provision of cash-based interventions to refugees, Moldovan families (hosting/not hosting refugees) in addition to many other humanitarian interventions/activities. The Cash Working Group (CWG) was established at early stages of the crisis and being co-chaired by UNHCR and MoLSP. In June 2022, the CWG partners agreed on joint Strategic Directions for Cash Assistance in Moldova with the following objectives: a) harmonizing systems for enrolling targeting group -refugees, Moldovan families-, b) harmonizing the transfer value of cash grant/assistance across the country, c) provision of assistance equitably throughout Moldova, following the same targeting criteria and geographical coverage, d) provision of assistance to vulnerable Moldovans affected by conflict in Ukraine is aligned with Government’s social assistance/protection schemes. To reach these objectives and to ensure flexibility of choice to beneficiaries, multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) was agreed to be the main modality of the response in the sector of cash-based interventions (CBIs).

Given the current conditions of the influx from Ukraine to Moldova, economic challenges in the country, unpredictability in commodity and energy prices as well as the importance of MPCA in the humanitarian response in Moldova, market assessment and monitoring is key for the humanitarian intervention. In this sense, the market assessment and monitoring intend to fill in an important information gap by providing useful and timely data on trends in Moldova market prices which will enable the Cash Working Group partners to continually monitor the sufficiency of the assistance provided to vulnerable population and revise the MPCA transfer values if required.

1.3 Objectives

The general objective of the exercise is to inform the Cash Working Group and other humanitarian actors of evolutions in prices (including inflation at micro and macro level), availability of goods and market functionality, and provide evidence base information for the organisation of MPCA in Moldova as a response to the humanitarian crisis in the country. More specifically the market assessment and monitoring aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Assess and track prices, availability, and accessibility of basic commodities in the market on quarterly basis,
- Assess the impact of the current humanitarian crisis and the sessional needs changes (such as winter) on the market systems,
- Assess the capacities in supply chain and market system to respond to increased demand,
- Contribute to a broader understanding of the market environment for the benefit of humanitarian actors across all sectors.

To reach these objectives, the following research questions are foreseen to be answered at minimum without limitations to be extended to serve for the purpose of the exercise: **a)** What are the prices and availability of basic food and non-food items in markets throughout Moldova, and how do these vary over time?, **b)** What disruptions in supply chains and market accessibility for any key commodities may/are traders or consumer face/ing?, **c)** To what extent have market operations and functionality changed over time?

2. Scope of Work

2.1 Desk Research

- Prior to carrying out qualitative and quantitative data collection, the entity will conduct desk research and utilize reliable secondary data as and when available notwithstanding existing data from national and international practitioners.
- On the basis of the desk research, the entity is expected to complete an overview on how markets are functioning,
- The entity will also be expected to determine the key markets to analyse on available secondary data such as Post-Distribution Monitoring reports, Multi-Sectorial Needs Assessment, Monthly price monitoring and economic indicators published by the governmental institutions, the consumption basket calculation of National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) etc.
- Using the results of the desk research, a cost-of-living estimation will be performed.

2.2 Market Place Selection

The exercise will prioritize primary marketplaces in the key areas where the density of the population affected from the humanitarian crisis (both refugees, Moldovan families hosting/not hosting refugees) is high. The selection of marketplaces will not only be focused on the urban areas but also the peripheral urban and rural areas in accordance with the target population disbursement across the country.

A broader marketplace definition is considered for marketplace selection for this exercise. A marketplace is defined as an area with a relatively sizable concentration of traders in close proximity to each other. This definition enables the entity to make judgements about the most valuable markets to monitor by taking into consideration of the proximity of the target population to marketplaces and local knowledge. The economic units are considered as follows: grocery stores, retail sale of meat/butcher shops, retail sale of fruits and vegetables, retail sale of dairy products, markets, supermarkets, pharmacies, schools and public health clinics/hospitals.

The traders will be selected within the targeted marketplaces and must be retailers selling to customers. The traders will preferably be selected from the ones who sell many of the items to be monitored, have continuous presence enabling upcoming monitoring exercise.

2.3 Items to be monitored

The entity will monitor a common basket of core market commodities commonly purchased by vulnerable households. The content of this basket will be derived from the existing minimum consumption basket of Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics. The minimum consumption basket covers, the food, non-alcoholic beverages, clothing, footwear, housing, water, electricity, gas, health, transport, telecommunication, education and other diverse products and services. The data of the food and non-food items will be collected on only the cheapest variety available in the marketplace.

2.4 Fieldwork Research

Three fieldwork research methods are foreseen to gather quantitative and qualitative data for market assessment and monitoring: semi-structured interviews with key informants, retailer survey, and household surveys with refugees, Moldovan families hosting/not hosting refugees. The objective of these data collection activities to assess and track prices, availability, and accessibility of commodities in the market, to gain insight into target populations' consumption patterns and how they interact with local markets, as well as the difficulties they may face accessing the available core goods and services, from both target populations' and specialists' perspective.

To ensure a representative sampling size, acceptable confidence level and margin of error, the entity will draft a sampling methodology for the mentioned components of the field research. Overall, the market assessment and monitoring methodology is expected to:

- Reflect an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) perspective in all data collection activities carried out as part of the evaluation – particularly in household survey,
- Employ a mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis tools including the analysis of monitoring data –as available,
- Refer to and make use of relevant sectoral standards and analytical frameworks.

The interviews with key informants will be identified based on the literature review and Cash Working Group's partners recommendation. The key informants will be selected from the humanitarian actors working in the cash sector through provision of MPCA to different target groups. From the initial interviews, other key actors can be identified through snowball sampling.

The interviews will aim to gather sufficient information about the target populations' consumption and mobility patterns as well as overall price levels at the provinces where the density of affected population is relatively higher. In addition, the key informants will be asked about barriers to access certain markets that may be different among refugee and local population. The entity will systematize the findings from key informant interviews in an interview matrix according to the market or potential barrier to which are related:

- Access to goods and services
- Access to health services
- Rental housing
- Transportation
- Job opportunities

To serve these purposes, the entity will be expected to develop a qualitative interview questionnaire and interview matrix to systematize the findings from the key informant interviews.

In addition to key informant interview, the entity will conduct a retailer survey in each selected market locations determined through the sampling methodology to gain a better understanding on how the different markets operate, to assess the commodity prices, accessibility to the market and the market capacities to response increasing demand.

The customer survey will aim to provide a customer's perspective to the exercise on the functionality of marketplaces, observations on the prices. The target population will be asked to provide general information from

their communities on the availability of key categories of items and services, barriers to market access, availability of cash and functionality of the markets (including functionality of financial service providers).

The retailer and customer quantitative data collection tools will be provided by UNHCR in collaboration with CWG partners to the entity. The entity will also be requested to provide technical support and knowledge on these questionnaires for contextualizing and easing the implementation. The entity will be expected to carry out the data collection through face-to-face interviews. In the locations where the sample size is small, and the logistical arrangements are not cost-sufficient remote data collection techniques can also be implemented.

3. Data Collection Cycles and Deliverables

Activity	Frequency (per annum)	Respondents (per cycle) ¹	Deliverables	Timeline
Phase 1: Inception _Market Assessment_ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial desk review - Inception visit to the key stakeholders working in the field of cash-based interventions - Selection of key informants - Establishment of sampling methodology - Selection of markets - Review of items to be monitored - Review of retailer and customer questionnaire - Development of qualitative questionnaire for key informant interviews - Draft inception report with the tools (developed KII interview guides and adjusted questionnaires for retailer and customer surveys) and circulation for comments before finalization 	One-time	n/a	Final inception report – including methodology, final evaluation questions evaluation matrix and tools, determination of key informants and a draft programme for the data collection phase.	TBC
Phase 2: Data collection _Market Assessment_ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key informant interviews (in country face-to face and/or remotely as required); field visits for key informant interviews as required - Debrief on preliminary findings of the key informant interviews, conclusions, and possible recommendations 	One-time	20	Debriefing on preliminary findings and emerging conclusions of key informant interviews Debrief PowerPoint presentation	TBC
Phase 2 continue: Data Collection _Market Assessment_	One-time	45 retailer surveys ²	Debriefing on preliminary findings and	TBC

¹ The number of respondents per cycle will be determined based on the sampling methodology to be developed by the entity.

² The retailer and customers surveys should be conducted in 5 different geographical scope of the country with the consideration of representative number of surveys from central, peripheral urban and rural areas: Northern Region,

Based on the developed sampling methodology by ensuring the acceptable level of margin of error: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting retailer surveys through face-to-face interviews at the selected market locations - Conducting customer surveys through face-to-face interviews with the different target groups (namely: Refugees HHs from Ukraine, Moldavian hosting HHs and Moldavian HHs that not host refugees) 		150 customer surveys (75 refugee, 75 Moldavian HHs)	emerging conclusions of retailer and customer surveys with the CWG partners	
Phase 3: Data Analysis and Reporting _Market Assessment_: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of collected data - Evaluation management and quality assurance (EQA) review of the draft report, circulation for comments - PowerPoint presentation in validation workshop (online or in-person) to discuss CWG partners and validate evaluation findings, conclusions and proposed recommendations 	One-time	n/a	Draft final report including recommendations (for circulation and comments) Validation Workshop PowerPoint presentation	TBC
Phase 4: Finalization of Market Assessment Report	One-time	n/a	Final Market Assessment Report (30-40 pages) including recommendations and standalone executive summary (5-10 pages)	TBC
Phase 5: Quarterly Market Monitoring Exercise: Data Collection, Data Analysis and Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly data collection from the retailers and customers, - Analysis of the collected data to observe the trends, changes with a comparative approach - Drafting a fact sheet to reflect the results of market monitoring on quarterly basis, including narrative and visualization - Presentation of market monitoring results to CWG partners quarterly 	Quarterly (4 times in a year)	45 retailer surveys 150 customer surveys (75 refugee, 75 Moldavian HHs)	Quarterly Market Monitoring Fact Sheet (6-8 pages) PowerPoint presentation of market monitoring results	TBC

Balti Municipality, Central Region, Chisinau Municipality, Southern Region, UTA Gagauzia, Comrat Municipality. The sample sizes reflected in the assessment and monitoring phases are indicative and can be adjusted in accordance with the sampling methodology recommended by the entity.

The final deliverables of Market Assessment and Monitoring are the Final Market Assessment Report and Quarter Market Assessment Fact Sheet which should comply with UNHCR Policy on Evaluation and the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (June 2016). In line with established standards for evaluation in the UN system, the Code of Conduct for evaluation in the UN system and the UN Ethical Guidelines for evaluations, evaluation in UNHCR is founded on the fundamental principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. The report shall be guided by and must adhere to these principles to ensure that (a) the report is fit for the stated purposes as set out in these policies; and (b) the report's findings, conclusions, recommendations and proposed lessons to be learned are viewed with confidence by their intended audience and users within UNHCR, its partners and beyond. The report's quality will be assessed on the basis of these standards.

4. Selection Criteria

- Staffing profile and lead consultant possess advanced degrees in fields such as economics, statistics and other related fields as well as long-standing expertise in carrying out research of this nature.
- Substantial and proven professional experience in conducting and/or managing strategic research and large scale-surveys at field or global levels in line with established norms and standards.
- Excellent qualitative research and analysis skills, with emphasis on the design and use of comparative analysis methods and tools.
- Excellent statistical and quantitative analysis skills
- Proven experience in the design and application of relevant mixed methods analytical tools and frameworks.
- Excellent English-language drafting and reporting skills and extensive experience conveying complex information clearly and compellingly through the use of visual media for a range of audiences (i.e. using data visualization tools).

The entity will be required to submit;

- a 10-page document (maximum) demonstrating how the Scope of Work will be completed successfully and in a timely manner
- Outline of quality assurance processes.
- Description of the team composition and management structure that will be dedicated to this agreement is also required substantiated with CVs.
- The technical and managerial expertise of the Research Coordinator/Team leader/Project lead who will also be the main contact point with UNHCR.
- A document with maximum three pages detailing similar work completed in the recent past.
- Proof of authorization from dedicated national entities to conduct survey research/data collection in the country.
- Prior experience working on with refugee populations is preferred, though not required.

5. Data Related Deliverables

This section highlights data deliverables related to this project.

5.1 Data Collection and Delivery

UNHCR has a corporate Kobo server which external parties can be granted access to for data collection. It is expected that data be collected and uploaded directly to the UNHCR server, giving UNHCR direct and continuous access to the data. Where this is not possible, UNHCR must be granted access to all data collected through project. Data includes raw datasets, as well as, cleaned and validated datasets collected or procured under these ToRs, and used in producing final deliverable outputs, such as, but not limited to: reports, tables, and visualizations. In case of surveys, the raw datasets must include actual microdata from respondents. Also, in the event the UNHCR server is not used, raw data must be delivered regularly throughout the data collection process (e.g. weekly or monthly, depending on

the duration of the exercise). This is critical to identify data quality issues (such as missing observations, high attrition rates, high rates of refusal) whilst the data collection is ongoing, so that they may be corrected in real-time.

Machine-readable format: Datasets should be provided in electronic form, or in files which are in a machine-readable format.

Data Security while delivering data: Appropriate security protocols must be observed in the transfer or transmission of datasets to UNHCR. The suggested mechanism for a secure transfer of datasets between the entity and UNHCR would be to use the UNHCR Microdata library: <http://microdata.unhcr.org>

UNHCR would be responsible for: (i) creating a dedicated project for the data, and, (ii) ensuring that only authorized collaborators (in the entity and UNHCR) are given access to the project repository.

The selected entity would be responsible for ensuring that all data generated under this project (contract) is deposited in the dedicated project repository.

Data Format: should be selected based on the data type (survey, geo-spatial, sensor, transit, etc.), Staff should choose the appropriate format from the choices below in which data should be delivered.

Survey dataset(s) may be provided in Rdata, STATA, SPSS, CSV, Excel, ASCII, etc. or any other suitable open format.

Geo-spatial dataset(s) may be provided in open format shape files which can be opened by a GIS application of choice. This data could also be provided in any other readily available formats such as CSV, XLS (97 and later), XLSX (2007 and later), TSV, or any other suitable open geo-spatial data format. Preferred formats are shapefiles for Vector³ data, and GeoTiff for Raster⁴ data.

Data Disposal at end of project: Once it has been used for its defined purpose, the data will be disposed of at the date of the end of the contract. After consulting with UNHCR, the selected entity will take reasonable measures to erase or destroy all data in any form or format used during the project that is not returnable to UNHCR (e.g. information stored on computer hard drive).

5.2 Data Documentation (Metadata)

Survey dataset(s): Metadata necessary to understand the survey design, methodology, and the datasets must be provided. Data documentation provided must comply with international metadata standards such as the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) (Codebook version) and the Dublin Core standards. All datasets must be documented in compliance with these standards, which should foster compliance with the replication standard and guarantee the ease of use, quality control, and cataloguing of the dataset. Given below is a list of metadata documents.

³ Vector Data uses the simple geometric objects of points, lines, and areas (polygons) to represent spatial features

⁴ Raster Data uses a grid to represent its geographic information. Points are represented by single cells, lines by sequences of neighboring cells, and areas by collection of grouping cells. Types of raster data include: satellite imagery, remotely sensed satellite data.

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- i. Survey questionnaire (XLSform) in English, Ukrainian, and Romanian languages which includes any/all changes from piloting;
- ii. Questionnaire design;
- iii. Interviewer manual;
- iv. Completed household/community questionnaires for all households/villages interviewed;
- v. Concise, but complete description of the sample design;
- vi. Sampling weights to be used in data analysis;
- vii. Description of the basic field procedures and quality control techniques;
- viii. Guidelines for using the data, including, but not limited to,
 - a. Uniquely identifying observations, including the identification variable to be used,
 - b. how to link the various parts of the survey,
 - c. codes for any items not pre-coded in the questionnaire, and
 - d. problems encountered in the data and the solutions taken;
- ix. Documentation of constructed data sets that will be available in the public use files; e.g. price indices, and aggregates of household consumption or income;
- x. Descriptions of the files, including contents and names of the data files mapped to the corresponding sections in the questionnaire; and,
- xi. System of variable names and labels, data descriptions and dictionaries.
 - Geo-spatial dataset(s): Given below is a suggested list of metadata.
- xii. Title – name by which the dataset is known;
- xiii. Description – brief summary including the purpose for which the dataset was developed;
- xiv. Theme – common use word or phrase used to describe the subject of the dataset;
- xv. Place – geographic name of the location covered by the dataset;
- xvi. Data presentation format – this refers to the Vector or Raster formats used to represent the geo-spatial data, including any specific standard file format used;
- xvii. Map projection –name of the map projection used;
- xviii. Bounding Coordinates:
 - a. Western-most coordinate of the limit of coverage expressed in longitude
 - b. Eastern-most coordinate of the limit of coverage expressed in longitude
 - c. Northern-most coordinate of the limit of coverage expressed in latitude
 - d. Southern-most coordinate of the limit of coverage expressed in latitude.

5.3 Data Entry & Analysis Software

Unless there is an explicit and documented reason that would prevent it, the usage of UNHCR data collection server is strongly encouraged: <http://kobo.unhcr.org>.

5.4 Data Quality

The contracted entity's survey manager and fieldwork supervisors will check all completed questionnaires and will conduct a minimum of 10 percent of spot checks to verify the accuracy of the data recorded and, where necessary, clarify with respondents any inconsistencies in their answers with that of the enumerator. The survey manager and fieldwork supervisors will randomly check interviewers and accompany them on some interviews. Representatives of UNHCR may also accompany some survey teams during pre-testing/piloting as well as during the survey to ensure

quality, as well as provide on-site supervision of the data entry and database cleaning processes as a means of additional quality control.

The contracted entity will be considered to have failed to comply with this contract if, based on a random and representative sample, it is determined that either (i) it is shown that 1 percent or more of the questionnaires that are presented were filled without the Survey Entity having visited the respondent, and (ii) it is shown that 1 percent or more of the questionnaire is inconsistently completed. In either of these situations, UNHCR will reserve the right to request a repetition of the work or the option of not paying for the work done (being reimbursed for any initial payment)."

5.5 Names, Locations, Mobile Contacts of Respondents

For both quantitative and qualitative approaches, UNHCR will need to have the contact information of survey respondents (names, locations or mobile numbers) to contact them for verifying/validating their responses.

5.6 Data Confidentiality, Ownership and Re-use

All data collected under these TORs including the documentation about the data and its collection methodology are confidential and are the property of UNHCR. The entity executing these TORs, must protect the confidentiality of responding establishments and individuals participating in the data collection at all stages as described in 'Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR'⁵. The entity must ensure that data or the documentation referred to above, collected or compiled under these TORs, are not distributed for commercial or non-commercial purposes to third parties, nor will they be used by the entity, their staff and/or consultants, or their sub-contractors for purposes other than those expressly stated in these TORs, without the written approval of UNHCR prior to, during, or after completion of the assignments.

5.7 Ethical Provisions

The entity will comply with ethical standards of social science research that involves human subjects in every stage of the survey process. An informed consent by the survey respondent to participate in the interview is required with provision of clear information that the participation in the survey is voluntary and is not anyhow aligned with qualification for any type of assistance in the future. Efforts will be made by the entity to balance transparency of the survey and confidentiality of the respondent. Ethical provisions for data collection in use by national authorities should be adhered to.

⁵ <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55643c1d4.pdf>