**APPENDIX 2 Country Contexts**

**Poland:** Following the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, as of November 2023 an estimated 957,305 Ukrainians have been displaced in Poland, the majority of whom are women, children and the elderly.[1] More than half of Ukraine's children are believed to have been displaced by the war.[2] In Poland, the parliament passed the "Act on Assistance," on 12 March 2022 which granted legal stay for Ukrainians and afforded Ukrainian children the right to access Polish education, and codified international standards for compulsory education.[3] For Ukrainian adolescents in Poland, education options include Polish schools, continuing Ukrainian curriculum online, or attending the few Ukrainian schools established in Poland. Despite efforts made to ensure access to Polish education, a substantial number of adolescents do not enroll or drop out.

Ukrainian refugee children in Poland face several challenges which include a) language barrier, which prevents children from communicating and integrating into the Polish education system. Polish language is different from their native language and could hinder their ability to learn and participate effectively in the school; b) despite positive steps from Polish Government, policy and bureaucratic barriers affect integration such as placement tests and flexibility to facilitate transition to enroll in Polish schools; c)trauma and well-being, adjustment to the new learning environment, bullying and discrimination at the schools/learning centers; d) physical capacity of the schools to register learners aged 3-17 (UNESCO); e) teachers shortage and language barriers for the teachers (Polish and Ukrainian). As per national teachers' union there is shortage of 20,000 teachers in Poland (UNESCO); f) 27% of students access All Ukrainian Online school platform (of which 39% is between 7-15 years, and 48% 16-19 years old), there is little or no information available on the education quality, and no steps are taken to link online systems with Polish education to ensure the certification is recognized and skill pathway for future are defined. As per the Ministry of Education and UNESCO data 181,700 Ukrainian refugee children are enrolled in school (June 2023). The children with disabilities face additional barriers to access education, a) physical accessibility i.e. lack of wheelchair access, lack of ramps or elevators, or inadequate facilities for children with mobility challenges; b) lack of specialized support which includes specialized teachers, teaching and learning resources, or support staff; c) language barriers i.e. communication impairments or use of sign language, or availability of teachers proficient in specific language or mode of communication; d)discrimination and stigma could hinder social integration and learning; e) limited inclusive education programs; f) financial constraints to access specialized support; g) transport issues, distances from the schools offering specialized services could prevent children with disability to attend school. Romani Ukrainian children in Poland are a minority and face specific barriers, which include, a) discrimination and stigmatization; b) language barriers; c) cultural and social barriers, difference between Romani communities and the majority Polish population could affect Romani children and their families to engage in education; c) bullying and harassment, Romani children have historically faced bullying and harassment in Poland and Ukraine, for refuge children bullying in school environment could discourage their participation in education; d) lack of diverse and inclusive curriculum, the curriculum in mainstream schools may not adequately reflect Romani culture and history. Thus, resulting in lack of cultural representation, and identify affirmation for Romani children.

**Romania:** The population of Ukrainian refugees in Romania remains in flux but on the average, there are around 85.000 refugees steadily in country. Most of the Ukrainian refugees are women, with many being the sole provider in single headed households. 34% of the Ukrainian refugee are children.

In principle, the Temporary Protection Status accorded to Ukrainians in Romania promotes integration and allows them access to health, education, and social assistance in the country.

However, regarding education, adequate access to these services has yet to materialize as local and central authorities face both bureaucratic and legislative difficulties, on top of the reality that these services are also not fully functional even for Romanian vulnerable populations. Staff working in the public system are not prepared to offer educational services to refugees and to respond to their needs. Language barriers, lack of personal documents, and cultural differences represent crosscutting issues that must be better tackled if children's rights are to be realized.

Only 58% of Ukrainian children with temporary protection in Romania were enrolled in the educational system as auditors or students. However, this doesn't account for low attendance rates of that 58% The main reasons for many Ukrainian children not being enrolled in the Romanian education system include the language barrier, differences between curriculums, uncertainties about their stay in Romania, and lack of recognition of studies in the Romanian education system in Ukraine. Consequently, many Ukrainian children follow the Ukrainian education system online.

The access of Ukrainian children to support services or educational resources in Romanian schools is considered low due to fragmented and incomplete communication of school enrollment information, difficulties in processing school applications due to lack of staff and language barriers, challenges related to the unclear status of participants in non-formal education programs in the context of the amendment of the 50/20 law (paid accommodation by the government), lack of support services in public schools for non-Romanian speakers, and limited access to free Romanian language courses (mostly done by NGOs).

Regarding wellbeing of children, a collaborative report between IMPACT and Save the Children[1] highlighted that children, young people and caregivers struggle with feelings of loneliness, pointing out a lack of friends as a prevalent issue. Moreover, caregivers highlighted peer and social activities as the primary unmet need for children, identifying challenges in accessing extracurricular activities as their greatest difficulty. Similarly, adolescents frequently mentioned wanting to talk to a psychologist. Another report by the Social Incubator[2] highlighted the need for psychological support for Ukrainian children, mentioning the importance of having a Ukrainian-speaking psychologist who can communicate effectively with children. In a recent NRC needs assessment[3] among youth in Romania, the individuals expressing a need for psychological support mainly comprised of women and young parents. Among the young parents, there is a strong inclination towards seeking psychological assistance for their children.

**Moldova:** considerably less research has been conducted on the status of education for Ukrainian children. In research conducted by UNICEF, UNHCR and REACH it was found that of those surveyed, 14% of households did not intend to enroll children in any education, whether online or in person while 29% will only be enrolled in Ukrainian online education. These risks are only further compounded by evidence that nearly a quarter of all families have concerns about the protection of their children. The most common reasons for these concerns were psychological violence and physical violence in the community as well as increased vulnerability to online violence which is only potentially enhanced through online learning.

An NRC study found that overarching needs were access to language services has language barriers were substantial, emotional support outside of the home to cope with their situation, and that while Roma children experience may of the same things as non-Roma, they experience more discrimination. There is a general lack

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of reliable data in Moldova that this study should seek to address while answering the key questions in this TOR.

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