Refugees need better health guidance

Behavioural insights on health service needs and access
May-October 2022
Health service needs and access

Key findings

EMERGING ISSUES
- Vaccination services
- Mental health services
- Support to new mothers
- Access to dentistry
- Cost of prescription medication
- Confusion about referral system

BARRIERS TO ACCESS SERVICES
- Gaps in knowledge
  - While understanding of the health system has improved, there is often confusion about referrals to specialist care, where to get vaccinations and health insurance.
- Fear of costs
  - Concerns about perceived costs of health services keep people from using them, especially dentists, even though all are free.
- Language problems
  - Language is a significant barrier for many. It’s hard to navigate the system and get the right medication without a common language.

DRIVERS TO ACCESS SERVICES
- Volunteers are key
  - Volunteers, landlords and neighbours play a crucial role in guiding refugees to health services and answering questions of all kinds. Their support is highly appreciated.
- High quality health services
  - Romanian medical services are considered to be of high quality, and health care workers are friendly and trusted. Critical care, such as dialysis or cancer treatment are especially good.
- Time eases access
  - Follow-up interviews indicate that refugees are more familiar with the system and more comfortable accessing services over time.

BEHAVIOURS & ATTITUDES
- People trust people
  - The most trusted sources of information are real people (refugees or volunteers) sharing their experiences either in person or online.
- Travel to Ukraine
  - Some refugees consult Ukrainian doctors online or return to Ukraine to purchase medicines and receive health services due to familiarity and cost.
- Refugee fatigue
  - Despite a warm welcome, several participants noted a change in attitudes towards refugees, including among doctors.

ROMANIA

80-90,000
Ukrainian refugees in Romania

74,203
refugees registered for Temporary Protection as of 16 October, 2022

At first it was a disaster for me. The children got sick, and I didn’t know where to go. But now it’s easier, and I know where to go.
Woman, age 50
Health service needs and access

Background and next steps

**BACKGROUND**

Ongoing war drives people away
War in Ukraine has resulted in the largest movement of people across Europe since WW2. Neighbouring countries opened borders and offered services, but refugee perspectives are essential for planning appropriate interventions and polices.

**METHOD**

Qualitative study on perceived health service needs as well as drivers and barriers to access these services

25 in-depth online interviews:
- 20 were women and 5 were men
- 17 were caretakers and 8 were not

Recruitment via social media channels, personal networks, other community support networks, NGO staff and posters located in relevant places.

10 key informant interviews with officials and service providers conducted 13 May – 13 June 2022

Follow up interviews with 15 refugees in October to understand how their situation had changed.

**PROPOSED ACTION**

1. Praise volunteers and health workers to sustain motivation
   Highlight the positive outcomes of the study, including welcoming atmosphere and quality of health services.

2. Provide clear and targeted information via trusted channels
   Improve and target health system information and use trusted channels to disseminate it among refugees.

3. Explore opportunities to engage Ukrainian health workers in Romania e.g., as health mediators
   Trust in Ukrainian doctors is a potential resource to help overcome language barriers and reduce burden on Romanian health system.

4. Engage cultural sector to improve mental health and wellbeing
   Leverage the arts and other cultural and community assets to improve mental health and psychosocial support for both refugees and host communities.

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In Ukraine, you know your doctors, but it is difficult for Ukrainians in Romania. You need to find information and figure out where to go, and whom to visit. When possible, I talk to Ukrainian doctors.

Woman, age 30
Read more

This briefing note is part of a qualitative study among Ukrainian refugees in Romania. For more information contact:

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Photo on the cover:
Marina is 15 weeks' pregnant and received an ultrasound test at the WHO clinic inside the Blue Dot Center, Galati, Romania.
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