

ANNUAL REPORT OF LAW CENTER OF ADVOCATES

2024

Executive Summary

In 2024, the CDA successfully implemented a series of vital projects aimed at supporting vulnerable populations within the Republic of Moldova. These projects include:

1. The "Legal Assistance for Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Moldova" project, generously funded by UNHCR.
2. The "Strengthening Access to Justice by Empowering Moldovan Refugees with Legal Knowledge" project, supported by Sweden through the UNDP Global Program on Strengthening the Rule of Law, Human Rights, Justice and Security for Peace and Sustainable Development.

Throughout 2024, CDA extended its support to refugees by operating in eight Cash Enrollment Centers across the country. In collaboration with relevant authorities, CDA diligently monitored the borders with Ukraine and Romania, ensuring adherence to legal provisions for asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied children.

CDA provided crucial legal counseling and assistance to approximately 23,830 refugees from Ukraine and third countries. We have fostered strong collaborative relationships with local social assistance directorates, mayoralities, and police offices, enhancing the coordination of our efforts.

CDA addressed twelve complex cases through strategic litigation at both administrative and judicial levels, seeking just and equitable outcomes for those we serve.

The organization conducted an annual evaluation of its services, which revealed a high degree of satisfaction among beneficiaries.

Through constructive advocacy efforts with state authorities, CDA contributed to improvements in the situation of beneficiaries of temporary protection and stateless persons in Moldova.

Legal Counseling and Assistance

Legal counseling and assistance were made accessible in all 32 districts and the Transnistria region to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, undocumented individuals, and foreigners in need

of support. A total of 23,830 beneficiaries received legal counseling, resulting in 32,032 individual counseling sessions.

Pre-Registration for Temporary Protection (PT): CDA dedicated significant resources to assisting refugees with pre-registration for Temporary Protection, especially those who entered Moldova through irregular channels. While the online system has occasionally presented technical challenges, CDA remains committed to finding solutions and minimizing disruptions. We continue to address barriers such as limited local contact information, striving to improve accessibility.

Legal Assistance and Representation: CDA staff provided essential legal advice, assisted in drafting legal documents, and represented beneficiaries in legal matters before authorities, courts, and police.

Asylum Seekers: CDA assisted 76 asylum seekers during the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure. Individual interviews are particularly important for third-country nationals, often with Russian or Belarusian citizenship but with a history of residence in Ukraine. CDA ensures that those receiving negative decisions are referred to the National Legal Aid Council for appeal assistance and court representation.

Support with Civil Documentation: Legal counselors provided invaluable assistance to refugees in obtaining necessary civil documents, including birth certificates for children with at least one parent holding Moldovan citizenship.

Support on Cash Assistance: CDA protection desk counselors offered support to beneficiaries in completing Reassessment Request forms related to their exclusion from cash assistance provided by UNHCR.

CDA representatives actively participated in the Human Rights Caravan organized by the Ombudsman, which took place in Drochia, Ungheni, and Cahul, underscoring our commitment to outreach and collaboration.

Mobile Workgroups: Counselors participated in mobile working groups alongside cooperation partners, assisting with online pre-registration for temporary protection, particularly for individuals with special needs, unaccompanied children, and those accompanied by unauthorized persons.

In collaboration with local authorities, CDA organized 48 informative sessions for 1,221 refugees from Ukraine, promoting awareness and understanding.

Persons with Specific Needs. CDA provided tailored legal counseling and assistance to 2,986 individuals with specific needs, including the elderly and persons with physical or mental disabilities. Many of these cases involved delays in the intervention of the IGM mobile team for

registration to temporary protection, which we are working to address in cooperation with relevant partners.

Gender-Based Violence. CDA provided assistance in 15 cases of gender-based violence against children and women. A concerning number of these cases involved violence perpetrated by family members. CDA facilitated referrals to specialized support services. A significant challenge remains the reluctance of domestic violence victims to report perpetrators to the police.

Child Protection. CDA facilitates the documentation of minors through legal counseling and assistance, including support in obtaining identity documents (temporary protection ID, birth certificates, travel documents). Protection desk staff conducted 270 best interest assessments to evaluate the situation of separated or unaccompanied children in Moldova, ensuring appropriate legal representation and care.

Statelessness and Citizenship.

CDA proudly joined the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. We established partnerships with "Ukrainskii Dom" and 10th of April NGO, extending support to five individuals through these collaborations.

CDA developed informative materials on statelessness, available on www.cda.md. 2,500 leaflets highlighting the risks of lacking documents were distributed in all districts.

Sixty-one stateless persons or individuals at risk of statelessness received legal counseling and representation, resulting in notable progress: four obtained citizenship of the Republic of Moldova, five received stateless status, and five renounced Subsidiary Protection Status (SSD).

Sixty-four beneficiaries received legal counseling and representation to obtain citizenship of the Republic of Moldova, with two successfully acquiring citizenship.

Capacity Development

Capacity Building of Authorities:

CDA conducted two training sessions for 37 General Inspectorate for Border Police (GIBP) staff on topics such as asylum procedures in the Republic of Moldova, in partnership with UNHCR.

A specialized training session on the legal aspects of child protection was provided to 23 staff members of child protection authorities from Chisinau.

Capacity Building of CDA Legal Advisors:

CDA conducted four capacity-building sessions for its lawyers on topics such as the role of lawyers in the asylum application examination procedure, asylum procedures in the Republic of Moldova, and the role of legal representatives and guardians for children displaced from Ukraine.

Monitoring and Advocacy

In collaboration with the Council of Europe, CDA developed a study on the capacity of the national asylum system in the Republic of Moldova. This study was conducted under the Council of Europe project “Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova,” which aims to provide tailor-made support to the Republic of Moldova in the field of asylum and migration.

CDA developed an alternative report submitted to the 112th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This report highlights the general situation regarding the asylum system in Moldova and key legislative issues, as well as the specific situation of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons.

CDA, in collaboration with UNHCR, advocates for amendments to the Temporary Protection Government Decision on issues related to the exclusion of periods of absence from the country, extension of the list of persons considered family members, and extension of medical services.

Organizational Development

CDA ensures accountability to affected persons through regular consultations and accessible feedback mechanisms, including measures for preventing and responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). CDA maintains open communication with asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons, and individuals at risk of statelessness, facilitating their participation in activities.

CDA beneficiaries can report incidents via email (complaints@cda.md), phone (+373 60330039), or directly to the executive director. Information is readily available in Ukrainian, Russian, and English at CDA premises, accommodation centers, the CDA website (www.cda.md), and social media.

The annual evaluation of services revealed that 58% of CDA beneficiaries are very satisfied, and 38% are satisfied with the services provided. 98% of respondents indicated that the information received was clear or clear enough to guide their actions.

The most requested legal services included legal assistance and counseling, primarily related to asylum (84.6%), citizenship (12%), and stateless status (3.4%).

Beneficiary feedback reflects satisfaction with CDA services:

“I turned to a CDA counselor for advice on acquiring citizenship and received qualified advice and recommendations on where to collect the necessary documents.”

During the reporting period, CDA provided training for five Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on project management. Four capacity-building events were organized for project coordinators, project assistants, legal counselors, and accountants. Ten project coordinators, assistants, and community members were trained on project writing, goal setting, objective formulation, activity development, and monitoring plan creation.

Five CSOs benefited from programmatic support to enhance access to legal services and remedies for displaced persons.

Conclusion

In 2024, the CDA demonstrated a steadfast commitment to providing crucial legal assistance and support to vulnerable populations, including refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, within the Republic of Moldova. Through strategic partnerships, dedicated advocacy, and a person-centered approach, the CDA has made a tangible positive impact on the lives of thousands. Building on the achievements of this year, the CDA is well-positioned to continue its vital work, addressing emerging challenges and promoting a more just and equitable society for all. The organization remains dedicated to upholding the rights and dignity of those it serves, fostering social cohesion, and contributing to the development of a robust and inclusive national asylum system.