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KEY HIGHLIGHTS 2022 - 2023

MOLDOVA





"Our portfolio mission is for Ceadir-Lunga to transition to renewable energy with more local energy sources and energy independence. This is of utmost importance to Moldova at this point with an energy crisis, and we hope that our municipality can contribute our share and demonstrate how this can be done at the local level."

Anatolie Topal, Ceadir-Lunga Mayor

"Thanks to the Mayors for Economic Growth project, our city is embracing a greener future. With the support of the UNDP and EU, we are transitioning to clean and renewable energy sources, creating a healthier environment for our citizens. We are grateful to the EU and UNDP for this opportunity to lead the way towards a brighter future."

Mihail Stamov, Deputy Mayor of Ceadir-Lunga

"The Green Energy transition portfolio has been a game-changer for our city. Through the Mayors for Economic Growth project, we have received the necessary funds to invest in renewable energy infrastructure, reducing our carbon footprint and fostering a more sustainable community."

Oleg Fazli, Head of the Investment Attraction and ODA Department of Ceadir-Lunga

"Our city's solid waste management system will undergo a positive transformation, thanks to the Mayors for Economic Growth project. With the financial support provided by the EU, we are implementing intelligent solutions that have improved waste collection, recycling, and disposal. We are delighted to bring a positive impact on our environment and the satisfaction of our citizens."

Nicolae Dandis, Mayor of Cahul

"The funds received through the Mayors for Economic Growth project have empowered us to tackle our solid waste management challenges effectively. We are immensely grateful to the UNDP and EU for their trust in our city's potential and their contribution to creating a cleaner and healthier living environment for our residents."

Lilia Rață, Senior Consultant of Călărași

"With this project we want to upgrade our city's environmental landscape. We are grateful for the introduction of such programs as Urban Imaginaries, as we now have more efficient waste collection processes, reduced pollution, and a cleaner, healthier Călărași. This project has positively impacted the lives of our citizens."

Vladimir Susarenco, Deputy Mayor of Călărași

"Thanks to the top-up funds provided by the Mayors for Economic Growth project, we will be able to improve our public transportation solutions. The UNDP and EU's support has allowed us to enhance our transportation infrastructure, making commuting more convenient and comfortable for both refugees as well as our residents."

Sergiu Andronachi, Mayor of Cimișlia

"We are building a hub where people can come together, access vital services, and strengthen the social fabric of Copceac. We express our deepest gratitude for this invaluable opportunity."

Oleg Garizan, Mayor of Copceac

"The Mayors for Economic Growth project has allowed us to build a much-needed social center for our town. We are creating a space where Refugees from Ukraine can connect, engage in various activities, and receive essential support. This space will be the visiting card of our locality."

Ion Cărpineanu, Mayor of Carpineni

"Like little seeds of hope, the funding received in Drochia to retrofit our kindergarten blossoms into a safe haven for the youngest souls seeking refuge. In their laughter and playful footsteps, we witness the power of compassion transforming a building into a warm embrace, where Ukrainian refugee children find solace, joy, and a brighter tomorrow."

Nina Cereteu, Mayor of Drochia

"Our Urban Imaginaries project weaves a tapestry of vibrant communities, sustainable economies, and a future filled with innovation. Through the power of education and fostering a thoughtful approach towards waste, we empower citizens to embrace recycling practices, transforming discarded moments into steppingstones towards a greener, brighter Cahul. Together, we paint a picture of resilience and harmony, where every act of recycling sparks a ripple of positive change in our beloved city."

Evelina Iacobache, Senior Specialist of Cahul City Hall

"With every educational initiative, we ignite a spark of mindfulness, teaching our citizens to embrace the power of recycling. As we join hands to create a city that thrives on innovation and compassion. We extend our appreciation to the European Union for their generous sponsorship, and to the UNDP for their dedicated implementation of the Cahul Urban Imaginaries Program."

Iuliana Bulat, Senior Specialist of Cahul City Hall

Abbreviations

CfI	Call for Interest
CO	Country Office
EaP	Eastern Partnership countries
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
GITA	Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency
LA	Local Authorities
LEDP	Local Economic Development Plans
LoA	Letter of Agreement
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and infrastructure of Georgia
M4EG	Mayors for Economic Growth (Facility)
NALAG	National Association of Local Authorities in Georgia
NSM	National Steering Mechanism
RPA	Responsible Party Agreement
ULC	Urban Learning Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Key figures

number of total members / new member	16 (2022 & 2023)
number of reconfirmed members	56
people reached via comms channel	at least 100,000
number of events / sessions / meetings, workshops, info-sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, sessions, meetings • 13 events organized by M4EG • 10 Urban Imaginaries mentorship sessions • 3 Portfolio learning sessions. • 15 Portfolio team working meetings. • 3 inspiration sessions
number of grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Portfolio Journey (Ceadâr-Lunga) • 2 Urban Imaginaries (Cahul & Călărași) • 5 Top Up Response and Renewal Program (Drochia, Cimișlia, Copceac, Cărpineni & Volintiri) • 3 Energy Efficiency Grants (Taraclia, Geamăna, Sireți) • 14 Refugee Response Communities (Bălți, Cahul, Călărași, Cărpineni, Ceadâr-Lunga, Cimișlia, Copceac, Dondușeni, Drochia, Leova, Palanca, Selemet, Telenești, Ungheni)

Portfolio Journey

Ceadîr-Lunga

A City's Journey: Ceadîr-Lunga's Transition to Green Energy

Population 16,605



In the heart of Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia nestled within the Republic of Moldova, lies the city of Ceadîr-Lunga. Once a thriving industrial hub during the Soviet era, it now grapples with the remnants of its past while facing turbulent times. However, against all odds, the municipality team of Ceadîr-Lunga has embarked on a bold mission to transform the city into a beacon of sustainability, worthy of its resilient citizens.

As baseline for the Portfolio Journey the city focused on the burden of outdated practices and a reliance on conventional energy sources. The city recognized the urgent need for change, not only to mitigate the city's environmental impact but also to create opportunities for its inhabitants. Soon after the project started the price of gas increased by 6-fold following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With a vision in mind, UNDP introduced the Portfolio Journey, a multifaceted approach encompassing various projects aimed at embracing green energy practices and fostering knowledge and awareness within the community.

The initial funding available for experimentation and ideation was used to spearhead 3 key directions.





1. The first focused on training existing green energy professionals through courses and knowledge sharing with other cities and countries. Through these training initiatives, the people of Ceadâr-Lunga began to grasp the transformative potential of green energy. They learned about the significant role it plays in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and even stimulating economic growth. More importantly, they understood the social impact of embracing sustainable practices, as it promoted the conservation of natural resources and fostered a sense of environmental responsibility.

2. Recognizing the need to inspire change at the grassroots level, the team initiated the Transitional Kindergarten program. This innovative project aimed to promote energy efficiency principles while providing tangible examples of successful energy transitions. Participating kindergartens received specialized training and an energy audit of their facilities, allowing them to develop their own energy transition plans with the involvement of families and neighbors. The initiative sparked a sense of enthusiasm among the citizens of Ceadâr-Lunga. As the kindergartens' plans unfolded, the city witnessed firsthand the impact of energy efficiency measures. One Kindergarten was chosen as a test site for new technologies thus walls were insulated, and new practices were introduced to improve the energy performance of the buildings. The effects were not limited to the kindergartens alone; the entire community witnessed the positive outcomes of these endeavors. Initial calculations have showcased a 30% reduction in heating costs during the winter months.

3. Amidst the challenges faced by Ceadâr-Lunga, the project also addressed the issue of energy consumption by the city and the accessibility of green technologies for low-income families. The city team spearheaded efforts to automate metering stations and install solar-powered lighting at pedestrian crossings. These initiatives not only reduced energy costs but also enhanced road safety and improved the quality of life for citizens. In a show of support for socially vulnerable segments of the population, 3,000 energy-saving light bulbs were distributed, providing tangible relief, and paving the way for broader energy transitions.

The journey of Ceadâr-Lunga serves as an inspiration not only to its residents but also to other cities facing similar challenges. It demonstrates the power of determined leadership and community engagement in effecting positive change. Through their commitment to green energy, the citizens of Ceadâr-Lunga are creating a legacy that will resonate for generations to come, as they transform their city into a shining example of resilience, sustainability, and hope.

Impact

Job Creation: The implementation of sustainable energy initiatives and infrastructure projects in Ceadîr-Lunga has resulted in the creation of new jobs. According to data from the city hall, these initiatives have generated approximately 5 direct jobs and 20 indirect jobs, contributing to a decrease in unemployment rates.

Cost Savings: The adoption of energy-efficient measures has resulted in significant cost savings for both the city and its residents. For instance, by implementing the kindergarten retrofit, Ceadîr-Lunga has achieved an annual energy cost reduction of 30% on heating agent.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) & ODA: The commitment to sustainable practices and the modernization of energy infrastructure has paved the way for attracting foreign investors to Ceadîr-Lunga. The city is currently in plans of developing an Investor menu pursuing financial means required to further the city's green energy transition ambitions.

Environmental Benefits: The adoption of green energy practices has led to various environmental benefits, such as reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality. As of 2023 Ceadîr-Lunga has started gathering comprehensive information on their CO2 footprint as a city and has pledged to contribute to a cleaner and healthier planet.





Cahul

Population 30,018

Recognizing the urgent need for a comprehensive solution, the municipality of Cahul has embarked on the Urban Imaginaries program. This program aims to revamp waste collection in the city by establishing four enclosed waste collection platforms and implementing a series of awareness-raising activities.

The first pillar of the project involves the construction and renovation of waste collection platforms. Through concrete work and the installation of twenty galvanized containers, these platforms will provide a clean and efficient system for waste collection. Separate collection sets, featuring two sections for plastic and glass, will also be integrated into the platforms.

The second pillar focuses on raising awareness and educating various segments of the population. The Creation Center "Luceafărul" in Cahul will collaborate with the program to organize an interactive drawing contest for young people and children between the ages of 7 and 18. This contest will serve as an educational game to introduce the youth to the importance of waste management and separate collection. Additionally, educational games for children on separate waste collection will be distributed to kindergartens in the municipality, allowing young children to learn about good waste management practices.

The third pillar involves promoting the program's objectives to a wider audience. A promotional video spot will be created, highlighting the importance of waste management and featuring all parties involved in the program. Information leaflets on separate waste collection will be distributed to residents in the neighborhoods where the platforms are located. The program will also install information plates on each platform, providing details on waste disposal services for citizens to contact when needed.

The Urban Imaginaries program in Cahul is a collaborative effort, involving various partners and stakeholders. Volunteers from the "Luceafărul" Creation Center and the Municipal Youth Center will contribute to organizing activities and distributing information. The City Hall of Cahul and the Communal-Housing Household of Cahul will work together to conduct neighborhood discussions with citizens, fostering dialogue and engagement.

The learnings from the Urban Imaginaries program will have a lasting impact on waste management in Cahul. The project activities will serve as a model for future initiatives, and the educational prototype developed through the program will be replicated on a larger scale. The knowledge gained will be applied to other local projects, aiming to enhance waste management practices and promote sustainable development in the region.

With a strong focus on citizen participation and innovative solutions, the Urban Imaginaries program is set to transform waste management in Cahul. By improving infrastructure, raising awareness, and engaging the community, the municipality is paving the way for a cleaner and more sustainable future.

Călărași

Population 16,400



In Călărași a community-led project is also striving to transform waste management in the city and create a sustainable future. With a population of 16,400, including over 5,300 residents in apartment blocks, the city recognized the need to improve its solid waste management practices.

The initial problem identified was not the collection and evacuation of waste itself but rather the appearance and functionality of the waste collection platforms scattered throughout the city. These platforms lacked proper organization, with containers placed directly on the ground and no measures in place to prevent animals from spreading garbage into public spaces. The hygiene and smell emanating from these platforms left citizens dissatisfied, impacting the city's urban aesthetics and economic development.

To address these issues, the city of Călărași chose to improve the household waste collection service at the common waste platforms by modernizing and enhancing their functionality. The project involved several stages and actions aimed at engaging the community and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Simultaneously, public awareness events were organized to educate and engage the community. An art contest was held, inviting students and young people to create urban creations from waste. The winning designs were then painted on the three modernized platforms, serving as a visual reminder of the importance of waste management and environmental protection.

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of the project, the team worked on improving the legal framework. A local regulation for waste disposal services was developed, making it mandatory for residents to sign contracts with GCL Călărași. Block meetings were organized in collaboration with GCL Călărași and the local Youth Council to inform citizens about the new regulations and how the rehabilitated platforms would function.

Two experimental ideas were implemented to test their viability and impact. The first experiment involved separate collection of electronic waste using specially designed containers. The project team, accompanied by youth from the Local Youth Council, went door-to-door to inform and encourage residents to deposit electronic waste in these containers. The results and citizen reactions were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the initiative, with plans to scale it up to all 20 platforms if successful.

The second experiment focused on harnessing creativity and engaging the city's young talents. A contest was organized for young people to submit models or drawings of urban art forms created from recyclable waste. The winning concepts were chosen through a city-wide vote, and the three most creative and ingenious designs were brought to life. These art forms not only added aesthetic appeal to the community but also served as symbols of raising public awareness about waste and environmental protection.

The project involved various partners, including the Local Youth Council, GCL Călărași, local NGOs, the Museum of History and Ethnography, and the School of Arts. Their collaboration ensured the success and sustainability of the initiatives, reaching out to different segments of the community and fostering a sense of collective responsibility.

The lessons learned from this project in Călărași will have a lasting impact on waste management practices in the city and serve as a template for future community projects. The improved infrastructure, public awareness campaigns, and engagement of the community will contribute to a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable Călărași.

As the project progresses, all activities will be publicized through the city's website, Facebook page, regional newspaper *Expresul*, and the communication channels of project partners. This transparent and inclusive approach will keep the community informed and involved, ensuring the continued success of Călărași's transformation towards a more sustainable future.

EU Response and Renewal Grant Programme under Mayors for Economic Growth



In December 2022, the European Commission announced a new financial agreement of EUR 1.8 million to enhance direct support to city and town authorities that are members of the Mayors for Economic Growth (M4EG) Facility network in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (Moldova). Seventy percent of the grant component will be available for Ukrainian local authorities, and 30 percent to local authorities in Moldova. The additional funds, along with previously repurposed funds from the M4EG project will sponsor a Call for Local Demonstration Initiatives focusing on revitalizing and supporting the recovery of local economies and communities impacted by the war.

The structure of the fund has two aspects:

Response & Immediate Recovery – funding range for each proposal: EUR 30,000-50,000 (no co-financing required). It intends to support the immediate needs of people (IDPs and refugees) whose houses, jobs and businesses were destroyed or affected by the war and small-scale restoration of infrastructure and services.

Renewal & Anticipation – funding range for each proposal: EUR 70,000 – 100,000 (at least 20% co-financing required). This aspect aimed at to support local authorities impacted by the war to get on track with their sustainable development pathways and lay foundations for economic recovery, future sustainable growth and modernization of cities and communities.

Energy Efficiency Grants

15 000 USD for Taraclia | 15 000 USD for Geamăna | 15 000 USD for Sireți



In 2022, The M4EG initiative has adapted its programmatic interventions to support municipalities hosting refugees from Ukraine. Recognizing the pressing need to address energy poverty and rising energy costs, the initiative will implement small-scale energy efficiency solutions in public institutions, including the Center for Children and two kindergartens. Solar power panels, biomass boilers, and the replacement of windows and doors will be among the upgrades implemented to improve energy efficiency.

The energy efficiency grants provide a glimmer of hope for the local communities, both in terms of financial relief and sustainable development. By reducing heating costs and improving energy efficiency, these initiatives will enable the localities to allocate precious resources towards other critical needs, such as education, healthcare, and social support for refugees.

Moreover, these grants signify a broader commitment to fostering socio-economic inclusion and resilience among refugee communities. By actively involving local NGOs and organizations, the projects promote collaboration, empowerment, and community engagement. The NGOs will work closely with the City Halls, providing invaluable insights and expertise to ensure the successful implementation of the projects.

As these energy efficiency renovations commence, the communities in Taraclia, Geamăna, and Sireți eagerly anticipate the positive impact they will bring. Beyond energy savings and environmental benefits, these grants symbolize solidarity, compassion, and a shared vision of a brighter future. Moldova's commitment to supporting refugees and promoting sustainable development serves as an inspiration, demonstrating the transformative power of inclusive initiatives that prioritize the well-being and dignity of all residents.

Refugee Response



Addressing the Refugee Crisis and Building Resilience

As the war in neighboring Ukraine continues, Moldova finds itself grappling with an increasing number of refugees seeking transit or refuge within its borders. With over 100,000 refugees and more than 700,000 official border crossings since March 2022, joint EU and UNDP initiative M4EG have allocated \$390,000 for emergency response and green recovery efforts. The focus is on integrating urban planning, gender responsiveness, and innovation at the local level aimed at fostering inclusion for the Ukrainian refugees currently residing in the RM. In collaboration with international and national civil society organizations, a total of \$257 million has been mobilized in 2022 to provide protection services and humanitarian assistance for refugees in Moldova.

Challenges faced by Local Authorities

The majority of the local authorities, signatories of the M4EG initiative, are under immense pressure to meet the basic needs of Ukrainian refugees crossing the border. Despite their best efforts, these host communities and municipalities struggle with limited resources and capacities to respond effectively while maintaining their existing administrative and service functions. The complex and rapidly changing situation requires adaptive and flexible programming to address the crisis adequately.

M4EG's Response

The M4EG has identified a series of interventions to support local authorities in mitigating the short-term socio-economic impacts of the refugee crisis. The project aims to provide rapid assistance and strengthen the resilience of local authorities. The experiences and lessons learned from Moldova's response will be shared through the M4EG regional network and the newly established Urban Learning Center.

Collaboration and Strategy

The M4EG team in Moldova is working closely with the Congress of Local Authorities (CALM) and the National Employment Agency to ensure efficient implementation of the refugee response initiative. Their expertise is invaluable in aligning the current intervention response with the countrywide strategy for the social and economic integration of refugees. The M4EG secretariat will support the inclusion of local-level efforts in the national refugee management and support coordination mechanism.

As the situation continues to evolve, the UNDP Moldova remains committed to supporting the leadership role of LPAs and providing timely assistance to their aid. By harnessing the power of collaboration and innovation, Moldova is determined to overcome the challenges currently posed.



CALM – Congress of Local Authorities in Moldova

Recognizing the crucial role of Local Authorities (LPAs) in managing the refugee crisis, the M4EG supported CALM in 2022 to set up a Coordination Unit and a Call Centre. This aimed to increase resilience and emergency preparedness of LPAs in Moldova. CALM assembled a diverse team of 12 experts and established the CALM Refugee Crises Cell in Chisinau. Under their guidance, several achievements were made. They facilitated four online meetings between Local Authorities, Central Government, and Development Partners, fostering collaboration. CALM initiated monthly meetings with the State Chancellery, advocating for the recognition of LPAs' role. They ensured LPA representation in national working groups, enhancing coordination. CALM's experts contributed to the Single Emergency Management Centre, representing LPA perspectives. They identified regulatory bottlenecks and proposed solutions, submitting four proposals to the Central Government. CALM provided consultations, conducted surveys, and kept LPAs and society informed. Their support empowered LPAs with flexibility and autonomy in crisis response. CALM's commitment to a human-centered approach yielded remarkable results, empowering LPAs to navigate the challenges with resilience and compassion.

Refugees from Ukraine can learn Romanian, thanks to EU and UNDP support

Refugees from Ukraine can learn Romanian language at courses conducted with the support of the European Union and UNDP. The courses are mostly attended by refugees from Ukraine, who learn Romanian from scratch the Alecu Russo State University of Bălți and the State University of Comrat. "Among the audience there are several Ukrainian students who have transferred to the Bălți university and a woman in her 70s. All participants want to socialise, to fit into the community and to find a job," says Violina Dănilă, a university assistant who teaches Romanian.

In Comrat, the courses are held online, attended by refugees settled in different regions of the country. The Romanian lessons are taught by the teachers of the Romanian Language Department of the Comrat State University. The institution will soon launch the second cohort of the Romanian course, with 17 more men and women to benefit from this opportunity.

By the end of the year, around 80 refugees from Ukraine will benefit from Romanian language courses at the Alecu Russo State University of Bălți and the State University of Comrat.



More than 3000 vacancies were offered at job fairs, organized with EU and UNDP support



Balti (26th of October 2022)



Ungheni (8th of December 2022)

Numerous economic agents and public institutions offered more than 3,000 jobs during job fairs conducted during October – December 2022 in Bălți, Cahul, Căușeni and Ungheni. Men and women from the Republic of Moldova, as well as many refugees from Ukraine attended these fairs. Potential employers have prepared for them information materials in Ukrainian language and a series of socio-economic integration activities.

“[My acquaintances] hope to find a job here at this fair. That’s why I think this fair is very important. I believe that anyone who wants a job will find it here. The most important thing is to try and everything will be fine,”

Anna
Refugee from Ukraine

Social Cohesion Activities

An extraordinary event took place in the beginning of 2023 — a cross-border youth friendship football match that built a connection bridge between youngsters from Ukraine and Moldova. Against the backdrop of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, children from Ceadîr-Lunga and their counterparts from affected by the war Ukrainian regions gathered on the green field to share their passion for football.

"We wanted to give these children a sense of normality amidst chaos, to remind them that the power of friendship and unity knows no boundaries," remarked Ivan Ghenov, who spearheaded the initiative in Ceadîr-Lunga. "Through this friendship football match, we aimed to restore their faith in brighter days and create lasting connections between young hearts that would endure long after the final whistle."

In another inspiring endeavor, the M4EG sought to bring joy to those who had experienced the ravages of war and displacement. Refugees resided in Cimislia and other M4EG member communities were invited to an unforgettable evening at the Harikiv Opera in Chisinau. For these uprooted people, the theater offered an exciting opera play.

"I had almost forgotten what it feels like to be captivated by the magic of theater," whispered Elena, a refugee from Cimislia, as the curtains unveiled a mesmerizing performance. "For a few hours, the worries and hardships melted away, replaced by magnificent performance."

As the Mayors for Economic Growth Initiative continues to empower communities across Moldova and beyond, it is clear that commitment to human-centered development extends far beyond economic prosperity.



Currently implementing (under development)

Wifi Hotspots

Ukrainian Friendship Officers

ICT Training Courses

Learning opportunities

- [ROM] Urban Imaginaries: Inspiration Session 2 - Participatory Foresight
- [RUS] Urban Imaginaries: Inspiration Session 2 - Participatory Foresight
- [RUS] ULC inspiration session: Tallinn's Pathway

Updates

You can find more information on human centered design and the first cohort' journey under the Urban Imaginaries here. From early spring to summer of 2022, human-centered design thinking was introduced to the communities, where they explored their identified problem and vetted and designed solutions through end-user research with residents. In November, all three presented their learning and effects so far in a regional Show and Tell event.

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