



**FIRST  
ANNUAL  
PROGRESS  
REPORT**

**Multi-Year, Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions  
Strategy for Ukraine 2018 - 2022**

# Introduction

In line with the Grand Bargain<sup>1</sup> commitment of progressing towards a 'collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding', in 2017 UNHCR has globally launched a Multi-Year, Multi-Partner (MYMP) approach to strategic planning for protection and solutions in 22 operations. In 2018, UNHCR Ukraine joined those pilot countries and launched its own MYMP strategy. The MYMP of UNHCR Ukraine was developed through extensive consultations with a variety of partners, including other UN agencies, donors, NGOs, civil society and, most importantly, the Ukrainian authorities. UNHCR Ukraine's MYMP period (2018 to 2022) is synchronized with the cycle of "the Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework" in recognition of the value of pursuing a joined-up approach among humanitarian and development actors in the context of the persistent conflict affecting eastern Ukraine, as well as the goal of achieving protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and stateless persons throughout the country.<sup>2</sup>

**This report presents the achievements of the MYMP in 2018, the first year of UNHCR Ukraine's five-year strategy for engagement in Ukraine.**

In early 2019, UNHCR analyzed the results of its first year of implementation of the strategy in parallel with the preparation of its Country Operations Plan for 2020, during which consultations were held with a range of stakeholders on how the Multi-Year, Multi-Partner Strategy should be fine-tuned in light of these results and updated assumptions. UNHCR facilitated discussion with 31 stakeholders in a series of small-group discussions with non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, government entities, international organizations (including development agencies), and donors. In parallel, UNHCR conducted a participatory assessment with a thematic focus on durable solutions and feedback mechanisms, with the following stakeholders and persons of concern consulted throughout Ukraine:

**184**

Refugees and asylum seekers

**86**

Stateless persons or those at risk of statelessness

**520**

Internally displaced and conflict-affected persons\*

\* including men, women, youth, as well as members of the Roma community and persons with specific needs (e.g., persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV)

The following chapters will summarize these findings and UNHCR Ukraine's progress in implementing its MYMP strategy. The document will also present UNHCR Ukraine's plans to adjust implementation in 2020 in light of the inputs received from stakeholders.

## I. Updates regarding the protection and solutions context

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

As of the end of 2018, Ukraine hosted 2,620 recognized refugees and persons with complementary protection and around 6,400 asylum-seekers. The refugee population in Ukraine is diverse and includes persons from over 60 countries of origin as well as a disproportionate number of single men of working age. Among refugees and asylum-seekers, 23 per cent are women and girls. In 2018, the number of new asylum applicants increased by 20 per cent, but remained low at 931 persons. The recognition rate in 2018 remained stable at 26 per cent, but was comparatively low for persons from refugee-producing countries such as Syria and Afghanistan. Ukraine has asylum legislation and institutions in place; however, there are protection gaps due to challenges

<sup>1</sup> The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. It commits donors and aid organizations to providing 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020, along with more un-earmarked money, and increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response, among other commitments.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) referred to in Ukraine as "Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework" (UNPF) represents the common strategic partnership framework between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations System for the period of 2018-2022. It affirms the commitment of all partners in support of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in areas that coincide with national development priorities.

with implementation and funding, such as inadequate interpretation and reception conditions. Despite the existence of relevant legislation and policies, durable solutions for refugees remain elusive. Only a few individuals per year opt for voluntary repatriation. The low recognition rate makes it difficult for asylum-seekers to achieve progress toward integration. The state does not provide refugees with language courses or tailored assistance to help them access employment. Despite these challenges, in the participatory assessment, refugees and asylum-seekers spoke about a greater interest in Ukrainian language-learning and livelihoods, showing that many wish to make a long-term home in Ukraine.

*“One of my children is disabled; he stays in the wheelchair all the time. My wife cannot work, as our son requires full time attention and she is taking care of him. I work long hours to provide for my family. However, twice a week my wife always makes it a priority to attend the language classes, because this is important for us to have normal lives here”.*

#### Male Asylum-Seeker

*From Afghanistan living in the Ukrainian city of Odesa*

#### Internally displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement and returnees

As of 13 March 2019, the Ministry of Social Policy has registered 1.36 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Of these, it is estimated that 800,000 persons reside more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA). Most IDPs were displaced from the non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts* during 2014 and early 2015 as a result of armed conflict. Among IDPs registered with the Ministry of Social Policy, 31,000 of the total are from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, including a significant number from the Crimean Tatar community. Furthermore, there are persons displaced within the NGCA of Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts*. Three-quarters of IDPs have no plans to return in the near future. In the participatory assessment, IDPs stated that their priority is to find durable housing solutions, since most spend a considerable portion of their incomes on housing and utilities. Employment levels have stagnated among IDPs (43 per cent employed compared to 58 per cent among the general population).<sup>3</sup> To facilitate local integration, IDPs advocate for their right to vote in all elections. They would like the right to participate fully in public affairs. They say they face discrimination in accessing pensions and certain administrative services.



*In 2019, UNHCR finalized its biennial Participatory Assessment with refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected people, which included a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) and qualitative interviews. The findings of Participatory Assessment 2019 have been included in the Country Operation Plan for 2020. Photo: UNHCR Ukraine.*

<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Migration, National Monitoring System Report on the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons, September 2018.

*“If only there were affordable housing options. Interest rates are very high; we cannot afford them. Leasing could help us. We do not feel secure without proper housing. Quite often we are afraid of being kicked out of our apartments since landlords have their own interests. It is hard to build your life when you are not rooted anywhere.”*

### Female IDP from Crimea living in Lviv

In addition to its focus on IDPs throughout the country, UNHCR addresses the needs of conflict-affected population living within twenty kilometres (km) of the contact line in eastern Ukraine, where the situation is particularly dire because of ongoing armed conflict that continuously affects their daily lives.

In government-controlled areas (GCA), among the population that did not flee this area 31 per cent are older persons, of whom 71 per cent are female; these older women have nowhere to go and no one to help them. Their greatest concerns are security and basic needs. In areas within five km of the contact line, 86 per cent of households report concern over the risk of shelling, compared to 29 per cent in areas 5-20 km from the contact line.<sup>4</sup> In the participatory assessment, residents spoke about the impact this protracted violence and isolation has had on their mental health. In 2018, UNHCR filled a critical gap in providing psychological support in locations close to the contact line to address this need.



*Yurii (not his real name), 9, lives with his mother just a few kilometres from the ‘contact line’. Every night they hear shelling. In 2015, he and his mother hid in their basement during the shelling and were covered with debris. In 2018, a shell damaged their house, including the boy’s room and bed. Since then, Yurii is afraid to sleep alone; he became moody and unsociable. A psychologist from UNHCR’s partner “Proliska” is providing support. Photo: UNHCR Ukraine.*

Within five km of the contact line, 19 per cent of residents express concerns about military presence in their communities. The military occupies civilian properties without compensating the owners, and military presence tends to draw shelling. Furthermore, 28 per cent of households expressed concerns about mine contamination in their communities.<sup>5</sup> The ongoing risk of mines negatively affects residents’ ability to travel and to use their land (e.g., for gardening, firewood collection), thus negatively impacting their welfare. The small settlements and rural areas in this zone have lost their economic base, and recovery efforts are not underway there. Roads and public transportation are poor, creating challenges for the delivery of assistance, as well as access to

<sup>4</sup> REACH, Analysis of Humanitarian Trends, Government Controlled Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, June 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

services. The situation is worst in very small, rural settlements along the contact line where shelling is frequent and the state is unable to extend services. For example, UNHCR identified a constellation of 26 villages in this area with remaining populations of under 150 persons. Most lack public transportation, shops, utilities and even ambulance services. In these isolated communities in an area of active armed conflict, people have multiple vulnerabilities—physical, economic, social and mental. Older persons and persons with disabilities, who are disproportionately female, face the greatest difficulties. Assessments continue to show gaps in reaching older persons in the villages in GCA close to the contact line; many are in need of case management, home-based care and psychosocial support.

## 96%

**Older persons** experience conflict-related psychosocial issues (changes in sleeping patterns, crying spells, persistent memories of conflict, etc.)<sup>6</sup>

## 41%

**Older persons** report that they are living alone (86 per cent women)

## 21%

**Older persons** experienced at least one type of violence and abuse, most common was emotional/psychological abuse (76 per cent women)

## 20%

**Households with a disabled child** are food insecure according to the multi-sector needs assessment therefore, they are most likely to be food insecure (compared to 6 per cent for households without vulnerabilities).

In the non-government-controlled areas (NGCA), persons along the contact line face similar challenges relating to ongoing violence. Since the areas along the contact line in NGCA are more likely to be urban or suburban, the size of the affected population is larger. As an illustration, the Shelter/NFI Cluster estimates that 70 per cent of shelter damages in 2018 occurred in NGCA; the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, led by OHCHR, found that in 2018, 78 per cent of civilian casualties caused by shelling or small arms fire occurred in NGCA. Persons in NGCA report challenges with employment and meeting basic needs. They face legal difficulties in accessing pensions and social benefits, and obtaining identity and civil documentation, including birth certificates. A major concern is the situation at the five checkpoints with GCA, which register a million crossings per month. Waiting times remain long (over three hours) and dangerous, as the checkpoints are affected by shelling and mine contamination. While shelter and sanitary conditions have improved, the journey remains difficult, involving multiple bus connections and restrictions on the transfer of personal goods. The impact is serious, especially considering that over half the persons crossing the checkpoints are older persons who travel mainly for family reasons or to obtain access to their pensions. Compared to before the conflict, the number of persons residing in NGCA who receive their Ukrainian pensions has declined by 700,000.

### Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

Though Ukraine acceded to the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions in 2013, the authorities have not yet adopted legislation to establish a procedure for determining whether an individual is stateless; therefore, the registered number of stateless persons (5,650 at the end of 2018) is considered to significantly underestimate the actual population of stateless persons in Ukraine.

Some residents of NGCA face challenges in obtaining proper identity and civil status documentation, such as birth certificates. For example, to obtain birth certification for their new-born children, parents must come to GCA and apply for birth certification through a procedure that involves application to the administrative court, an accelerated judicial proceeding and a visit to the civil registration office to obtain the certificate. The fees and indirect costs associated with travel, as well as stay in GCA, are burdensome for poor families. In areas along the contact line, courts are overburdened and understaffed, so the consideration of applications takes longer. The number of babies born in NGCA who have not obtained officially recognized birth registration, estimated at 46,691 as of 31 December 2018, continues to grow. In addition, persons with residence

<sup>6</sup> The data about older persons comes from HelpAge, Baseline Report: Emergency Protection-based Support to Conflict-Affected Older Women and Men in the GCA Locations of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, July 2018. Their survey was conducted in the areas of their project implementation, which covers 43 locations in GCA of Donetsk (25 locations) and Luhansk (18 locations) oblasts. These locations are situated either very close to or within the 5 km zone (70%) on the GCA side of the line-of-contact in both Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

registration in NGCA face procedural barriers to renewing or replacing their identity documents, which expands the risks of statelessness.



*Petro (not his real name), 70, an Afghan war veteran, lives close to the contact line. During the early morning of 14 February 2019, his village was heavily shelled with a projectile landing directly on his home and burning it to the ground. The blast pushed the elderly man into his unused fireplace, where he was protected, saving his life. After surviving the blast, Petro moved into an empty trailer next to his destroyed home. Petro, who suffered a concussion and has a shell fragment stuck in his leg, has since been supported by UNHCR partner Proliska, which provided him with a non-food item kit, including a blanket, linen, clothes and shoes. UNHCR has also provided individual cash for protection as well as psychological support. UNHCR's partner R2P is currently assisting Petro in renewing his passport that had been burnt. Photo: Proliska*

### Operational responses within distinct geographical zones

UNHCR continues to work toward protection and solutions in three distinct geographic zones within Ukraine:

**Zone I – the line of contact:** This part of the country—defined generally as twenty km on either side of the contact line—continues to be affected by armed conflict. Since early 2015 with the adoption of the Minsk Agreement, Ukraine has had a partial ceasefire along a 427 km-long contact line running through Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts* in eastern Ukraine. However, violations of the ceasefire occur daily, and the negotiations among parties to the conflict have reached a stalemate. Though civilian casualties decreased by nearly 54 per cent in 2018 as compared to the previous year, families along the contact line continue to suffer the effects of regular shelling, including property damage, stress and economic blight. The protracted nature of the conflict tests social cohesion.

The main protection needs in zone I relate to physical protection from the effects of armed conflict, access to social and economic rights, documentation, housing/land/property rights, as well as SGBV and child protection. The shelter needs are large. Along the contact line, over 50,000 homes were damaged by the conflict. In GCA, several humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, have conducted repairs; families, communities and local authorities have also contributed. It estimated that currently 3,000 families in GCA are in need of humanitarian shelter repairs; an address-level verification, currently in progress and expected to be completed in May 2019, will provide precise figures of the outstanding shelter needs in GCA. If more people return, the figure could rise. Some returning families have damaged homes that were not eligible for repair because the owner was absent, so returns could lead to a new demand for shelter interventions. In NGCA, there are few actors implementing humanitarian shelter projects. Though it is not possible to conduct an address-level assessment of housing damage, the Shelter/NFI Cluster estimates 10,000 families in NGCA are in need of humanitarian shelter interventions.

**Zone II – NGCA:** The operational context in the NGCA involves restrictions on humanitarian access, logistical challenges and uncertainty. In line with humanitarian principles, UNHCR maintains its presence in the NGCA

to deliver assistance in response to humanitarian needs. The actions of the Government of Ukraine are critical for protecting the rights of persons in NGCA. Under international law, Ukraine has an obligation to take all possible measures to protect the human rights of citizens who live in areas that are not under the state's control. Ukraine can take various steps to improve protection of persons living in NGCA, such as simplifying access to documentation and pensions and easing people's movements through checkpoints along the line of contact.

**Zone III – Rest of Ukraine:** In the rest of Ukraine, the priority is integration of refugees and IDPs. As the conflict continues, IDPs need to be able to integrate legally, economically, socially and politically so that they do not experience protracted displacement. This shall be without prejudice to their right to return to their homes voluntarily, especially as conditions evolve. Integration of refugees and protection and acquisition of documentation/nationality for stateless persons (or those at risk of statelessness) is also critical. The improved integration of refugees would build the authorities' confidence in the country's asylum system and lead to fairer recognition rates. In many respects, conditions in Ukraine are favourable for integration of both refugees and IDPs. In terms of legal framework, Ukraine has acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the two statelessness conventions, as well as relevant international and European human rights conventions. It has adopted national legislation on asylum and internal displacement broadly consistent with international standards. Ukraine has adopted a policy framework, including national policies on durable solutions for IDPs, integration of refugees, as well as a national plan of action on human rights.<sup>7</sup> However, the state has not allocated sufficient resources for implementation of these policies. Economically, Ukraine is recovering modestly with a growth rate of 3.1 per cent in 2018. Out-migration has a growing impact on the country's markets and demography. An estimated four million Ukrainians are involved in labour migration, often short-term and circular in nature, with between 2.6-2.7 million Ukrainians working abroad at any given time. Ukraine has held presidential elections in spring 2019 and will hold parliamentary elections later in the year. The political constellation that emerges following the elections will affect progress on policies that would advance the protection and solutions of UNHCR's populations of concern. Ukraine has a strong and active civil society, which has been instrumental in assisting IDPs, stateless persons and refugees, and advocating for their protection.

## II. Strategic objectives, progress and priorities

**Resources:** In 2020, UNHCR expects a reduction of 16 per cent in donor resources available to support IDPs and conflict-affected persons. After having already experienced a significant reduction in the budget for refugees and asylum-seekers in 2019, the volume of resources for 2020 is projected to stabilize. The resources available for support to stateless persons will remain low, but stable, in 2020.

**Partners:** As of 2019, UNHCR Ukraine maintains a network of twelve implementing partners. Of these, one is an international NGO. Working with a national organization with relevant expertise, UNHCR conducted organizational capacity assessments for all its national NGO partners in 2018; each partner began implementing a tailored set of activities related to its priorities, such as governance, fundraising and human resources management.

**Prioritization:** Based on these forecasts regarding resources, the progress of programs implemented to date, as well as UNHCR's mandate and comparative advantage, UNHCR will prioritize advocacy, support to capacities of national and local institutions, and community-based interventions, while delivering individual humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable in zone I where the needs are greatest. Individual level assistance will target those with specific needs, including minorities, older persons at risk, single female-headed households, persons with disabilities, survivors of SGBV, children at risk and persons with protection needs (including LGBTI persons). Persons living in isolated communities closest to the contact line will be prioritized.

### Strategic Objective #1: Asylum seekers, Refugees and Stateless

*By 2022, asylum-seekers will have access to increasingly fair and effective procedures. The Government of Ukraine and national civil society organizations will facilitate the local integration of increasing numbers of refugees, while UNHCR will provide voluntary repatriation and resettlement*

<sup>7</sup> National Comprehensive Programme of Social Adaptation and Reintegration of IDPs.

for small numbers. Undocumented persons will have access to fair and effective procedures to confirm their citizenship or statelessness.

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

A summary of the progress to date includes:

- In 2018, UNHCR cooperated with the State Migration Service (SMS) to prepare a Progress Analysis Report on measures taken to improve the quality of the asylum system. The report reviewed the impact of a variety of capacity-building measures implemented over recent years, such as training, coaching, legal and administrative reforms, quality assurance measures and regular exchange of information, including at a regional level, to strengthen the fairness and effectiveness of refugee status determination procedures. Using a scorecard applied throughout the region, UNHCR estimates a 30 per cent improvement in Ukraine's asylum procedure since 2013. In particular, the SMS improved the interviewing process and the quality of country-of-origin information; it has started to provide interpretation services. Cooperation between the SMS and civil society organizations also improved.
- New challenges occurred in Kyiv, where the reorganization of the SMS's office limited reception capacity. UNHCR identified 150 persons who wished to apply for asylum, but were unable to do so, as of the end of 2018.
- According to UNHCR's records, there were no cases of *refoulement* from Ukraine in 2018. Nevertheless, asylum-seekers continue to face challenges in access to asylum procedures upon arrival at international airports. Access to airport zones has been a long-standing problem in Ukraine. While UNHCR still does not have access, in 2018 it became possible for asylum lawyers, through close cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Human Rights, to gain access to transit zones at international airports to counsel persons about the procedure.
- UNHCR enhanced cooperation with the state-run Free Legal Aid Centers (FLAC), as its lawyers provided assistance to a greater number of asylum-related cases. In 2018, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Coordination Center for Legal Aid Provision which foresees further collaboration. At the same time, structural issues remain, such as limited budget, lack of interpretation services, and regulations and practices that prevent the FLACs from intervening in a timely manner in asylum-related cases, most notably concerning cases at the border.
- To enhance their local integration prospects, UNHCR provided 348 refugees and asylum-seekers with cash/vouchers to start businesses or engage in training for livelihood purposes.



Joel (left) fled the Republic of Cameroon and applied for asylum in Ukraine where he now feels very much at home. The self-reliance grant Joel received from UNHCR allowed him to start his own carpentry workshop in Kyiv. Joel produces furniture and interior decoration items from wood. Thanks to his business, Joel can more easily integrate. He is also grateful to be able to contribute back to Ukrainian society that so warmly welcomed him when he fled his country. Mahmoud (right) fled the war in his home country in Syria. He is one of two viola players of Uzhgorod State Philharmonic Orchestra. The professional musician also has his own jazz band which performs regularly in small venues. With UNHCR's support, Mahmoud bought a viola and other musical equipment. Now he does not have to rent equipment for his performances, which has increased his profits.



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- Reception conditions did not improve. Of the three temporary accommodation centers run by the SMS, two remain half-empty because they require repairs. Persons living outside these centers do not receive any social assistance. UNHCR continues to fill the gap. In 2018, it provided support to 1,942 persons with specific needs.
- In 2018, UNHCR provided training to 25 refugee community groups on topics ranging from NGO management skills, writing project proposals, providing paralegal services, and social support. During follow-up monitoring, participants indicated they had started practical application of their knowledge and continued working towards formulating and achieving the goals of their communities. This had positive results. In Odesa, a Coordination Council brings together refugee communities and the SMS, and a refugee youth group gained representation in the City Youth Council. UNHCR also implemented 18 "protection impact projects" aimed at promoting tolerance between refugee and local communities, mostly through improving the infrastructure of state institutions, e.g., schools where refugee children study, evening schools that enrol refugee adults, public libraries, etc. UNHCR proactively reached out



to less active communities. As a result, three newly identified communities became more involved in UNHCR's activities.



*UNHCR supported several schools and public libraries with multimedia equipment to conduct tolerance classes and promote intercultural dialogue between local and refugee students. In a Bila Tserkva public school, the local community went a step further and subsequently organized free language classes for refugees, which are held twice per week. Nine Somali asylum-seekers attend regularly. Photo: UNHCR Ukraine*

**Strategic Objective #1 (refugees and asylum-seekers) Way Forward:** Based on these results, available resources, consultations with stakeholders and the participatory assessment, UNHCR has updated its plans for 2020. In the year ahead, UNHCR will continue to support the SMS's efforts to strengthen the asylum procedure. A particular focus will be on improving the legislative framework to guarantee access to the asylum procedure at international airports, as well as to simplify asylum-seekers' access to employment. To help them meet their basic needs and prepare for local integration, UNHCR proposes that the government give asylum-seekers the right to work without obtaining a special permit after a certain time period (e.g., three-to-six months after they apply for asylum). In 2019-20, UNHCR will expand language instruction to asylum-seekers and refugees, since this was an important request during the participatory assessment. The authorities do not yet provide any language instruction. Since the work with refugee communities has proven fruitful, UNHCR will continue this work with a particular focus on engaging women and youth.

### Stateless persons

A summary of the progress to date includes:

- Members of parliament registered draft legislation on establishing a statelessness determination procedure. Parliamentary committees reviewed and cleared the draft legislation, but it is still pending a first reading. UNHCR has contributed to the development of the draft law and considers that it is in line with international standards.
- In early 2018, Ukraine adopted legislation that would allow a simplified, administrative procedure for birth registration of babies born in non-government-controlled areas; however, the authorities have not yet agreed on how the procedure should work. As a result, the number of children without government-issued birth registration continues to grow. Together with other partners, UNHCR conducted extensive advocacy on this issue.
- Legal assistance has been considered as an effective instrument for solving individual cases, but because legal procedures are long and complex, this current approach has low cost-effectiveness. During 2018, UNHCR provided legal aid to 1,147 persons under its statelessness mandate. As a result, 148 persons obtained passports, and 190 persons obtained birth certificates. Furthermore, UNHCR identified over 300 persons who were undocumented and at risk of statelessness in

government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, but due to resource constraints, began to deliver assistance to them only in 2019.

- At the time of formulating this strategy, UNHCR had been working and gaining experience on the reduction of statelessness mainly among populations that had faced long-standing risks, such as migrants, persons with Soviet-era passports and Roma populations. In the past year of casework and advocacy, it has become clear that the ongoing conflict causes new risks of statelessness, notably related to the absence of birth registration and documentation. Also, if persons living near the contact line lack identity documents, they cannot move freely as a result of the area's internal checkpoints and document checks. This exposes them to serious protection risks.



*Olena (not her real name), 33, was born in Tajikistan. Shortly after her birth, her family was forced to flee the country and moved to Ukraine. Due to her family's poverty, Olena grew up in an orphanage. Her birth certificate got lost, so she was unable to obtain a Ukrainian passport. Later, she was unable to register the birth of her four children. UNHCR's partner R2P supported her in obtaining a birth certificate and Ukrainian passport. This made it possible for her to get birth certificates for her children. Photo: UNHCR Ukraine.*

**Strategic Objective #1 (stateless persons) Way Forward:** Based on these results, available resources and consultations with stakeholders, UNHCR has updated its plans for 2020. In the likely event that the authorities introduce a statelessness determination procedure and/or an administrative procedure for birth registration of babies born in non-government-controlled areas, UNHCR will prioritize support to the state's capacities to implement these procedures. Activities would include: information campaigns/outreach to communities; training of government staff; training of judges; and possibly limited technical assistance. At the same time, UNHCR will reshape its legal assistance, employing a community-based approach to provide paralegal assistance to larger numbers. Community members will be trained on the procedures and will be able to disseminate information, as well as intervene with the authorities in individual cases. Overall, priority will be given to the prevention of statelessness with a focus on eastern parts of the country. Legal assistance will target only the most vulnerable or strategic cases. Concerning the Roma population, UNHCR will seek to engage other partners that provide multi-sectoral support to them and will share experience about how to resolve documentation problems.

## Strategic Objective #2: IDPs and persons at risk of displacement along the line of contact (Zone 1)

*By 2022, the most critical humanitarian and protection needs of IDPs and persons at risk of displacement will be met through an inter-agency response along the line of contact, with UNHCR responding in the areas of protection and emergency shelter/NFIs and meeting critical needs in partnership with government, NGOs and communities.*

The scope of interventions differs in NGCA and GCA depending on humanitarian access, identified needs and activities conducted by other actors.

A summary of the progress to date includes:

- UNHCR provided legal assistance to 18,682 persons. The most common legal issues related to pensions, IDP registration, documents, and property rights. Training was provided to 738 legal professionals, many of them from the state's Free Legal Aid Centers (FLACs).
- To address individuals' specific needs, UNHCR strengthened the provision of case management as part of its comprehensive protection response, which entailed social accompaniment and effective referral to other UNHCR activities (such as shelter and cash for protection), as well as referral mechanisms among NGO and government partners in selected geographic areas. Another component of this case management includes a one-time material assistance, which, in GCA, UNHCR provides this protection assistance in cash. In 2018, 4,064 persons with specific needs received this one-time cash for protection support to meet their immediate needs.
- UNHCR's partners were among the first to respond to conflict flare-ups by delivering emergency support in areas close to the contact line, including core relief items and emergency shelter kits, as well as case management and protection referrals.
- UNHCR partners identified that persons residing near the contact line have psychological needs due to the prolonged exposure to armed conflict. As no other actors have responded to these needs in these locations, UNHCR delivered psychological support to 308 persons, primarily in rural, isolated areas along the contact line.
- UNHCR's NGO partners raised awareness on the risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) linked to the conflict and provided trainings for civil society, youth and government officials. Seventy-five survivors of SGBV received protection and assistance in 2018.
- In 2018, UNHCR conducted an evaluation of its work with community centers. Of the 86 community centers supported since the beginning of the conflict, 80 per cent continue to function. The most successful bring together community organizers, volunteers, NGOs and local authorities to deliver a range of services to the population. Among beneficiaries, 30 per cent are IDPs and 70 per cent from the host population; two-thirds of beneficiaries are female. Therefore, in order to build on these recommendations, strengthen peaceful co-existence between internally displaced persons and host communities and move towards "humanitarian-development-nexus" type activities, in 2018 UNHCR has created Community Protection and Solutions Projects, which include repairs and/or refurbishment of community centers, extension of public services (e.g., pensions, social services, legal aid) to areas along the 'contact line,' as well as support to other local services, based on consultations with the community. In 2018, UNHCR implemented 64 such projects in eastern Ukraine on both sides of the 'contact line'.
- A UNHCR NGO partner monitored the situation at the checkpoints on a daily basis, interviewing 24,770 persons in the course of the year, of whom 65 per cent were women. Following regular advocacy on the situation at the checkpoints, including monthly reports, there was progress in 2018: the authorities undertook improvements to shelter, technical and sanitary conditions at the checkpoints.
- With the conflict continuing to damage houses along the contact line, UNHCR responded to humanitarian shelter needs, exceeding its targets for shelter repairs by 18 per cent. A total of 1,414 shelters were repaired (of which 38 per cent in NGCA). While increasing the number of repairs in NGCA, UNHCR was not able to repair as many shelters that had been planned due to significant operational constraints. The repairs targeted vulnerable families who remained in (or planned to return to) houses damaged during the conflict. Sixty per cent of shelter beneficiaries were female. During post-construction monitoring, UNHCR assessed that all the construction works met local construction standards and also used these to verify the overall protection situation of the beneficiary; over 90 per cent of beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the quality and quantity of the construction works.
- A UNHCR NGO partner conducted an address-level verification of houses with outstanding humanitarian shelter needs in government-controlled Luhansk *oblast*. It identified 1,300 households, of which 90 per cent require light or medium repairs. A similar verification exercise will be completed in government-controlled Donetsk *oblast* in the first half of 2019. The number of humanitarian shelter actors in GCA has decreased along with donor funding; this has slowed the pace of repairs. At this pace, it will not be possible to meet all the humanitarian shelter needs in GCA in 2019, as had been expected. In

Donetsk *oblast*, the State Emergency Services conducted light shelter repairs with state funds; UNHCR provided tools to assist this effort.

- Since less frequent shelling led to an 84 per cent reduction in the number of newly damaged houses, UNHCR decreased its distribution of emergency shelter kits.



*Oksana (not her real name), 39, lives with her husband and their seven children in close proximity to the 'contact line'. The big family has to share a two-room house, while the parents struggle to make ends meet. On one February night in 2015, the family's house was damaged by a blast and Oksana instinctively jumped over her son to protect him with her own body. Meanwhile, her husband, who was outside their house, suffered a concussion and lost his hearing after the shell hit their yard seven metres from him. Since then, Oksana has suffered from speech problems and her children from anxiety, lack of concentration and urinary incontinence. As they were unable to afford repairing their house, they covered their windows with plastic sheets and moved to their basement – the warmest location in their house during the cold winters. Thanks to UNHCR partner the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), their home was fully repaired and the family was able to regain a sense of normalcy.*

**Strategic Objective #2 Way Forward:** Based on these results, available resources, consultations with stakeholders and the participatory assessment, UNHCR has updated its plans for 2020. UNHCR will scale down the provision of legal assistance, referring IDPs with straightforward complaints to the state-run Free Legal Aid Centers wherever possible. UNHCR will continue to provide legal assistance to conflict-affected persons and residents of NGCA (those not registered as IDPs), since they do not have access to the state's free legal aid. UNHCR will also continue to assist persons who do not have access in practice to the state-run Free Legal Aid Centers (for example, due to location), as well as to support strategic litigation related to advocacy. Despite the budget reductions, UNHCR will maintain the financial allocation for support to persons with specific needs, prioritizing those living close to the contact line. The needs remain quite high. Along the contact line, UNHCR will assist persons with specific needs, particularly older persons at risk, persons with disabilities and female-headed households. Support will include case management, social accompaniment, psycho-social support, and cash-based interventions (where possible) or in-kind assistance. Priority will be placed on persons living in remote, rural areas along the contact line where humanitarian needs are greatest. UNHCR will sustain protection referral mechanisms and strengthen support for community-level activities to prevent SGBV. Based on the positive experience from previous years, community-based activities will continue in 2020. UNHCR will support communities in establishing centers that bring together local authorities and civil society to deliver a range of social services, particularly near the contact line where these are mostly absent. UNHCR will contribute to sustainable peacebuilding through advocacy on social cohesion (conducted with other members of the Humanitarian Country Team), as well as building ties and participation at community level. Since it will not be possible to transfer responsibility for protection coordination to a government counterpart by the end of 2019, UNHCR will continue to coordinate the Protection Cluster through to the end of 2020.

For shelter activities, in GCA, UNHCR will work toward transferring responsibility for light repairs of damaged houses to the local authorities and State Emergency Services. UNHCR will conduct a smaller number of shelter repairs for the most vulnerable persons living along the contact line in order to address acute humanitarian needs and prevent further displacement. Assuming that the operational environment will permit the planning and logistics required for shelter interventions, UNHCR will prioritize shelter activities in NGCA where outstanding needs are higher and fewer actors have capacity to deliver this support.

## Strategic Objective #3: IDPs, returnees, and population at risk of displacement in Non-Government Controlled Area (Zone 2)

*By 2022, IDPs, returnees, and population at risk of displacement in NGCA will have received the shelter/NFI and protection interventions required to meet their needs, while peacebuilding initiatives will have prevented the aggravation of conditions causing displacement or preventing returns.*

Given the inherent unpredictability of the situation in the NGCA, in the absence of political solution, the level of UNHCR's engagement will be determined by the evolving context and reviewed again at the end of 2019.

A summary of the progress to date includes:

- In NGCA, 540 houses damaged by the conflict were repaired. UNHCR worked through a private construction company for medium and heavy repairs and successfully implemented a pilot project to provide light repairs in multi-story buildings.
- To support persons with specific needs, UNHCR provided tailored in-kind assistance, such as mobility and assistive devices. In total, 1,038 persons in NGCA received this in-kind individual protection assistance.
- UNHCR implemented 24 projects designed to strengthen community-based protection at community level and supported 13 community groups to improve their engagement and ability to find community-based solutions to local protection issues.
- UNHCR assisted 2,227 households (3,730 persons) in Donetsk with 6,681 tons of coal (three tons per household), assisting them to survive the cold winter conditions. Persons with specific needs were identified by UNHCR as well as by partners along pre-defined vulnerability criteria such as single-parent households, persons with disabilities, elderly, families with three or more children, and vulnerable women. Special emphasis was placed on reaching persons in rural areas and areas close to the contact line, since this group often remains without any assistance for extended periods.
- Extensive advocacy was conducted regarding social cohesion and protection of the rights of persons living in NGCA with a particular focus on issues relating to birth and death registration, freedom of movement and access to pension. Despite these efforts, older persons in NGCA faced significant obstacles in receiving their pensions; 700,000 fewer persons in NGCA received pensions in December 2018 as compared to the period before the conflict.



*Within the framework of its 2018/2019 Winterization Program, UNHCR, together with partners, distributed 6,681 metric tonnes of coal to 2,227 vulnerable conflict-affected households in Donetsk (3 tonnes per household). Through its winterization programme, UNHCR was the first organization to reach conflict-affected persons residing in localities that had been cut off from humanitarian aid for over three years. The distribution of coal is made possible thanks to the support and funds of [EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations \(ECHO\)](#). Photo: UNHCR Ukraine.*

**Strategic Objective #3 Way Forward:** Based on these results, available resources and consultations with stakeholders, UNHCR has updated its plans for 2020. It is recognized that due to the conflict and economic factors, humanitarian needs in NGCA remain high, especially given the shelter cluster's estimate that 10,000 households require humanitarian shelter interventions. Relatively few humanitarian actors are able to respond, which creates a greater imperative for UNHCR to maintain its response in zone 2. However, there are challenges with humanitarian access and predictable operational conditions, which are critical for shelter activities that require considerable planning and logistics. In 2020, UNHCR will endeavor to deliver an increasing proportion of its shelter assistance in NGCA; the delivery of light repairs in multi-story buildings will continue, as this has proven to be a cost-effective and high-impact activity. UNHCR will continue to support persons with specific needs, as well as community-based projects. Advocacy will continue implementation of all possible measures that would facilitate protection of the rights of Ukrainian citizens living in NGCA. This includes access to pensions and social benefits, as well as to the issuance of identity

documentation and birth registration certificates by national authorities. UNHCR will support other measures that would foster ties among residents of GCA and NGCA

## Strategic Objective #4: IDPs in Government Controlled Area (Zone 3)

*By 2022, IDPs will enjoy increased protection of their rights in GCA (zone 3) through (i) further development of Ukrainian law and policy designed to ensure all Ukrainian citizens can fully exercise their rights without discrimination based on their place of origin or registration as an IDP; and (ii) implementation of a community-based approach that fosters social cohesion and addresses specific needs. Durable solutions to internal displacement will increasingly be attained, as IDPs benefit from legal and policy measures that facilitate integration of IDPs and establish conditions for voluntary return.*

A summary of the progress to date includes:

- UNHCR provided training, mentoring and networking opportunities to 139 community groups that brought together IDPs and host communities throughout Ukraine. As an outcome of such events, these groups organized themselves to work in community centers, provide services to vulnerable groups, create self-help/counselling groups, neighbourhood committees or revolving self-organized trainings on different skills. They also advocated more effectively for themselves vis-à-vis the local authorities. For example, some IDP community groups registered as legal entities and successfully applied for funding from the local authorities.
- While UNHCR provided free legal assistance to 1,584 persons in zone 3, it also strengthened cooperation with the state-funded Free Legal Aid Centers. A series of trainings were organized, referral mechanisms were initiated with more than 500 cases referred in 2018 following the guidance provided in the prioritization table developed in accordance with MYMP and Milestones Table, and a memorandum of understanding was signed. Overall, in 2018, the Free Legal Aid Centers strengthened their outreach to IDPs, giving free legal aid to 39 per cent more IDPs than in the previous year.
- The Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs (MTOT) agreed to assume responsibility for coordinating the Shelter/NFI Cluster in 2019 with UNHCR's ongoing support. In the last quarter of 2018, MTOT hosted a Shelter/NFI Cluster meeting at national level for the first time; it regularly contributed to cluster meetings at sub-national level. MTOT developed its information management capacities and expanded partnerships with international development actors in the area of durable housing solutions for IDPs.
- Durable housing solutions remain a high priority for IDPs, and while the state makes some funds available for affordable housing, this has been insufficient. To generate an evidence base for further advocacy on funding for IDP housing, UNHCR cooperated with the State Youth Construction Fund on an assessment of their subsidized housing program. It also trained community groups on how to advocate at local levels for access to social or affordable housing.
- To build on the local expertise and networks gained during the humanitarian response, UNHCR has partnered with development actors (FAO, ILO and WHO) to propose an area-based initiative entitled 'Community resilience, livelihoods and health for recovery and peace in conflict-affected areas of Donetsk *oblast*,' for which funds are actively being sought. UNHCR will also ensure mainstreaming of protection considerations in these development projects.



*In Poltava, a community organization led jointly by IDPs and host community members received training from a UNHCR partner on how to engage with local authorities in the context of decentralization. Later the organization*

*applied to the local authorities for funding and received support to make its community center wheelchair accessible. Photo: UNHCR*

**Strategic Objective #4 Way Forward:** Based on these results, available resources, consultations with stakeholders and the participatory assessment, UNHCR has updated its plans for 2020. UNHCR will reduce the provision of individual legal assistance in zone 3, focusing mainly on strategic litigation. IDPs with legal questions will be referred to the Free Legal Aid Centers, which have an increasing capacity to provide the necessary assistance, in zone 3. UNHCR will provide mentoring support to community groups that bring together IDPs and host communities. They will have opportunities to exchange experiences on how to conduct advocacy at local level, particularly around the issue of access to housing. Local-level advocacy is particularly important in the broader context of decentralization of government decision-making in Ukraine. UNHCR will continue its ongoing cooperation with the State Youth Construction Fund with a focus on supporting it to refine its procedures, reinforce the transparency of housing programs for IDPs, and advocate for an increased budgetary allocation. UNHCR will link this advocacy with its work on community mobilization, since IDPs themselves can be effective in advocating for allocation of funds for affordable housing projects at the regional or municipal levels. While MTOT will have taken over responsibility for coordination of the Shelter/NFI Cluster, UNHCR will provide limited ongoing support for information management. Assuming that development partners receive funding for the proposed area-based initiative, UNHCR will complement their new activities with its protection, community mobilization and emergency interventions, including shelter. UNHCR will also ensure mainstreaming of protection considerations in these development projects.

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