

# Operational Update

March 2019

UNHCR announced a [call for applications for the self-reliance grants program 2019](#). This program provides financial assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers who want to start their own business and achieve greater self-reliance. **73 persons** started their own small or medium-scale businesses thanks to UNHCR grants in 2018. *More information on page 3.*

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](#).

UNHCR has just published its [Key Advocacy Messages on Asylum](#). Based on joint-assessment with the State Migration Service in 2018, as well as a participatory assessment with refugees and asylum-seekers, the document highlights priorities for improvements to the asylum system in 2019-2020.

## KEY INDICATORS

**6,252**

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other conflict-affected persons have received [legal assistance](#) from UNHCR partners in 2019.

**156**

IDPs and other conflict affected persons have been approved to [receive cash for protection](#) through the individual protection assistance program (IPA) in 2019.

**80**

Households in eastern Ukraine have benefited from UNHCR [shelter assistance](#) in 2019.

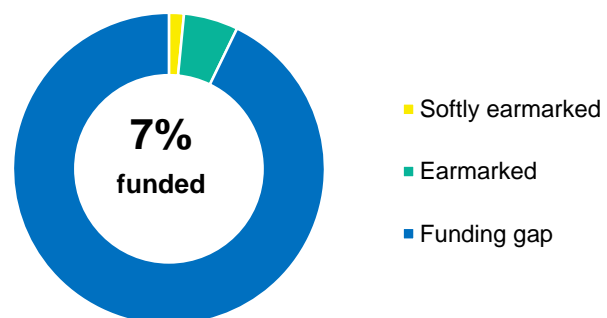


*Odette Nienge found home in Ukraine in 2009 after fleeing from civil war in Congo. Back home, Odette had her own hair salon. When she came to Ukraine, she worked at different places, learned the language and kept dreaming about starting a business in her new home. Odette started with opening a small booth on the beach at the Black Sea side during summer, where she did traditional African braiding. That type of hair styling gained great popularity among clients. With help from a UNHCR self-reliance grant, in 2018 Odette opened a parlour in Kyiv. You can [read about Odette's remarkable story on UNHCR Ukraine's website and watch a video \(click for link\)](#).*

## FUNDING (AS OF 20 MARCH)

**USD 28.3 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2019

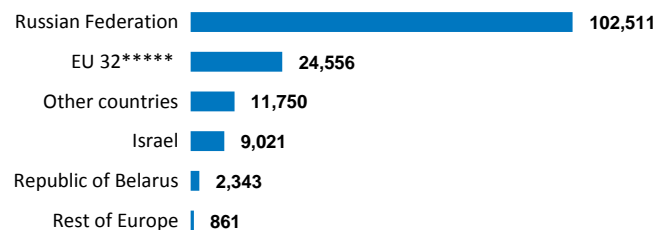


## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)\* AND OTHER CONFLICT-AFFECTED PERSONS\*\*

**1.6 million**\*\*\*

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM UKRAINE

**151,042**\*\*\*\*



\*Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).

\*\*Vulnerable, conflict-affected persons living along the 'contact line' in GCA and non-government controlled areas (NGCA).

\*\*\*Sources: 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), UNHCR

\*\*\*\*Source: UNHCR PopStats, June 2018.

\*\*\*\*\*28 EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

## Operational Highlights

In March 2019, the [OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine \(SMM\)](#) recorded approximately **33,000 ceasefire violations**, representing a 27 per cent increase compared to the previous month. As a result of the continuous increase of shelling, **42 civilian homes and two bridges** were either damaged or destroyed near the 'contact line' in east Ukraine.



During the reporting period, the most impacted villages included Travnene, Hladosove, Zhovanka, Chermalyk and the town of Marinka in Donetsk Oblast on the government controlled side (GCA), as well as the towns of Shchastia, Komyshevakha, Zolote, the villages of Katerynivka and Novooleksandrivka in Luhansk Oblast GCA. This is almost as many as in February 2019 and twice as much as in January 2019. The most intense shelling was reported during the last week of the month. On the 'contact line', UNHCR and its partners - [Proliska](#), [Right to Protection \(R2P\)](#) and the [Norwegian Refugee Council \(NRC\)](#) – continue to be among the first responders for conflict-affected settlements along the 'contact line', therefore, the residents of the 42 damaged or destroyed houses received NFI kits and emergency repair materials.

In March, UNHCR and its partners undertook **650 protection monitoring visits** to conflict-affected populations located on the 'contact line'. UNHCR's NGO legal partner, [R2P](#) undertook 86 protection monitoring visits at five EECPs on the government-controlled areas, where they surveyed and counselled **2,223 persons crossing the 'contact line'**. This information can also be found on UNHCR and [R2P's Online Checkpoint Monitoring Dashboard](#). Information on monthly crossings of the 'contact line' can be found on [UNHCR Monthly Crossings Dashboard with information provided by the Ukrainian Border Guards \(SGBS\)](#). In March, **four persons** over 60 died while crossing the EECPs. In parallel, UNHCR SGBV Partner, [Slavic Heart](#), has deployed three Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) mobile brigades along the 'contact line' in order to increase the identification and response for SGBV survivors. During the reporting period, Slavic Heart recorded four new SGBV cases.

On 27 March, UNHCR held a Local Protection Meeting in Novoluhanske, Donetsk Oblast. The meeting gathered local authorities, social and medical services, IOM, Proliska, R2P and local community representatives to address the absence of a proper paved road to the village of Travneve, as well as access to food, water, medical services, etc. The only way to the village is an unpaved seven kilometer road that under certain weather conditions can only be traversed by a 4x4 vehicle. The Ukrainian government has recently restored control over Travneve and the village is now blocked between positions of parties in the conflict.



## Key Advocacy Messages

UNHCR has recently published its key advocacy messages for asylum. UNHCR works closely with Ukrainian authorities to build an asylum system that extends protection and promotes durable solutions. Here are some key highlights:

- Adopt a procedure for considering asylum applications at international airports.
- Provide adequate funding and procedures for the use of interpreters.
- Ensure that all persons enjoy the right to apply for asylum without undue barriers, regardless of how and when they arrived in the country.
- Asylum-seekers should enjoy freedom of movement; detention is an exceptional measure and can only be justified for a legitimate purpose.
- Persons must have a fair opportunity to appeal negative asylum decisions.
- Asylum-seekers must have access to free urgent medical care.
- Asylum-seekers' access to employment must be simple and practical.
- Provide language instruction to asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Engage with asylum-seeker and refugee communities.
- All persons needing international protection must have the possibility to naturalize after a reasonable period of residence.

For more information on each of these advocacy messages, please see our [Key Advocacy Messages on Asylum in Ukraine](#).

## Donor Relations



On 19 and 20 March, UNHCR facilitated a mission of eight diplomats to Sloviansk, Sviatohirsk, the entry-exit checkpoint (EECP) of Maiorsk and the conflict-affected city of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine. They witnessed UNHCR's activities and learned about the pressing protection issues facing conflict affected and internally displaced persons such as the conditions of collective centers, freedom of movement at the EECP, continuous shelling and shooting affecting a densely populated town near the 'contact line'. Also, the delegation met with conflict and internally displaced persons who are directly impacted by these issues. The mission included diplomats from the Embassies of Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Spain.



### MULTI-SECTOR RESPONSE TO REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

- In March, UNHCR placed **30 signs** with information on asylum procedures in Ukraine in 30 checkpoints around the country at borders with the Russian Federation and Belarus. The signs provide information that facilitates access to asylum procedures for those seeking international protection.



## Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- UNHCR finalized a participatory assessment with refugees and asylum seekers. In total, UNHCR jointly with NGO partners working with refugees, including *the 10th of April (Desyate Kvitnya)*, *Rokada* and *Neeka* as well as with the State Migration Service (SMS), held **20 focus group discussions (FGDs)** and **14 qualitative interviews** with refugees in Kyiv, Odesa, Zakarpattia, Lviv and Kharkiv regions. Major concerns raised include documentation and lengthy asylum procedures; livelihoods and access to employment; absence of naturalization prospects for the beneficiaries of Complementary Protection. A majority highlighted their need to have more opportunities to learn the Ukrainian language.
- During the month of March, UNHCR's NGO partner, Rokada, started a series of trainings on psychology (do you really mean "parapsychology" or "psychological support"?) for refugee community members and, especially, community member leaders. The training includes an introduction to basic psychosocial support so that leaders can provide initial support to their community members.
- From 25 to 26 March, UNHCR partner Right to Protection (R2P) organized a training for 14 lawyers of Free Legal Aid Centers (FLAC) from Kyiv and Lviv.
- During the reporting period, UNCHR partner *Neeka's* lawyers undertook 16 monitoring visits to the SBGS Temporary Holding Facilities (THFs).
- During the reporting period five asylum-seeking unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were registered in Kyiv (3), Odesa (1) and Kharkiv (1).

# 1,347

Legal consultations were provided to refugees and asylum seekers in Kyiv, Odesa and Zakarpattia regions in March

# 865

Social consultations were provided to refugees and asylum seekers in Kyiv, Odesa and Zakarpattia regions in March

# 36

Refugees and asylum seekers received psychosocial assistance in March

# 90

Court interventions by UNHCR partners in Kyiv, Odesa and Zakarpattia regions in March

## Livelihood Interventions for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- During the reporting period, UNHCR provided the last payment of self-reliance grant packages approved for 73 refugees and asylum seekers.
- UNHCR established a pilot cooperation project with one of the biggest supermarket chains in Ukraine, “Silpo”, that will conduct *pro bono* business development trainings for four beneficiaries of UNHCR’s grant programme.
- In March, UNHCR announced a [call for applications for the self-reliance grant program in 2019](#).

# 14

refugees were counselled on opportunities to receive self-reliance grants from UNHCR and its partners in March

# 73

refugees have started their own businesses with UNHCR self-reliance grants since launch of the program in 2018



*Anzur\* fled to Ukraine from Tajikistan in 2006. In the last years, Anzur was already working as a chef at a food court at one of the local Kyiv markets. Anzur’s entrepreneurial mindset pushed him to follow one of his dreams: opening his own eastern cuisine café. Thanks to UNHCR’s self-reliance grant, Anzur took the risk and started his own business. As a result of his success, he is now opening a third traditional café specialized in eastern cuisine in Kyiv.*

## Assistance to Stateless Persons and Persons at Risk of Statelessness

- On 11 and 12 March, UNHCR together with its partners R2P and Proliska, as well as relevant government authorities discussed and established mechanisms of identifying stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness in the Donetsk region. They clarified areas of cooperation, concrete plans of action, and ways to follow-up. UNHCR is committed to the global campaign on ending statelessness by 2024.

# 145

Stateless persons (or at risk of) were identified and provided with legal aid in Kyiv, Odesa and Zakarpattya regions in March

# 7

Persons received passports in March thanks to UNHCR and partners’ support

# 18

Persons received duplicates of birth certificates in March thanks to UNHCR and partners’ support

# 3

Persons obtained their birth certificates for the first time in March thanks to UNHCR and partners’ support



*Dmytro\* lives in Donetsk Oblast. This elderly man with disabilities (he has lost his leg due to a serious illness) received his first Ukrainian ID in 2019. Dmytro has lived with his relatives since 1992. His only personal identification document was a passport issued by the former USSR. In 2015, Dmytro’s life changed for the worst after his house was destroyed by shelling from the conflict when he lost all of his documents and belongings. Thanks to UNHCR partner, Proliska, together with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Dmytro was able to have legal representation for a year and a half long, complicated court process to obtain a Ukrainian ID. Now, with his new national ID, Dmytro can finally apply for social payments from government and live a dignified life.*

**PROTECTION FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED AND OTHER CONFLICT-AFFECTED PERSONS****Protection Cluster**

- The Protection Cluster updated its [Advocacy Note on Mine Action in Ukraine](#). Mine contamination is a key protection concern, with over 1,000 casualties recorded as a result of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERWs) since 2014. Land mines continue to be planted in the ongoing conflict. In 2018, 43% of civilian casualties were attributed to mine and ERW-related incidents. Mine-related incidents remained the leading cause of child casualties in 2018. The note describes the impact of mine contamination on the affected population, outlines recent developments on national legislation and standards in Ukraine, highlights critical issues for mine action response in the field of mine victim assistance, mine risk education, data management and capacity building, and sets out recommendations in these areas for national authorities, donors and humanitarian actors.
- The Protection Cluster issued its [monthly factsheet](#), highlighting key protection concerns and response activities by protection partners. Due to an escalation of hostilities, OHCHR recorded a 300% increase in civilian casualties compared to the previous month, with mine and ERW-related incidents accounting for 50% of casualties. At least 86 private houses were damaged due to shelling in GCA and NGCA. Freedom of movement remains a key protection concern for the conflict-affected population, with 16 people being killed while crossing checkpoints in 2019, the majority of whom were older people.
- The Protection Cluster held a Protection Working Group meeting in Kramatorsk, Donetsk GCA. Key protection issues discussed included acute protection concerns of people living in isolated settlements along the contact line, where people experience shelling and where access to social services is restricted, resulting in a lack of access to education and health care.

- **Participatory Assessment (PA):** In the month of March, UNHCR held [74 focus group discussions](#) (FGDs) and [nine key informant semi-structured interviews](#). Focus groups covered different categories of IDPs, including Crimean Tatar and Roma, adults and children with disabilities, women as single heads of households, unemployed and elderly persons, youth and leaders of communities. The assessment underlined protection concerns related to civilians' lack of security and safety due to ongoing shelling; lack of basic services, livelihoods, access to healthcare, and employment opportunities; HLP and documentation issues; military occupation of civilian houses; and freedom of movement.

**Legal Assistance and Protection Counselling****1,928**

Internally displaced and other conflict-affected persons received legal assistance from UNHCR and its partners in March

**4,305**

Persons benefitted from individual protection counselling in March

**83**

Group consultations on protection-related issues were provided to 562 females and 354 males in areas along the 'contact line' in March

**Social Accompaniment**

- In the month of March, UNHCR partners provided social accompaniment to **178 individuals** who needed support in obtaining personal documentation or accessing state services, receiving authorization to cross check points, among other things. In some cases, individuals were supported with transportation to access public buildings and register for social services.



Oleksandr\*, 55, moved from a non-government controlled area (NGCA) to his parents' house in the village of Novobakhmutivka in close proximity to the 'contact line' in 2014. He has since lived there alone. In 2015, Oleksandr was seriously injured by a shelling incident during which his passport was destroyed. With no passport, he faced difficulties crossing the EECs, finding a job, and earning an income, which led him to suffer from malnutrition. Having no relatives and no financial support for almost four years, Oleksandr could not restore his documents and lived on food and money provided by neighbors. The situation changed in December 2018, when UNHCR partner, Proliska, started supporting him in the long process of restoring his passport. UNHCR also provided Oleksandr with winterization cash assistance to live through the severe winter of 2018-2019.



## Psychosocial assistance

# 244

Persons received consultations in March

During the reporting period, UNHCR partners provided **244 vulnerable persons with psychological consultations** to help conflict-affected people deal with symptoms of psychological trauma, domestic violence, grief, depression, anxiety, and psychological tension.

## Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

- In March, UNHCR's partner, Slavic Heart, provided social consultations to **seven SGBV survivors** in eastern Ukraine.
- In 2019, UNHCR SGBV Partner, **Slavic Heart**, deployed three Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) mobile brigades along the 'contact line' in order to increase the identification and response for SGBV survivors. During the reporting period, Slavic Heart recorded **four new SGBV cases**.
- In March, **80 persons** benefited from awareness raising trainings on SGBV prevention.



## Individual Protection Assistance (IPA) cash

# 87

IPA cash beneficiaries selected in March

UNHCR continues identifying and providing vulnerable conflict-affected individuals in eastern Ukraine with **cash for protection**. In 2019, UNHCR plans to distribute cash for protection to **2,500 vulnerable persons** living near the 'contact line'.



Kateryna\* is a single mother-to-be. She lives with her younger brother, sister and their mother. Because of the conflict, their mother does not have a stable job. The family lives from her part-time earnings and social payments, which total \$37 USD a month complimented by gardening and poultry. The family struggles to make ends meet. Kateryna is experiencing some pregnancy complications. Neither her father nor the father of her future child provide any kind of support to the family, although the young woman has tried to reach out to them. With cash aid from UNHCR, Kateryna bought a stroller and a cradle for her baby.



## Peaceful Coexistence Projects (PCPs)

# 5

Projects approved in 2019

UNHCR supports small to medium-scale infrastructure repairs proposed by beneficiary communities or local authorities. PCPs primarily support creation of an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence between the displaced population and host communities and are an important tool in prevention of tensions between displaced people and the host population. Since the beginning of 2019, UNHCR has initiated the implementation of **five peaceful co-existence projects (PCPs)** in eastern Ukraine.



One of the PCPs completed in March was the renovation of a medical center close to the 'contact line'. The village of Sotenne in Luhansk GCA (close proximity to the 'contact line') is home to more than 600 people, including 100 children. In summer 2018, the village community initiated repair of a medical center, which serves several neighboring villages close to the 'contact line'. The building was very old and heavily-damaged. UNHCR through its partner, Proliska, provided the community of Sotenne with construction materials, while the village council funded the repair works and construction of a water supply.



## Community Support Initiatives (CSI)

# 12

Initiatives approved in March

UNHCR in Ukraine empowers communities of internally displaced and other conflict affected persons. CSIs includes a range of activities designed to mobilize and empower communities, building on their education, skills, and capacities in order to strengthen their abilities to organize emergency response and self-advocate with local and national authorities as well as find durable solutions for their own protection.



One of the communities UNHCR supported in March through a CSI included a center which provides temporary shelter for people in the town of Toretsk, near the 'contact line'. This center, founded by local volunteers, is utilized by IDPs, conflict-affected persons with specific needs as well as host IDPs who have nowhere to go. Today, there are eight persons regularly living in the center. Charity lunches and different activities for children are organised in this center. UNHCR through its partner, Proliska, provided a laptop and an overhead projector to organise movie screenings for people who found shelter in the center as well as to attend psychosocial support meetings.



## SHELTER/NON-FOOD ITEMS AND HOUSING

### Shelter and NFI Achievements, Impact, and Identified Needs

- In March, UNHCR completed repairs to **33 homes** of vulnerable families in eastern Ukraine.
- In March, UNHCR partners distributed **1,500 bed linen** sets in 23 IDP collective centers in Donetsk Oblast.
- During the month of March, **15 NFI kits** were distributed in Luhansk Oblast.



Olena\*, 36, lives with her husband and son in Stanytsia Luhanska, Luhansk Oblast located on the 'contact line'. Stanytsia Luhanska has suffered from heavy shelling since the start of the conflict in spring 2014. On 15 February 2015, a shell destroyed everything the family possessed. That night, they were having dinner at their relatives' place not far from their home when they heard their house being hit, forcing the family to move to Luhansk city into the house of Olena's mother. In 2017, Olena was referred to UNHCR's NGO partner, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), for assistance. In spring 2018, the family received all necessary materials and a team of builders started construction.

Finally, in December 2018, the family moved back to their home.

Although happy that their home is rebuilt, Olena is frustrated to see her family divided. Now, she lives in the government controlled side of Ukraine, while her parents and parents-in-law live in the non-government controlled side.

## Working in Partnership

The humanitarian response to displacement in Ukraine is a coordinated effort by the government, international organizations, national and international NGOs. In providing support to persons of concern, UNHCR works closely with the Government of Ukraine. In the case of IDPs, UNHCR has signed a Letter of Understanding with the [Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons](#). UNHCR works together with [11 NGO partners](#). UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster and Shelter/Non-food Items (NFI) Cluster. UNHCR also leads the logistics working group that is mainly responsible for humanitarian convoys to eastern Ukraine.

## Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for critical financial support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programs with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

The indicative level of funding for the operation is **US \$2.035 million**. This figure is based on contributions earmarked to Ukraine, the indicative allocation of flexible funds and adjustments.

### EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS TO UKRAINE | USD

**Japan** 0.84 million | **Sweden** 0.55 million | **Russian Federation** 0.25 million | **Lithuania** 0.034 million | **Private donors** 0.034 million

### UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

*Major donors of unearmarked contributions.*

**Sweden** 90.4 million | **Norway** 44.5 million | **Netherlands** 37.5 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Germany** 26.7 million | **Denmark** 24.4 million | **Switzerland** 15.1 million | **Private donors Spain** 12.8 million

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## Links

UNHCR Ukraine: [www.unhcr.org/ua](http://www.unhcr.org/ua) - Twitter: [www.twitter.com/UNHCRUkraine](https://twitter.com/UNHCRUkraine)

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*Please note that this report attempts to highlight the main activities implemented by UNHCR and its NGO partners within the selected reporting period. Please note that it is by no means exhaustive. For additional details about our work, do not hesitate to check [www.unhcr.org/ua](http://www.unhcr.org/ua) or, contact us directly at [ukrkom@unhcr.org](mailto:ukrkom@unhcr.org).*

*\*Please note that the names of persons who appear in this report have been changed for their protection.*