

Partnership with Ukrainian Authorities

March 2020



In January, UNHCR provided 19 mobile cases to the regional branches of the Department of Social Policy (DoSP) in conflict-affected Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Each case contains a computer and printing equipment that will be used to support the provision of social services to displaced and conflict-affected persons along the contact line. These cases are particularly beneficial in isolated villages where the residents face difficulties with accessing administrative services due to a lack of infrastructure and transportation. Photo: UNHCR.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has worked in Ukraine since 1994. The main office was established the following year when UNHCR started supporting Formerly Deported Persons (FDPs), mainly ethnic Crimean Tatars, in acquiring Ukrainian citizenship after they returned to Ukraine from other locations in the former Soviet Union. In 1996, UNHCR and Ukraine signed a [host country agreement](#) that was subsequently [ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament](#). Between 1996 and 2001, UNHCR facilitated the naturalization and integration of some 115,000 FDPs thanks to a citizenship campaign that simultaneously increased the Government's capacity to process applicants and encouraged FDPs to take steps to acquire citizenship. After this campaign ended, UNHCR in Ukraine began monitoring the protection situation of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons and intervening directly to support and provide assistance whenever possible. Since the start of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, UNHCR launched a humanitarian response plan to address the country's internal displacement situation with coordinated efforts by the Government, international organizations, national and international NGOs. In 2020, UNHCR started the year with [10 NGO partners](#), as well as by co-leading the [Protection Cluster](#) comprising of [51 NGOs](#), and the [Shelter and Non-Food Item Cluster](#). This document describes UNHCR's partnerships with its main governmental counterparts, including but not limited to:





The Ministry of Interior (MoI)

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has remained a key policy-making agency on migration-related issues, since 2016, when it took over strategic priorities including supervision of [migration-related activities](#) and the development of migration-related policies and legislation. Examples of successful cooperation between UNHCR and MoI include:

- In 2018, the MoI contributed to the development of [UNHCR's 2018-2022 Multi-Year, Multi-Partner strategy Protection and Solutions Strategy for Ukraine](#).
- The MoI provides policy guidance to UNHCR's key partners such as the State Migration Service (SMS) and the State Border Guard Service (SBGS).
- In 2017, the MoI and UNHCR organized a [Round Table on local integration and socio-economic rights](#) of asylum-seekers, refugees and persons in need of complementary protection for key Ministries.
- The MoI participated in drafting [the amendments to the Refugee Law](#). Advocated for by UNHCR, the draft law is currently pending with the SMS.
- In 2017, UNHCR was invited to provide legal expertise to the [Action Plan of the MoI Development Strategy until 2020](#). Thanks to UNHCR, the local integration of refugees was added to the priorities of [the Strategy of the State Migration Policy until 2015](#). UNHCR welcomed item 5 of the Action Plan, which stipulates that SMS, MoI and other interested bodies should [...] [enhance the system of verification and identification](#) of Ukrainian citizens, foreigners and stateless persons in accordance with the latest international upgrades. This also implies biometric recognition systems.
- The MoI requested that UNHCR provide recommendations to its newly created [Human Rights Unit](#) and involve their staff in meetings and trainings related to the protection of human rights.
- In 2017-2019, UNHCR also organized [five outreach visits](#) for government officials to Roma settlements in Odesa and Zakarpattya regions. Each visit has been followed by an

inter-agency meeting of SMS, MoJ Civil Registry, FLAC addressing problems of undocumented Roma.



The Parliament (Verkhovna Rada)

- UNHCR provides its [legal expertise to draft legislation](#) related to the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, displaced and conflict-affected persons through the submission of letters of concern and participation in working groups.
- UNHCR participates in round tables organised by the [Human Rights Committee](#) (responsible for issues related to IDPs, conflict-affected persons and non-government controlled areas (NGCA), and the [Social Policy Committee](#), using this floor to raise relevant UNHCR's advocacy messages. UNHCR and its partners advocated with the SMS and other state bodies to improve access to documentation for conflict-affected populations and to prevent their risks of statelessness, by improving identity setting procedures in the Resolution #302 on issuance of the passport.
- In the area of IDP protection, UNHCR centres its efforts on joint work related to the mechanism of [paying pensions to IDPs and conflict-affected persons, as well as compensation for damaged/destroyed housing for civilians affected by the conflict](#). UNHCR expects the Parliament to elaborate and adopt relevant draft laws in 2020.
- In December 2019, UNHCR welcomed the adoption in the first reading of the [draft law #2335 on statelessness determination procedure \(SDP\)](#), which envisages the issuance of an ID document confirming the legality of residence for stateless persons in Ukraine and ensures simplified access to employment. Jointly with its NGO partners, UNHCR has contributed to the development of this draft law through its continuous advocacy interventions. In December 2019, UNHCR also welcomed the registration at the Parliament of the Presidential draft law #2590, which stipulates the access to

naturalization for recognized stateless persons after three years from the moment of their recognition under *the SDP law*.



The Office of the Ombudsman

- The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) exercises parliamentary control over the observance of human rights and freedoms. [The Office of the Ombudsman](#) is a key partner to UNHCR Ukraine in the area of protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and IDPs, as they are integrated into the [National Human Rights Strategy of Ukraine by 2020](#).
- UNHCR participates in working groups chaired by the Office of the Ombudsman, contributing to the elaboration of assessment mechanisms for lost/damaged property as a result of the conflict, and IDPs' needs assessment instruments.
- UNHCR cooperates with the Office of the Ombudsman on issues related to specific protection issues for IDPs from Crimea.
- UNHCR relies on the data provided in the annual reports of the Office of the Ombudsman to identify [protection gaps](#) of IDPs and conflict-affected persons, as well as refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR refers to the Office of the Ombudsman requests to facilitate [access of asylum-seekers to the territory of Ukraine](#) (particularly in international airports). In this area, UNHCR advocates for the establishment of a [mechanism for independent monitoring of access to asylum procedures in international transit zones at airports](#), as well as for the provision of legal assistance to asylum-seekers in these zones. UNHCR's NGO partners could monitor access to asylum procedures in Kyiv airports as their staff members have obtained the status of experts affiliated with the National Preventive Mechanism under the office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights.
- UNHCR continuously advocates for the Ombudsman to monitor the situation of [asylum-seekers in detention centres](#) and

advocate for alternatives to immigration detention.

- UNHCR relies on the Office of the Ombudsman with regard to [strengthening the capacity-building](#) of authorities and local communities in order to combat intolerance and discrimination against refugees, as well as building greater public awareness of refugee issues and improving public attitudes toward refugees in order to prevent hate issues.
- UNHCR works jointly with the Office of the Ombudsman to [advocate for amendments to domestic legislation](#) on asylum and integration in line with international standards.
- UNHCR relies on the Office of the Ombudsman to prevent instances of refoulement (forced deportation) of asylum-seekers and refugees.



The State Migration Service (SMS)

UNHCR works with the Government of Ukraine to improve asylum procedures, including through the achievements of the joint [Asylum Systems Quality Initiative project in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus \(QIEE\)](#). In March 2019, the State Migration Service (SMS) attended the QIEE High-Level Conference in Geneva organized by the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe and reported about joint achievements as a result of UNHCR and the SMS cooperation. The improvements in the Ukrainian asylum system, as well as remaining gaps and recommendations, were highlighted in the UNHCR's Progress Analysis Report completed in close coordination with the SMS in 2019.

- In 2019, UNHCR and its NGO partners provided support to the management of the [SMS Kyiv regional department \(TsMU\) which became operational the same year](#). This assistance would enable the SMS office to ensure that approximately 150 new asylum-seekers, who could not apply for asylum since October 2018, would be officially registered and documented. To support 20 new staff at the Kyiv SMS office, UNHCR and its NGO partners conducted

four training sessions on the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure as well as six sessions on the prevention of professional burnout and coping mechanisms.

- UNHCR has been advocating with the SMS for amendments to [the national legislation on asylum](#) to bring it in line with international and European standards. An informal working group was established comprising of experts from the SMS, UNHCR and its NGO partner, the “Right to Protection”, which convened on a regular basis between May and September 2019.
- In October 2019, the SMS shared with UNHCR the [draft of the new Refugee Law](#), consisting of many provisions which mirrored standards of the EU Asylum Directives. With the support of UNHCR’s Regional Bureau for Europe, comments to the Draft Law on Granting Protection were produced. The draft law is expected to be registered and voted on by the Parliament by the end of 2020.
- UNHCR jointly with its NGO partners continues [monitoring migration services in Kyiv and Odesa](#). In addition, UNHCR’s NGO partners are present on a weekly basis at the SMS regional departments, ensuring reinforced cooperation between the SMS and civil society.
- In 2019, UNHCR trained [115 government officials who are involved in the Refugee Determination Procedure](#) (the SMS and judges).



The State Border Guard Service (SBGS)

UNHCR has been providing [technical and material support to the five entry-exit checkpoints \(EECPs\) along the contact line in eastern Ukraine](#) between government-controlled (GCA) and non-government controlled (NGCA) territories. In 2019, examples of material support included:



150
body cameras



3
laptops

UNHCR’s support resulted in the reduction of waiting times for those who crossed and improved conditions for persons with specific needs, such as the elderly and persons with disabilities.

- UNHCR’s NGO partners - the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Right to Protection (R2P) and Proliska conduct regular monitoring and emergency response missions to all five EECPs. In 2019, UNHCR’s NGO partner R2P interviewed [26,396 persons](#) crossing the EECPs and recorded their key concerns. Please see the analysis of this monitoring on the [UNHCR/R2P online dashboard](#), regularly updated on UNHCR Ukraine’s website.
- UNHCR’s NGO partners R2P, Proliska and NRC provide [protection counselling and legal assistance at the checkpoints](#), ensuring that conflict-affected persons have improved access to relevant information regarding their rights.
- UNHCR has developed an [online dashboard](#) using the data the SBGS collects on a daily basis at the EECPs in eastern Ukraine and on the administrative border with Crimea. This dashboard is embedded into the [SBGS website](#).

UNHCR’s support to the SBGS also stretches to the area of asylum.

- In 2019, [UNHCR’s information stands have been placed at arrival or transit zones of 24 airports](#) throughout Ukraine. UNHCR also provided the SBGS with [9,160 leaflets on the RSD procedure in Arabic, English, Farsi and Russian](#) for placement on information stands.
- The information signs have been set up at [30 border crossing points on the border with the Russian Federation, Belarus and the administrative border with Crimea](#). The signs in Russian and English explain the availability of free legal aid and provide contact details of the SBGS, the SMS and UNHCR’s hotlines.

- In 2019, UNHCR's NGO partners trained **283 SBGS officials on refugee protection needs** that simplified the application process for 63 persons who sought asylum through the SBGS in 2019.



The Ministry of Veteran Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs (MinVTOT)

In 2017-2018, UNHCR provided expert support on issues related to IDP registration, housing, education as well as birth and death registration for conflict-affected persons to the [Ministry for Temporary Occupied Territories and IDPs \(MTOT\)](#). In 2018, UNHCR started transitioning responsibility for [shelter/NFI coordination](#) to the Ministry. Formally, the process of transition started after the Protocol of Intentions was signed between UNHCR and the MTOT. During 2019, before the merging of the MTOT and the Ministry of Veteran Affairs, the [UNHCR-led Shelter/NFI Cluster](#) provided capacity-building support by dedicating two days a week to work at the MTOT's premises and sharing its expertise on coordination and information management functions. Thanks to this cooperation, [four National Cluster meetings were organized jointly with the Ministry](#). Two parties also set up an initial monitoring mechanism for collective centres. In 2020, the Cluster re-started the transition process ensuring the inclusion of the Cluster's coordination tasks into the TOR of the new units in the MVTOT.

UNHCR continues to provide expert support to MinVTOT's legal initiatives on IDPs and the conflict-affected persons, focusing on the elaboration of durable solutions. The handover of shelter/NFI coordination is ongoing.

Support to this ministry has included:

- [Expert legal advice](#) to the draft legislation proposed by the MinVTOT in the area of IDP protection and durable solutions as well as protection of conflict-affected persons.
- Identifying and piloting [housing solutions](#) in the area of affordable and social housing, through different operational mechanisms.

- UNHCR is actively engaged in compensation-related issues for damaged and destroyed property.
- Contributing to adjustment of the list of items prohibited for transfer through the contact line to the needs of people crossing it.

Also, MinVTOT continues to advocate within the Government for [better conditions at the checkpoints](#). For example, upon the request of MinVTOT and as an anti-corruption measure, UNHCR purchased body cameras for use by border guards at EECs.



The Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

- UNHCR continues to advocate with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for the adoption of an [administrative procedure on birth registration which would enable families from NGCA and Crimea to obtain the registration documents](#) on the same day. The ultimate goal is to increase the proportion of children born in NGCA and Crimea who receive Ukrainian birth certificates and access to the benefits of citizenship.
- UNHCR maintains close cooperation with the [Free Legal Aid Centres \(FLAC\)](#) across Ukraine [to improve access to legal assistance to its persons of concern](#). In 2018, UNHCR and FLAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding which established referral mechanisms of certain caseloads to be referred to the local offices of FLAC. In 2019, UNHCR and its NGO partners provided capacity-building support to FLAC which enabled 160 FLAC lawyers and attorneys to receive competency-based trainings.
- In 2020, UNHCR's partnership with FLAC will focus on the training of paralegals working with IDPs and the further implementation of the referral mechanism, through which UNHCR's NGO partners have referred 1,519 cases to FLAC in 2019.



The Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP)

- UNHCR provides technical advice to the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) on draft legislation related to IDP protection. It advocates for [delinking of IDP certificate from payment of pensions and elaboration of a mechanism on paying accumulated pension debts to IDPs](#).
- UNHCR also works closely with multiple local childcare services under the Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights of the Ministry of Social Policy on issues related to support of [unaccompanied or separated asylum-seeking children and children at risk](#).



State Fund for Support of Youth Housing Construction

In 2019, UNHCR started cooperating with the [State Fund of Youth Housing Construction \(State Youth Fund – SYF\)](#) by evaluating their affordable housing programme for IDPs. With their support, UNHCR reached out to the beneficiaries of this initiative and developed a report with recommendations on ways to improve the programme. In line with these recommendations, UNHCR and SYF started developing a tool titled “[E-cabinet](#)” that will increase transparency and the efficiency of the selection process by minimizing the interactions between the beneficiaries and the SYF.



Міністерство культури,
молоді та спорту України

The Ministry of Youth and Sport of Ukraine

UNHCR cooperates with the [All-Ukraine youth Centre under the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Ukraine](#), as well as the local youth centres in various cities of Ukraine, to stage different activities which ensure greater integration of youth from refugee and asylum-seeking communities in Ukraine.



The Ministry of Education of Ukraine

To assist refugee and asylum-seeking children and adults in accessing education, UNHCR has partnered with the [Ministry of Education of Ukraine](#). Thanks to this cooperation, several evening schools and daily public schools provide support to UNHCR and its NGO partners in organizing educational activities, including Ukrainian language classes.

CONTACTS

E-mail: ukrki@unhcr.org
Tel: +38 044 288-9710

LINKS

UNHCR Ukraine: www.unhcr.org/ua
Twitter: www.twitter.com/UNHCRUkraine
Facebook: www.facebook.com/UNHCRKyiv
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr_ukraine