Highlights

- The security situation continued to deteriorate throughout March with intense armed clashes in Donetsk, Horlivka and Mariupol areas in particular. This had a negative impact on the water and electricity supply to vulnerable people in eastern Ukraine; the number of causalities has also increased.

- The number of people crossing checkpoints between government and non-government controlled areas of eastern Ukraine increased markedly during March. The State Border Guard recorded over 720,000 people crossing five checkpoints, compared to 490,000 in February. An additional checkpoint that was opened at Zolote (Luhansk oblast) on 31 March closed after only a few hours.

- The Ukrainian government suspended social benefit payments at the end of February to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and started verification procedures for registered IDPs from five oblasts in eastern Ukraine. According to the government, this is intended to fight fraud in the benefits system. However, it has caused a great deal of anxiety to many IDPs, as shown by the numbers of people calling special hotlines.

- UNICEF and Representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany launched a large-scale project in Kramatorsk, which aims to provide conflict-affected children and families with access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as support child protection, IDP integration and resilience-building activities.

- The third round of the national polio vaccination campaign reached 81.7 per cent of targeted children, according to Ministry of Health statistics. In particular, collaboration with the Ministry of Education enabled vaccination teams to operate in schools and kindergartens.
Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Compared to February, a number of different sources indicated a significant deterioration in the security situation in eastern Ukraine during March. For example, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission teams recorded 309 ceasefire violations along the contact line in one week alone (11-19 March). During the period 1–31 March 2016, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), working under the auspices of OHCHR, recorded 36 civilian casualties (two killed and 34 injured) in the conflict zone of eastern Ukraine. In addition, a woman, injured by an explosive remnant of war (ERW) in January 2016, reportedly died in hospital in March, of her injuries. Of the 36 casualties recorded in March, 10 were women (injured), three were boys (injured) and 20 were men (two killed and 18 injured).

The upsurge in fighting also disrupted vital water and electricity supplies. In Zaitseve, electricity workers refused to repair power lines damaged in shelling on 28 February after they had been allegedly targeted with heavy machine gun fire during a previous attempt to repair them. On 2 March, four transformer substations in Petrovskiy district and one in Aleksandrivka (both in Donetsk oblast) were left without power due to shelling; there was a similar situation in Luhansk oblast. On 13 March, the Donetsk Water Treatment Station, which provides clean water to 300,000 people, stopped operations when all staff had to be evacuated after shelling occurred in the Avdiivka area. A humanitarian crisis was only averted when the treatment station resumed work on 17 March following intense negotiations led by officials from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Ukrainian government suspended social benefit payments at the end of February to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and started a procedure of verification of registered IDPs from five oblasts in eastern Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv). The government has stated it is doing this in order to fight fraud in the system, but it could affect as many as 500,000 people, according to estimates by the Ombudsperson of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights. While many of these people are living in government-controlled area (GCA), others are in the non-government controlled areas and have to cross the contact line regularly to access their social benefits and pensions. The issue has created anxiety among IDPs as illustrated by a sharp increase in phone calls received by information hotlines.

The State Border Guard Service recorded over 720,000 people crossing through five checkpoints between government and non-government controlled sides of the contact line during March. This is an increase of 76 per cent in comparison to February, when 490,000 people were recorded as crossing. This is attributed in part to the suspension of social benefit payments and verification process, which compelled people to cross the contact line. Long queues continue to be reported and checkpoints, such as the one at Mariinka were subjected to temporary closures on several occasions due to shelling in the area. Mine incidents near checkpoints continue to take place with higher frequency. The long-awaited opening of an additional checkpoint at Zolote in Luhansk took place on the morning of 31 March, but it closed again a few hours later, as the de facto authorities in the non-government controlled area of Luhansk oblast reportedly did not allow civilians to cross to their side of the checkpoint.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

The Child Protection sub-cluster undertook a number of activities during March 2016. For example, on 4 March it met in Kyiv to discuss the new policy regarding foster families and temporary care arrangements. The sub-cluster has updated the map on psychosocial support available for children with mental health services, and a draft strategy for 2016 has been developed, and is currently being circulated amongst its partners for consultation, a process that should be finalised by mid-April.

In cooperation with the GBV (gender-based violence) sub-cluster, the Child Protection sub-cluster launched a pilot project to implement revised guidelines on gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. This is part of a global initiative and Ukraine was the first among eight target countries to start implementing the new guidelines and activities. A workshop was organized with members of the sub-cluster to discuss ways of developing work plans, which include the integration of gender-based violence issues into child protection activities. Lastly, Child Protection sub-cluster members continued throughout March to deliver trainings to frontline responders on the global Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Settings. So far approximately 300 persons have attended these trainings, in nine different locations in Ukraine.

The WASH Cluster held monthly coordination meetings in Kyiv and Mariupol. A planned meeting in Luhansk had to be re-scheduled at short notice due to a temporary halt of operations following a change in the de-facto authorities.
Progress monitoring indicators for the WASH response for 2016 were agreed with cluster partners. The cluster facilitated a meeting between the main organizations providing water treatment chemicals to the utilities in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts - UNICEF, Swiss Development Aid and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to avoid gaps in the provision of chlorine, aluminum sulphate, and other reagents.

The Cluster continues to monitor the evolving situation in the conflict-affected areas, and coordinate responses to various requests for support from water supply companies and local authorities along the contact line. Of particular concern was an incidence of compromised water supply in Avdiivka, resulting from a stop of operations of the Donetsk Water Treatment Plant between 13-17 March. The security situation in the area had deteriorated to a degree that required the evacuation of staff. The Cluster was able to establish and maintain contacts with relevant local authorities, the utility company, and a response organization on stand-by. About 30,000 people were affected in the government-controlled area (GCA) in the ‘grey zone’ around Avdiivka, and the utility company managed to continue minimal service provision for the duration of the disruption. The incident highlights the need for capacities to speedily respond to emergency situations that hamper the provision of basic services to the civilian population.

The Global Cluster Coordination mission in March made a number of recommendations which are being discussed within the Humanitarian Country Team and a roadmap is under preparation. In summary, the findings are leading towards more effective decentralisation of the coordination function; transfer of leadership for some sectors in the government-controlled areas (GCA) to regional authorities, and possible discontinuation of some of the clusters.

Summary of Programme Response

2016 PROGRAMME TARGETS AND RESULTS
Results as of 4 April 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster 2016 Target</th>
<th>Cluster Total Results</th>
<th>UNICEF 2016 Target</th>
<th>UNICEF Total Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUTRITION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant or lactating women reached with infant and young child feeding counselling</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>8,481</td>
<td>80,000</td>
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<td><strong>HEALTH</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children who received regular immunization through the enhancement of cold chain and vaccine distribution systems</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of health professionals who gained increased knowledge and capacity for the implementation of public health campaigns</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WATER, SANITATION &amp; HYGIENE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of conflict-affected people who gained access to safe drinking water</td>
<td>1,700,000(^1)</td>
<td>1,775,380</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of people with access to hygiene supplies</td>
<td>412,500(^1)</td>
<td>135,540</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD PROTECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of affected children, youth and caregivers provided with psychosocial support</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>33,546</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children and their families who received MRE</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children who benefitted from rehabilitated education infrastructure, life skills training and educational supplies</td>
<td>187,200(^1)</td>
<td>12,524</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIV AND AIDS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pregnant women and children provided with tests for early diagnostic of HIV to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that ‘TBC’ means ‘to be confirmed’. Figures for some Cluster Targets for 2016 are not yet available, but will be added to the table as soon as they are determined.

\(^1\) The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2016 was launched on 17 February 2016.
Health and Nutrition

The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported that 81.7 per cent of targeted children have now been reached with polio vaccines during the third round of the polio outbreak response campaign in Ukraine. This was the last of three rounds in the nationwide polio immunization campaign aimed at preventing further circulation of the polio virus in Ukraine. The third round took place between 25 January and 29 February. It was extended to reach all children under the age of 10 years old, and was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Health as well as the Ministry of Education.

A survey supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) was carried out after the end of the third vaccination round. It surveyed the parents of 1,600 children aged between 2 months and 6 years of age and showed that the overall coverage of all three rounds of polio vaccination - either trivalent oral polio vaccine (tOPV) or inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) - is estimated to be 48.45 per cent. Oblast-specific coverage during the campaign ranged widely, from 3 per cent to 75 per cent.

To fill in the immunization gaps, UNICEF stepped up its communication and community mobilization activities, focusing on the low-performing areas, urging vaccination of all children under 6 years of age, until all of them have received three full doses of the polio vaccine and for children under 10 years old to receive one additional dose. These ‘catch-up’ activities will continue until mid-April, when the next External Outbreak Assessment will be conducted by Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners.

As far as UNICEF’s community mobilization efforts in the low-performing regions are concerned, it was noted that the consultation sessions with doctors in shopping malls were especially popular. Over 160,000 additional information materials, including colouring books for children and leaflets for parents, with targeted messages about the ‘catch-up’ activities were disseminated to parents during events in shopping malls and road shows in areas with low levels of vaccination coverage.

As well as social mobilization, UNICEF also continued its capacity-building activities on immunization and polio counselling, through the organization of trainings and workshops. During the month of March, a total of 91 health care workers, including family physicians, nurses and primary health care personnel at the oblast and raion levels, received training on polio immunization-related issues. Since September 2015, a total of over 4,500 health workers have been trained and are now able to provide effective counselling on polio immunization in Ukraine, including 1,165 health workers since the beginning of 2016.

UNICEF held consultations with the Ministry of Health, UNDP, Crown Agency and Ukrvakcina to overcome bottlenecks with regard to the importation of drugs and vaccines and to re-vitalise the regular supply of vaccines, including for polio. As a result of effective advocacy, registration of the bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) vaccine was completed on time, so that UNICEF will act on the procurement of 2.76 million doses of bOPV as requested by the MoH, in line with the global tOPV/bOPV switch taking place this month.

The shipment of the last batch of antiretroviral drugs (ARV) and commodities procured for NGCAs was received in Kiev. However the delivery to end-point users in NGCAs is pending receipt of the required authorisations from NGCA authorities. A monitoring mission to assess the distribution and use of ARV medications delivered to date is currently under preparation.

WASH

During March 2016, UNICEF ensured safe drinking water reached 1.45 million people through the provision of liquefied chlorine to the water utility company Voda Donbassa in Donetsk oblast. UNICEF continued strengthening partnerships with NGOs including ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), SOS-Kramatorsk and the ‘Help Is Me’ Charitable Foundation, in order to implement an effective WASH response, including distribution of hygiene supplies in eastern Ukraine.
UNICEF also assisted 9,708 people in the past month through the distribution of 2,138 hygiene kits (954 baby, 524 adult and 848 family hygiene kits) and 1,184 cash vouchers for hygiene supplies.

A total of 4,200 people were reached with the dissemination of hygiene messages through hygiene sessions (attended by 550 participants) and 3,600 beneficiaries, through the distribution of Information, Education and Communication materials, which included 2,200 colouring books; 3,500 copybooks; 1,500 hand washing posters; 1,800 bars of soap and stickers, and 1,600 calendars in Kramatorsk, Dzerzhynsk, Artemivsk, (Donetsk oblast) and Shchastya and Popasna (in Luhansk oblast).

UNICEF shared the design layouts of the information materials with Save the Children, who aims to print 5,000 colouring books and 500 hand washing posters which will be distributed through child-friendly spaces in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and government-controlled areas of Donetsk oblast.

UNICEF also delivered 36,000 stickers with hygiene promotion messages to departments of education in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast for distribute in schools of oblasts.

**Child Protection**

During March 2016, the UNICEF-supported hotline run by the NGO ‘La Strada’ which provides information, psychological and legal assistance to children, their parents and guardians, received 3,716 calls from children. Of these calls, 51.8 per cent were from girls and 48.2 per cent were from boys. Another 684 calls came from caregivers. Whilst the majority of the calls (89.5 per cent) were general requests for information, 4.2 per cent were about legal issues, and 6.3 per cent of the callers requested psychosocial assistance. All those who called the hotline received support and referrals where needed. Since January 2016, La Strada has received a total of 12,275 total calls from children.

UNICEF continued providing psychosocial support to children through its network of Community Protection Centres (CPCs) as well as with mobile outreach activities. In March 2016, a total of 6,500 children were given psychosocial support in thirteen community protection centres (CPCs), two branches in Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts (the ‘branches’ are small, minimally staffed part-time ‘contact centres’ offering some of the services of CPCs), and mobile teams conducting their activities in the “grey zone” (close to the contact line, mostly in the government-controlled area of Donetsk oblast).

With ECHO funding, UNICEF supported the Centre for Specialised Psychological and Psychotherapeutic Assistance in Sloviansk, Donetsk oblast, which is run by the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. In March 2016, the Centre provided sixty family counselling meetings (with 6 parents and 4 children) and 32 individual counselling sessions to 14 severely traumatised children, as well as two group workshops for 13 children.

UNICEF’s partner NGO ‘Most’ (Bridge), which operates in the non-government controlled area of Donetsk oblast provided safe spaces to children and young people in its three youth centres in Donetsk, Snizhne and Horlivka. These centres offer a variety of activities, including: career trainings, a café, creativity workshops, English language club, drama, sports and games, and personal safety classes. In addition, two mobile teams provide support to vulnerable families and youth in the town of Horlivka.

Community professionals and CPC staff took part in trainings targeting youth, such as a drug abuse prevention programme, facilitated by the NGO ‘Volunteer’. According to feedback from the participants in these trainings, the majority (between 93-100 per cent) are satisfied with the content of the trainings. Another of UNICEF’s partners, the NGO “Terre des hommes,” completed the first two-day training on Child Protection Minimal Standards (CPMS) for
child protection specialists in Donetsk oblast. Participants in this training included 21 specialists from local social services departments, education departments, CPCs and mobile teams, centres of extracurricular activities and local NGOs who work with children and families.

Education

In March 2016 UNICEF completed the rehabilitation of 12 educational facilities, situated close to the contact line in eastern Ukraine, which were damaged as a result of the conflict. During rehabilitation, UNICEF focused on the most critical emergency work, primarily the repair of roofs, windows, doors, toilets, floors and heating systems. Amongst the schools that have been rehabilitated, were the following: Kindergarten №7; School №1 and School №2 in Myronivske; Kindergarten №10; Kindergarten №11; School №8; School №11; Child Art centre and Music school, all in Svitlodarsk; School №7; School №12 and School №13 in Dzerzhynsky.

The project faced difficulties with the transport of construction employees, materials and equipment through the checkpoints, but UNICEF engineers managed to resolve this issue on a day-by-day basis, by working in close cooperation with UN Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) officers and the respective local authorities. All in all, 2,500 children have benefited from the rehabilitation of these educational facilities.

UNICEF is aiming to create more than 7,500 new seats in pre-school education facilities in five oblasts in eastern Ukraine: Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. The lack of kindergarten seats is a general problem all over the country, resulting in lack of access to early child development. In government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, the problem has been exacerbated by the flow of IDPs from the conflict zone, which has placed an additional burden on the educational system and in some places tensions have been reported between IDPs and the host community. In collaboration with respective departments of education in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia oblasts, 291 facilities have been identified in these five oblasts for the possible creation of new kindergarten seats. These facilities are located in the areas which have the largest numbers of IDPs and/or the longest waiting lists, yet where there are premises available for the possible creation of new places. UNICEF is working in collaboration with the Kyiv School of Economics to finalize an assessment of these facilities, identifying the locations most in need, and where it would be possible to create new places, with some rehabilitation or provision of supplies.

On 22-23 March staff from UNICEF’s Kramatorsk field office visited educational facilities in eight locations in Donetsk oblast near to the conflict zone: Andriivka, Svobodne, Svitle, Ivanivka, Kalynove, Krasnohorivka, Ugledar and Kurakhove, (Donetsk oblast), in order to assess the possibility of expanding the number of kindergarten seats and to collect information for the final report by the Kyiv School of Economics. Most of the facilities visited were village schools with abandoned premises, including empty classrooms and kindergartens constructed during the Soviet era. In all of these places the school authorities, schools, teachers, parents and village council representatives explained that there were a variety of financial, logistical and other difficulties preventing parents from taking their children to the neighbouring village kindergartens.

On 24 March, staff from the Kramatorsk field office conducted monitoring visits to three kindergartens in the villages of Khrestyshe, Raigorodok and Donetsk, in Sloviansk district of Donetsk oblast, to check the possibility of creating new kindergarten spaces there as well. The education team found out that there is no capacity to create new groups in the kindergartens of Khrestyshe and Raigorodok. However, in the village of Donetsk there is a kindergarten, which although now closed, could potentially be extended and rehabilitated.

Regarding Communication for Development (C4D) education-related activities, in March 2016 UNICEF shared the design layouts of Mine Risk Education materials with OCHA and the USAID/OTI (Office of Transitional Initiatives)-funded Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative, which printed 13,100 leaflets and 2,210 posters and distributed them in schools, kindergartens, hospitals and other public places in Novoaidarsk, Novoaidar, Stanychno-Luhansky, Popasnyanskyi, Starobilskyi, Milovskiy raions; in Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne towns, and, at the Stanytsya Luhanska and Zolote checkpoints.

Since January 2016, 200,000 mine risk education books were printed and delivered to Departments of Education in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, for distribution to every school-age child in government-
controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The UNICEF Field office team in Kramatorsk conducted two working meetings with Heads of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast education departments in Sloviansk and Severodonetsk respectively, to discuss the plans and issues related to the implementation of the project funded by KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau) (‘Reconstruction Credit Institute’). Both education department heads expressed their commitment to cooperating in all aspects of the project and facilitating the collection of the necessary data and submitting it on time.

External Communication

On 16-17 March, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, visited one of the EU Children of Peace projects in Ukraine, a school in Konstantynivka, Donetsk oblast. The visit was supported with visibility materials, media and social media outreach. The press conference which took place was well covered in the national press, with more than 14 media stories appearing.

On 18 March, a press conference was organized for the launch of two UNICEF projects financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through GIZ (Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/German Association for International Development) and the KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau/Reconstruction Credit Institute) in Kramatorsk, Donetsk oblast. A press release was issued to support the media event, and an information pack developed for dissemination to the media, which included an infographic about the impact of UNICEF new initiatives. The information pack was shared on social media, and posted on the UNICEF Ukraine website. The launch was well covered by the media, featuring in around 21 stories.

Funding and Planning

As part of the country’s inter-agency 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan, UNICEF is requesting US$54.3 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children in Ukraine in 2016. This includes an additional US$3.5 million to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV for 30,000 pregnant women and children in non-government controlled areas as well as ensuring continuity and scaling up of anti-retroviral treatment for people living with HIV. The total requirements will cover both immediate life-saving interventions, as well as more comprehensive rehabilitation of WASH and educational infrastructure, provision of supplies and sustained basic social services for all conflict-affected children in Ukraine. As of 31 March 2016, UNICEF has received $8,427,596 against the total requirement. UNICEF is urgently appealing for additional funds to sustain the provision of critical humanitarian support to conflict-affected women and children. This includes critical interventions in the WASH, protection and education sectors, as well as supplies for the HIV and AIDS response, mine-risk awareness and education. Supplies of vital polio vaccines are needed to address the polio outbreak and scale up the immunization of children in Ukraine.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Sector</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Funds received</th>
<th>Carry-forward to 2016</th>
<th>Funding gap</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
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<td>1,000,000</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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<td>Cluster/sector coordination</td>
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<td>Unallocated</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>29,820,375</td>
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