**Highlights**

- Internal displacement continues to increase in Ukraine, with 1,099,618 people having fled the eastern part of the country, of whom 140,483 are children (Source: Ministry of Social Policy).

- Heavy fighting in the town of Debaltseve over the past few weeks leaves local population with very limited access to social services, seriously raising the humanitarian situation concerns.

- On 24 February the Humanitarian Country Team launched the revised Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Ukraine appealing for US$316 million for 3.2 million of the most conflict-affected people.

- As part of the HRP, UNICEF is appealing for US$55.8 million to meet urgent humanitarian needs, including 900,000 children affected by the conflict.

- On 24 February, 16,000 litres of water were distributed to 8,000 people in Debaltseve, reaching also 2,700 vulnerable children in the town.

- During February 2015, more than 8,000 IDPs, including over 2,700 children, visited child-friendly spaces and benefited from psycho-social services at the community protection centres in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia regions.
Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Several isolated skirmishes and exchanges of fire have been reported during the past week, jeopardizing the holding of ceasefire agreement which came into effect on 15 February. In some locations (such as Donetsk airport and near Mariupol), artillery was used and sporadic fighting occurred in the past few days. As of 26 February, with the declared start of supervised withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of conflict there is a notable decrease in violence. All the relevant actors are reaffirming their statements communicating continued withdrawal of heavy weapons.

To date the conflict in Ukraine claimed lives of more than 5,800 people, including 63 children. On 22 February, a bomb attack on a rally in Kharkiv resulted in four casualties, including two adolescents. Across the former zone of direct conflict many people continue to flee. The overall security situation in these areas is compounded by massive presence of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs).

As of 2 March, the Ministry of Social Policy reported 1,099,618 registered IDPs across the country, including 140,483 children.

In the town of Debaltseve, the humanitarian situation remains dire. The city suffered heavily from continuing fighting during the past weeks, resulting in the local population being traumatized and lacking access to assistance or basic services for weeks. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission reported that as of 25 February almost all buildings in the city centre were destroyed or heavily damaged. According to field monitors several buildings are reportedly mined and the ongoing demining efforts are preventing the start of renovation process in the town. Debaltseve had a pre-conflict population of more than 25,000 people. As per the available data on 27 February only 7,000 inhabitants remained, including 1,000 children, with extremely limited access to running water, basic services, electricity, and heating.

At the evacuation centre in Sloviansk, the number of newly arriving IDPs has been decreasing since the end of February, with 100 IDPs registered last week, arriving mainly from Debaltseve, Vuhlehirsk, Horlivka, and Mariinka. The humanitarian situation in some locations (among them Horlivka and Krasnoshirivka), across the frontline and the buffer zone is of concern with reported damaged infrastructure, shortage of basic commodities and increasing food prices.

From 24 January to 26 February, the Ministry of Social Policy registered 2,593 children among the population evacuated from non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhans. In Mariupol, OSCE monitors reported on families with children and youth leaving the city due to the harsh living conditions there.

The State Sanitary Epidemiological Service of Ukraine met UNICEF and expressed concern about the risk of occurrence and spreading of infectious diseases among IDPs and local population in conflict area. Through field visits to Donetsk, Luhans, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhia, UNICEF and local authorities have assessed that the intermittent access of affected populations to water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene (WASH) supplies could exacerbate the spread of diseases. The Donetsk filter station is reportedly not functioning, due to heavy shelling in January, resulting in Avdiivka, Krasnoshirivka, and part of Donetsk and Yasynovata cities without functioning, centralized water supplies. Water and sanitation conditions for people still living in bunkers in Donetsk are reportedly poor, with limited access to potable water, sanitation facilities and hygiene supplies. In Luhansk region, local populations are complaining about low quality water.

According to OSCE, schools in Horlivka reportedly reopened on 24 February. However, access to education is still hampered in some areas (Andriivka and Kramatorsk) due to the lack of public transportation. The Education Department in Lugansk reports that out of the 363 schools in the region some 300 are working, and that several
schools are destroyed, of which five are located in Luhansk city. Furthermore, several schools and kindergartens near the demarcation line, including those in Kramatorsk, are reportedly open, but are still without heating and in need of additional education supplies, due to the increasing number of IDP students. A comprehensive and collective overview of the distinct education needs of boys and girls is needed to facilitate a more coordinated and targeted response.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

On 24 February, the Humanitarian Country Team launched the revised Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Ukraine, appealing for US$316 million for 3.2 million of the most conflict-affected people. As part of the HRP, UNICEF is appealing for US$55.8 million to meet urgent humanitarian needs of 900,000 children affected by the conflict.

In order to scale-up its response in the country, UNICEF is expanding its field presence and recruiting additional staff. This will further strengthen the ability to monitor the situation of children on the ground and provide timely assistance in order to meet the need of the affected population.

The cessation in hostilities in the affected area of Debaltseve, allowed the safe delivery of humanitarian supplies on 24 February, despite logistics constraints. UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP provided food and non-food items, including water and hygiene kits, to partners to be distributed to conflict-affected population.

UNICEF has deployed a dedicated Education Cluster Coordinator to Ukraine, which will enable strengthening of the national and sub-national cluster coordination.

Summary of Programme Response

Education

With the revision of the Humanitarian Response Plan, the Education Cluster’s strategic objectives for 2015 have been revised to ensure access to quality education for all crisis-affected children, and provide mine risk education for children, parents and caregivers, educators and civil society actors. The psychosocial support has been streamlined within the Child Protection Sub-Cluster objectives and coordination of efforts in this area is planned to be even more prominent.

In February, UNICEF and NGO partner Rubezhi delivered education kits to 500 children in Svyatohirsk and Slovyansk. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Danish Demining Group (DDG) in collaboration with UNICEF are supporting mine risk education (MRE) project in conflict-affected areas. The objective is to strengthen government capacity in the injury surveillance system for mine-/explosive remnants of war related incidents and to increase children’s safety by enhancing their knowledge on risks and motivating safe behaviour among children of preschool and school age and their parents in the Donbas area. A knowledge, attitude and practices survey covering Luhansk and Donetsk is being planned in coordination with other MRE actors.

On 19 February, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science, the Head of the Parliamentary Committee on Science and Education, the Head of the Open Policy Foundation, and representatives of Donetsk teachers and students, discussed the extension of registration for independent testing. The registration deadline has been extended until 20 April. Additional testing sessions are planned on 9 and 27 June. A passport is no longer a requirement for registration and for taking the test.
Water Sanitation and Hygiene

On 18 and 25 February UNICEF distributed 40,000 litres of drinking water to 3,000 people in the town of Volnovakha. With the support of UNICEF’s implementing partner ADRA Ukraine, several locations were reached - among them six kindergartens.

As part of the humanitarian convoy to Donetsk organized on 24 February, 16,000 litres of water were distributed to 8,000 people in the town of Debaltseve. Among them, approximately 2,700 vulnerable children were reached.

On 23 February, the implementing partner Ukrainian Frontiers received additional quantity of 626 hygiene kits (326 adult hygiene kits, 250 baby hygiene kits and 50 family package hygiene kits) to be distributed to 1,700 people in Slovyansk, Artemivsk, Kramatorsk, Kostiantynivka, Druzhkivka and Horlivka.

UNICEF’s implementing partner KHORS distributed hygiene items, as part of in-kind contribution made by a corporate partner to 448 families in the cities of Severodonetsk, Lysychansk and Rubizhne currently hosting high number of IDPs from the Luhans oblast.

Child Protection

During the reporting period, the child hotline run by La Strada and supported by UNICEF, received a total of 1,072 calls, 56 per cent from boys and 44 per cent from girls. Most of the calls were related to legal advice and requests for psychosocial support. All callers received counselling, support and referral when needed.

During second half of February and early March psychologists in Donetsk and Luhansk trained by UNICEF and partners provided the range of psychosocial support services, including 43 individual and 96 group counselling for children and their families, reaching a total of 1,321 persons. The team of psychologists from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts supported by UNICEF and partners also provided outreach and professional support sessions to teachers and psychologists working in local schools included in this activity.

In February, more than 8,000 IDPs (2,700 children) received range of social services including legal and psychosocial support and access to child-friendly spaces at the network of community protection centres in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia regions.

Health and Nutrition

To improve low immunization coverage against polio in Ukraine, UNICEF is procuring 4.8 million doses of polio vaccine. The first shipment of vaccines is expected to arrive by the end of April 2015. In collaboration with partners, UNICEF has been developing outreach activities to support IDP mothers with infants by providing knowledge and good practices on breastfeeding in emergency.

External Communication

During the reported period, the UNICEF Representative was interviewed by international media outlet Mashable, Lithuanian newspaper Lietuvos Rytas and Ukrainian newspaper Holos Ukraina. The Independent released on 25 February an article quoting the UNICEF Representative on needs of children in Ukraine. On 24 February, a story on the UNICEF-led joint UN convoy to Donetsk was published on the UNICEFConnect global blog. A series of human interest stories, a photo essay, and daily updates on UNICEF Ukraine social media accounts were shared to highlight both the needs of children affected by the crisis, and also the humanitarian response in affected areas.
Funding and Planning

UNICEF has revised its appealed to US$55.8 million to provide emergency relief assistance to children affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. To date, just over US$12.3 million has been received, representing 22 per cent against the appealed amount. The committed funds have already been spent, illustrating the urgent need for additional funds to enable continued support to the affected children. The table below provides a detailed overview by sector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Sector</th>
<th>Requirements (US$)</th>
<th>Funds received (US$)*</th>
<th>Funding gap (US$)</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14,400,000</td>
<td>3,993,662</td>
<td>10,406,338</td>
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<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>2,600,000</td>
<td>1,050,120</td>
<td>1,549,880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>12,300,000</td>
<td>4,550,387</td>
<td>7,749,613</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>23,000,000</td>
<td>1,805,096</td>
<td>21,194,904</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sector Coordination, Field Support</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
<td>945,065</td>
<td>2,554,935</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55,800,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,344,330</strong></td>
<td><strong>43,455,670</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
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Next Sit Rep: 20/03/2015

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