



UNICEF
Europe and
Central Asia
Region (ECAR)

Ukraine Crisis
Situation Report
28 Feb 2022

unicef 
for every child

On 13 February 2022, 9-year-old Masha sits at her desk at home in eastern Ukraine.
© UNICEF/UN0597353/Filippov

February 2022

Highlights

UNICEF, together with partners, is part of the ongoing humanitarian response in Ukraine and continues to reach vulnerable children and families affected by conflict. UNICEF is currently scaling up its humanitarian efforts to respond to the growing needs across the country.

UNICEF's immediate financial requirements for the refugee response plan in neighbouring countries is \$73 million over a 6-month period. Inside Ukraine, the needs are far greater; UNICEF is appealing for \$276 million covering a 3-month period, with a strong focus on multi-purpose cash, child protection, as well as water and sanitation.

Background

On 21 February 2022, the Russian Federation officially recognized the independence of non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. On 23 February, Ukraine announced that it would declare a nationwide state of emergency starting 24 February. On 24 February, the Russian Federation initiated military action on multiple areas of the country.

Given the fast-moving situation, the numbers of internally displaced are difficult to assess. According to UNHCR, as of 28 February, more than 500,000 people had fled into neighbouring countries, principally Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary, half of whom are children. Between 3 and 5 million people could seek refuge in neighbouring countries in the next few months.

The security situation along the line of contact remains very volatile. Shelling of medical and educational institutions has increased since the most recent escalation of the conflict.

Heavy fighting and explosions have been reported in and around Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Hundreds of casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure – including residential buildings, schools, shelters, shops, and medical facilities – have been reported.

The current fighting has expanded the conflict into new areas beyond eastern Ukraine. The armed conflict in the east is now in its eighth year and has taken a heavy toll on the 3.4 million civilian population including 510,000 children living in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This protracted crisis has disrupted the daily lives of children and families on both sides of the line of contact in both government and non-government-controlled areas, leaving them in need of continuous humanitarian assistance. The adverse effects of this crisis are compounded by the socio-economic and health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has put significant strain on the most vulnerable families and children. A recent polio outbreak in western Ukraine has further challenged the country's already fragile health-care system.

Situation overview and humanitarian needs

The recent escalation of the conflict across the entire country has caused a growing number of casualties among the civilian population, the destruction of essential infrastructure – including schools, hospitals, bridges, water and sanitation infrastructure and residential buildings. This has led to increasing needs and impeded the ability by humanitarian actors and local by authorities to respond. The most urgent needs are emergency medical services, medicines and health supplies, hygiene kits, safe water, shelter, as well as psychosocial support, for people who have fled their homes.

Based on the latest available information, several educational facilities have been damaged in government- and non-government-controlled areas over the past week. Schools have been closed since 21 February in non-government-controlled areas, and there is no information when they will reopen or possibilities for alternative learning modalities. In government-controlled areas, the Ministry of Education previously reported that 33 schools with over 5,500 students are closed for face-to-face learning due to insecurity in areas along the line of contact. The number of children with no access to education is now well beyond 500,000 as a result of the recent crisis.

The direct and indirect effect of the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine continues to significantly impact the lives of children and young people, leaving families on both sides of the contact line in urgent need of sustained humanitarian assistance. Critical water, sanitation, electrical and heating facilities, and school infrastructure have been damaged and are dilapidated, while access to learning is challenged by inadequate teaching methodologies. As a result, children's access to safe shelter, water and schooling are threatened.

Children and their families require systematic protection services, including to address gender-based violence, violence against children and to access psychosocial care. Mine risk education and mine victim assistance are critical as explosive ordnance contamination remains a major source of threat to life, safety, and stability.

Access to quality health-care services, including immunization, HIV/AIDS support and emergency medical services remains limited, and the already weakened health system continues to be severely challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Child poverty has increased. Limited freedom of movement continues to curtail access to social benefits and services, civil documentation, and critical winterization needs.

As the crisis escalates, UNICEF is scaling-up its ongoing humanitarian response in Ukraine to ensure sustained delivery of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), immunization and health care, education, child protection and humanitarian cash assistance.

UNICEF Response

UNICEF, together with partners, is part of the ongoing humanitarian response and continues to reach vulnerable children and families affected by conflict. In both government- and non-government-controlled areas, UNICEF's work with partners is being implemented with some disruptions, due to the security situation. UNICEF has staff in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Kyiv and Lviv.

Health

UNICEF is supporting local authorities' emergency response efforts by positioning critical supplies to cover the immediate needs of internally displaced people in strategic *hromadas* (municipalities) to reach people on the move in the east, centre and west of the country. UNICEF also continues to integrate its humanitarian response with longer-term resilience building efforts (nexus programming) by strengthening the capacities of local health facilities to deliver quality health-care services – including primary health care in communities, emergency life-saving trauma care and essential services to affected populations – through mobile health teams in Kramatorsk, Novohrodivka, Mariupol, Mariinka, Bakhmut, to be expanded once security allows it to areas with high numbers of displaced people.

UNICEF is also supporting the establishment of a contingency medical stock to ensure the continuity of health services provision, especially in facilities and communities hosting high numbers of displaced people that may face higher volumes of patients and possible stock-outs of commodities.

UNICEF has been supporting the government's response to the ongoing polio outbreak, now presenting a higher risk of further spreading in country and across borders. The response was recently disrupted by the escalating conflict. UNICEF is ready to resume and expand activities as soon as the security situation allows it.

UNICEF will also continue its emergency response efforts to address the COVID-19 outbreak, including by working with *hromadas* to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among people over 60.

Water and sanitation

In non-government-controlled areas, UNICEF has distributed hygiene kits to 80 social institutions. Five thousand family hygiene kits are now stored in UNICEF's implementing partner's warehouse, ready to be distributed upon request. The rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure are ongoing, with five facilities in social institutions and five of de-centralized water infrastructure rehabilitated so far.

Child protection

Thirteen mobile teams are providing psychosocial care to children and caregivers in government-controlled areas, as well as case management support for the most vulnerable families with children. This includes cases of gender-based violence, children with disabilities in need of support, unaccompanied or separated children and other extremely vulnerable internally displaced families with children. Care is currently being provided online from basements, until the security situation allows face-to-face service provision. An additional five teams composed of psychologists, health and/or social workers, to provide first aid and psychological first aid in conflict-affected areas are being supported. These teams will be deployed as soon as the security situation allows.

UNICEF is working with the government to establish a coordination mechanism to provide child protection services. A child protection hotline has been established in government-controlled areas and plans for the evacuation of children from institutional facilities are being put in place as quickly as possible given the current security context.

Education

UNICEF is supporting the rehabilitation of schools damaged during the escalation of the conflict. In partnership with the Ministry of Interior, State Emergency Services, *hromadas* and other partners.

Social protection

A cash feasibility assessment is being initiated in close collaboration with the Cash Working Group and the Ministry of Social Policy – UNICEF will provide overall operational and technical support for this assessment, which will be used to identify key design features for a multipurpose case response. UNICEF will provide multipurpose cash support to an estimated 530,000 vulnerable households with children inside Ukraine to help meet the multisectoral needs of children and their families impacted by the crisis.

In parallel, UNICEF will support an assessment of the viability of the national social protection system to continue functioning during the emergency.

Neighbouring countries

In neighbouring countries – Moldova, Belarus, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Czech Republic – UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR to respond to the additional humanitarian needs of people crossing borders after fleeing their homes. As numbers are expected to increase significantly in the coming hours and days, UNICEF is preparing to scale up its support, particularly around child protection, immunization, and social protection. As of 28 February, UNHCR reported more than 500,000 people have crossed into neighbouring countries. This includes 281,000 people in Poland, 84,000 in Hungary, 46,000 in Moldova, 34,000 in Romania, as well as a few hundred people in Belarus.

In neighbouring countries, UNICEF is reactivating the **“Blue Dot” safe spaces** that provided crucial support and protection services to families on the move during the refugee and migrant crisis of 2015-2016. These spaces are set up in close coordination with national and local authorities along routes of major population flows – often in conjunction with municipalities. The Blue Dots will provide key information to traveling families, psychosocial support, safe spaces for mothers and children, and the ability to identify protection risks, including unaccompanied and separated children. A fundamental feature across all Blue Dots will be mental health / psychosocial support and links to a social worker who can support separated and unaccompanied children. Blue Dots connect to one another in a sequenced way, as people move, to help support tracing and family reunification, and best interest assessments of children without caregivers. Ultimately, Blue Dots can also provide a range of other services as needed, such as cash and information. The menu of services will be determined at each site and will inevitably vary based on what is already available and what the needs are. UNICEF plans to set up 26 Blue Dots, with the capacity to provide support to 3,000-5,000 people per day, per location, in Moldova, Romania, Belarus, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic. UNICEF is working with governments and partners on quick assessments and expecting first Blue Dots to be operational in the coming 48-72 hours. In Poland, UNICEF has deployed child protection, emergency and water and sanitation technical expertise to establish eight blue dot hubs along border areas, in collaboration with UNHCR. In Moldova, UNICEF is working with its five biggest child protection partners to set up at least seven blue dots along the border with Ukraine.

UNICEF Country Offices are also scaling up their **health response** in countries bordering Ukraine, to strengthen essential health services that can be provided to children and support the prevention of outbreaks. Activities include health promotion and information on vaccination, child nutrition, and access to essential services, all targeted for people on the move. They also include the provision of essential commodities for facilities serving large numbers of people – such as vaccines, supply for essential health services, medicines for non-communicable diseases, and micronutrient supplements. Finally, the health response will support the delivery of health services for mothers and children at refugees’ aggregation points (e.g., municipality shelters, government centres), if these are currently unavailable. UNICEF is also assessing needs for sanitation interventions in shelters, as this will be a major issue. In Moldova UNICEF delivered four tons of basic hygiene products, including diapers, disinfectants, and absorbent wipes to the Palanca centre, at the border with Ukraine.

Additionally, neighbouring countries are exploring the possibility to provide **cash assistance** to families crossing the border. The design will depend on how long people stay in country after crossing the border (e.g., in Moldova, those crossing border stay between 5 and 24 hours only). UNICEF is planning humanitarian cash responses even for households fully in transit, in anticipation of them having had to leave many basic household goods behind and losing employment. Beneficiaries will receive one-off payments rather than monthly support in destination countries. In Moldova and Romania, UNICEF teams are mobilizing to provide emergency cash support to an estimated 16,500 displaced households with children. In line with global commitments, this direct cash support will empower individuals and households to obtain the goods and services that they need most at the time they need them most. In Poland, UNICEF is anticipating six months of cash support to 50,000 refugee households with children.

Supply and logistics

As Ukraine's airspace is currently closed, UNICEF is planning alternative transport routes to deliver supplies to the country, mainly overland, as well as identifying storage and distribution hubs. Partnerships with municipalities in nine oblasts are being discussed and an agreement will be established to preposition supplies in eastern, central, and western Ukraine. UNICEF has identified two warehousing facilities in Lviv, for their use. UNICEF Supply Division has also identified a warehousing facility in Poland to facilitate the immediate delivery of supplies in-country.

An initial supply delivery - which includes winter clothes for children, health supplies, recreational kits, early childhood development kits and water and sanitation supplies - is scheduled to reach Kyiv between 28 February to 3 March. These supplies will serve over 20,000 people. If the situation allows, the first batch of supplies will be delivered to non-government-controlled areas through a UN convoy and distributed through implementing partners on the ground. A second supply delivery to support water and sanitation, health, child protection and education activities is expected to be delivered the following week. These supplies will serve up to 40,000 people. A detailed distribution plan is under development.

In neighbouring countries, UNICEF is in the process of assessing humanitarian supply needs at the border. Based on early planning assumptions, UNICEF plans to procure essential items including health and water and sanitation supplies, first aid kits, medical kits and other medical equipment for mobile health services. A separate supply list for neighbouring countries will be developed as soon as assessments are completed. In Poland, UNICEF is currently finalising a supply list for the establishment of eight Blue Dots.

Partnerships

UNICEF's Ukraine country office has 15 active partnership cooperation agreements, including with civil society organisations, international and local NGOs in government- and non-government-controlled areas. Eight additional partners in child protection and education have been identified and a humanitarian programme document is under development for scaling up response in case management, psychosocial support for children and families and to provide psychosocial first aid trainings to teachers. UNICEF is expanding partnerships with NEEKA, Caritas, and ADRA to scale up its response in water and sanitation and emergency supply distribution in the western part of the country. UNICEF is exploring other partners on the ground for its response in neighbouring countries.

Funding overview and partnerships

Within the fragile and complex situation, UNICEF has been working to maintain ongoing life-saving humanitarian programmes for hundreds of thousands of children and families in eastern Ukraine, as well as to scale up emergency response actions. UNICEF has developed a modular, scalable plan that reflects UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies. The aim is to reinforce and expand UNICEF's existing humanitarian response through key partners in all of Ukraine and leverage ongoing humanitarian-development programming that provides integrated social services through strategic partnerships with *hromadas* (municipalities) in key oblasts (regions) across the country. UNICEF's plans cover the key sectors of health and nutrition, child protection, water and sanitation, nutrition, education, and social protection - with UNICEF contributing to overall interagency targets.

Immediate financial requirements for the refugee response plan in neighbouring countries is \$73 million over a 6-month period. Inside Ukraine, the needs are far greater; UNICEF's is appealing for \$276 million covering a 3-month period, with a strong focus on multi-purpose cash, child protection, as well as water and sanitation.

Communication

On 28 February, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell issued a [statement](#) to draw public attention to the impact of ongoing military operations on children and UNICEF's work to protect children. On 25 February, Europe and Central Asia Regional Director Afshan Khan [briefed the press corps of the Palais des Nations in Geneva](#),

generating significant coverage. UNICEF Ukraine continued to produce multimedia content showing the impact of the conflict on children, and UNICEF's work to meet their most urgent needs. The UNICEF communication team in Ukraine is raising awareness of children's growing needs as hostilities intensify.

In 2021, UNICEF Ukraine social media channels grew significantly, gaining over 800,000 followers, with 1.6 million visitors to UNICEF Ukraine's official website. UNICEF Ukraine also continued to amplify the voices of children and their families, reaching over 12 million people monthly through its digital channels.

Who to contact for further information:

Afshan Khan

Regional Director

UNICEF Regional Office for Europe
and Central Asia

Email: akhan@unicef.org

Murat Şahin

Representative

UNICEF Ukraine Country Office

Email: msahin@unicef.org

Marixie Mercado

Communication Specialist

UNICEF

Email: mmercado@unicef.org