

HelpAge Ukraine Situational Report

June 10, 2022



Ukraine

One in four Ukrainians are over 60, leading the current crisis to be referred to as the "oldest humanitarian crisis" in the world. Older people are especially at risk as many are unable or reluctant to leave their homes. As others flee, older people who remain often find themselves with limited support. This is especially concerning in the Donbass oblast of eastern Ukraine, where the most intense fighting is occurring. Those who can leave are often undertaking physically and emotionally difficult journeys.

Those displaced can repeatedly find themselves sleeping in centers which are not set up to support them and their specific needs. Some do not have the capacity to provide assistance to the numbers needing it.

Older people are also more likely to have health conditions and disabilities. The healthcare system in Ukraine is struggling with staff shortages and at times a lack of medicine.

It is critical that their capabilities and wealth of experience are utilized when designing humanitarian interventions and programming.

15.7 million need support (OCHA)

11 million Ukrainians are over 60 (Ukraine Government)

7.1 million are internally displaced (IOM)

7.2 million refugees have fled Ukraine (UNCHR)

Ukraine: Rapid Needs Assessment of Displaced Older People: In May, HelpAge interviewed 557 displaced people in the oblast of Lvivska, Dnipropetrovska and Chernivetska in Central and Western Ukraine to better understand their needs. To click [here](#) to see the full report.



Case Study: Valentina, 81 years old

Valentina fled from Severodonetsk, in the Donbas region, where she lived for 50 years, to Dnipro on March 31, 2022 after her house was damaged when a bomb exploded nearby. She fled by bus with her deceased sister's husband, Sasha. She told HelpAge "First we stayed in an orphanage and then with my surviving sister, Tamara, 76, we rented a house. To begin with it looked like a mansion, and it had a lovely garden, but all the disadvantages showed themselves later. We realised how cold and damp it was and there is only electric heating, but that is too expensive to use." She subsequently told us, "In Dnipro I have lost my independence. I injured my knee in a fall some time ago and I barely go out now." Currently, Valentina is relying on support with food as well as medication for her lungs. She cannot afford to treat her knee injury. She is currently in discussion with her son, who is France, about leaving the country, but she worried that with her painful knee she will not be able to manage the long journey.

People reached

- Distribution of food and hygiene kits has started in Lvivska oblast, and additional kits will soon arrive in our warehouses in Chernihivska, and Dnipropetrovska oblasts. In total, HelpAge will provide these kits to over 35,000 internally displaced people. They will be distributed by HelpAge volunteers as well as by partners Turbota pro Litnih v Ukraini (TLU) and Right to Protection.
- **2,690 older people** in the Donbas region are continuing to receive counseling calls from HelpAge's 189 volunteers. These older men and women are those whom HelpAge provided support to prior to the current escalation of the conflict.



- **1,714 hygiene kits** were distributed via two local NGOs (Hands of Friends and Slavic Heart) and two municipal authorities (Psychoneurological Center and Social Centre for Mothers) in the Donetsk oblast of eastern Ukraine. These kits include adult diapers, personal protective equipment, and absorbent pads.

HelpAge plans

- In the coming weeks, HelpAge will establish community safe spaces which will provide the opportunity for older people to gather and seek psychosocial support from peers and HelpAge staff as well as referrals to existing services. Currently several locations have been identified in Lvivska oblast and staff recruitment is on-going.
- In the coming months, HelpAge plans to provide multipurpose cash to older people through the post office as well as cash grants and specialised equipment for centers hosting older people, as their numbers have increased as result of the conflict. Furthermore, specialized kits will be provided for those with incontinence.

Partners in Ukraine

Right to Protection has been a leading voice standing up for the rights of those most at risk in Ukraine since 2001. Since the start of the conflict, they have been active across much of Ukraine, providing food, water, medicines, generators, cash, and legal advice.

TLU is a Ukrainian NGO which has been providing support to older people since 1999. During the crisis, they have been working through their large network of volunteers across Ukraine to provide food, medicine, and hygiene items.



TLU volunteer providing medicine to an older Ukrainian.

Moldova

In Moldova, 491,144 have entered the country from Ukraine since the end of February; 9% are over 65, according to REACH. While most have traveled through Moldova to Romania and other countries, or have returned to Ukraine, 86,266 are currently staying. Of these, 4,384 people are residing in 95 refugee accommodation centers, while others are either staying with host families or friends or are renting private accommodation. Older people arriving in Moldova have faced often difficult and traumatizing journeys, often complicated by mobility issues. Every person who arrives in Moldova has unique needs. Ensuring that support is tailored to the individual will remain critical.

86,266 refugees are remaining in Moldova (UNCHR)

Approximately, **7,764** refugees remaining in Moldova are over 65 (REACH)

People reached

- **2,350 refugees** are currently being provided with food catering or food vouchers in 49 refugee accommodation centers across Moldova. In total, HelpAge has have provided over **500,000 meals** to refugees in the last 2 ½ months.
- **5,000 refugees have received hygiene vouchers or kits** that were distributed at 45 refugee accommodation centers across Moldova, enabling refugees to access items such as soap, masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning products.
- **35 refugee accommodation centers received institutional hygiene kits.** These included washing mops, washing up liquid, hand sanitizer, and other items.

HelpAge plans

- Currently, HelpAge is setting up safe spaces, both in the refugee centers and the community, where older refugees can access psychosocial support and legal support from a team of experts. It will also be as space where older people can gather and provide peer to peer support.
- In the coming months, HelpAge will provide older people with cash assistance, assistive products, and hygiene items. HelpAge will set up outreach programs to provide basic services to those who are unable to leave their homes or the refugee accommodation centers.

Advocacy call:

We call on all parties to the conflict and on humanitarian actors responding to the crisis to ensure that:

- Safe, rapid, and unimpeded humanitarian access is in place to ensure older men and women and people with disabilities who have not been able to leave their homes, including those living in institutions, can be reached, can access essential life-saving humanitarian support and tailored and prioritised assistance, and can be evacuated to safety.
- Older Ukrainians who have fled to other areas of the country can access full basic services, including food and water, healthcare including mental health support, social services including pensions, transport, and information. Those who have been evacuated should not be forced to move into institutions.
- Refugee host countries must ensure that older people's rights are upheld, including ensuring dignified reception at border and transit points with prioritisation procedures for crossing of older people; respect for family unity and facilitation of older people reuniting and settling with family members; prioritisation of protection for those facing additional risks, such as older people and women with disabilities; and provision of access to national health and social protection systems.
- Older men and women should be included in humanitarian assessments and program activities to ensure that they are provided with appropriate humanitarian protection and assistance.

For more information you access our latest advocacy brief: "[No time for Business as Usual](#)"

Communication

Visit our [Ukraine page](#) for the latest updates on HelpAge's work, including testimonies from older people and our colleagues in Ukraine, Rapid Needs Assessments, interviews, and news statements.

To support our life-saving work, visit [our donation page](#).

For more information, contact Cindy Cox-Roman: ccoxroman@helpageusa.org.

Below is some of our recent media coverage:

- Al Jazeera: [100 days of the Russia-Ukraine war](#)
- Corriere Della Sera: [Ukraine and the elderly: the hidden victims of the war \(Italian\)](#)
- HelpAge USA Press Release: [100 Days On: New Survey Highlights the Risks to Millions of Older People in Ukraine](#)



Justin, CEO, HelpAge International, Sonja, CEO, HelpAge Deutschland, and Tatiana, Country Director, for Moldova, meeting with an older refugee group in Moldova

Orla, Humanitarian lead for Ukraine and Sasha, Dnipro area manager, listening to Iryna, 60, and her disabled son Anatoly, 41, in the transit center in Dnipro

