**Ukraine**

As the nature of the war in Ukraine shifts rapidly, older people remain at risk, as many are unable or reluctant to leave their homes, including in areas of active conflict.

While throughout the crisis the government has continued state pension payments to older people, the amount is insufficient to cover their basic needs. Accessing pensions remains difficult, especially for those in the Donbas region, as many local ATMs are not working.

Older people are also more likely to have health conditions and/or disabilities. The healthcare system in Ukraine is struggling with staff shortages and at times a lack of medicine. The challenges are especially acute for institutions which support those displaced, as they simply do not have the capacity to provide assistance to the numbers needing it.

**Case Study: Anatoly, 66**

Anatoly fled Kramatorsk April 7, 2022 after Russian artillery and rocket shelling. He had pneumonia and traveled by train to Lviv accompanied by a doctor. Initially he stayed in a theatre downtown but now lives in a gym in the Lviv Polytechnic University with around 300 people. He told HelpAge “Here we are provided with everything we need, but it is very uncomfortable when there are so many people in such a small space. A family lives next to me with three small children. They are very nice. But home is much better.” Like for many others, the war has been emotionally very hard for Anatoly. He told HelpAge, “Every smile is difficult. This war and this situation are worse than a nightmare.”

**New Needs Assessment in Ukraine**

We interviewed 557 displaced people in Dnipropetrovska, Lvivska, and Chernivetska oblasts in Central and Western Ukraine to better understand their needs. Below are some of the key findings for older people (60+). The full report will be released next week.

- Older people said they are in greatest need of cash, as well as healthcare, hygiene items, and clothes.
- 43% of older people interviewed have at least one disability and 87% have a serious health condition such as hypertension.
- 26% of older people did not have family members or friends who could support them and nearly half were currently not receiving any assistance.
- 88% of older people preferred to receive assistance as cash to enable them to purchase the items that meet their personal needs.

**People reached so far in Ukraine**

- **2,690 older people** in the Donbas region whom HelpAge supported to prior to the current escalation of the conflict continue to receive counseling calls from HelpAge volunteers.
- HelpAge is providing **equipment and supplies to an IDP center** in Dnipro that supports particularly vulnerable older people and people with disabilities, including those with very limited mobility. We are securing specialized beds, mattresses, linens, as well as hoists that enable people with disabilities to move in and out of bed.

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**15.7 million need support** (OCHA)

**11 million Ukrainians are over 60** (Ukrainian government)

**7.7 million are internally displaced** (IOM)

**6.2 million refugees have fled Ukraine** (UNCHR)
In several towns in the Donetsk oblast of eastern Ukraine, HelpAge is identifying and supporting older people and other IDPs who have fled fighting and are living in the community. Some are housed by local residents and others rent houses from people who have left for safer areas. Because these people often cannot travel to centralized aid distribution points, HelpAge is assessing and responding to their individualized needs.

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

HelpAge plans

In June and July, together with partners Turbota pro Litnih v Ukraini (TLU) and Right to Protection, HelpAge will provide over 35,000 internally displaced people with food, hygiene kits, and cash assistance in Lvivska, Ivano-Frankivska, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkivska, Chernihivska, and Dnipropetrovska Oblasts.

At the end of May, HelpAge plans to provide 2,220 supermarket vouchers worth $74 each to at risk families.

HelpAge has also recently set up offices in Lviv and Dnipro and is recruiting local staff to deliver programs at greater speed and scale.

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, legal advice, water, generators, and cash while also supporting Ukrainians in need to access medicine.

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.

Moldova

In Moldova, 456,947 people have entered the country, of which 9% are over 65, according to REACH. While many have passed through Moldova to Romania, or have returned to Ukraine, 93,000 have chosen to stay. Of these, 4,384 people are residing in 95 refugee accommodation centers while others are staying with families or friends or are renting private accommodation. Older people who arrive in Moldova have faced often difficult and traumatizing journeys, complicated by mobility issues that many face. Every person who arrives in Moldova has unique needs. Ensuring that support is tailored to the individual will remain critical.

Case study: Tatiana, 62

Tatiana, fled with her grandson and three other relatives from Odesa to Moldova in early March. Currently they are being hosted by relatives in the capital, Chisinau. Tatiana was particularly concerned about being able to get the medication she requires. She told HelpAge “I was diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago and had the tumour removed, but I need a certain medication that I take every day. I have another month’s supply, but I am so worried that it might not be available here. I don’t know if I need a prescription or not, nor do I know how to find a doctor to prescribe it." In addition, because the family fled quickly they lack sufficient clothing, especially for winter.
People reached so far in Moldova

- In total we have provided approximately **450,000 meals** and food vouchers to 2,780 refugees in 45 accommodation centers across Moldova since mid-March. HelpAge covers 55% of all food provided in the centers and operates in 22 from 32 districts of Moldova.

- **3,100 refugees received hygiene vouchers** to purchase soap and hand sanitizer distributed at 45 refugee accommodation centers across Moldova in April.

- **30 refugee accommodation centers received institutional hygiene kits.** These included mops, dish soap, hand sanitizer, and other items.

HelpAge plans

- In the coming weeks, HelpAge will scale up food assistance in refugee centers, in collaboration with the World Food Programme.

- HelpAge aims to support refugees in rural areas, including through targeted support to older people. Working with partners, HelpAge will establish community safe spaces and provide cash assistance.

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 to ensure older men and women and people with disabilities who have not left their homes, including those 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 and gender-based violence services, and social services including pensions, transport, and information. Evacuees should not be forced to move into institutions.

- Refugee host countries must guarantee older people’s rights, including by 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 those with disabilities and older women; and access to national health and social protection systems.

- Humanitarian actors and donors should include older people in humanitarian assessments, consult with them and incorporate their views into program and service design.

Communication

Visit our Ukraine crisis page to get the latest updates on HelpAge’s work, including testimonies from older people and our colleagues in Ukraine, Rapid Needs Assessments, interviews, and news statements.

You can support our work in Ukraine by donating here.

For more information, contact Cindy Cox-Roman, CEO, HelpAge USA, at ccoxroman@helpageusa.org.

Below is some of our recent media coverage:

- INews: Older people afraid of burdening their families are being left behind after Russian invasion
- Guardian: Alone under siege: how older women are being left behind in Ukraine