

May 19, 2022

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator United States Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, District of Columbia 20523

Dear Ambassador Power,

We represent national organizations working to improve the experience of aging through public policy, research, philanthropy, and civil discourse. As we learn more each day about the devastation and suffering of millions of Ukrainians, resulting from Russia's assault, we want to take this opportunity to acknowledge USAID's significant investment in the humanitarian response.

We are aware that the United States is the largest single-country donor of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and that USAID partners are delivering goods and services to millions of affected persons in Ukraine and in neighboring countries.¹ However, we are concerned that USAID's implementing partners operating in Ukraine and elsewhere may not consistently reach older people with humanitarian support and that humanitarian support may not adequately address their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Older people are often among those who are most at risk from the lack of access to regular medicines and medical treatments. Many have specific dietary and nutritional requirements. For those who require support in meeting their basic needs, networks of family, friends, and community organizations have been disrupted and may not be quick to resume. Older people are also at risk of serious human rights abuses, including death and injury from indiscriminate weapons, targeted executions, physical violence and rape, humiliation and degrading treatment, and looting and destruction of their property.²

Currently, USAID does not have a specific policy regarding older people as a vulnerable group. We encourage USAID to consider developing such a policy. We also urge USAID to require its implementing partners to consistently include the needs of older people in Ukraine and other war zones and disasters among its priorities, including by ensuring:

- Humanitarian support, including food, water, medicine, healthcare, psychosocial support services, to older people who have not left their homes, including those living in nursing homes and other residential facilities or hospitals.
- Evacuation efforts that include older people, including through targeted outreach, and are accessible to older people, including those with disabilities.
- Basic services for all older people who have fled their homes, including food, sanitation, shelter, and information that is responsive to their particular needs.
- Respect for family reunification and facilitation of older people to reunite and settle with family members, if that is their wish.

¹ US Department of State Website, "United with Ukraine," March 22, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/united-with-ukraine/#humanitarian-assistance>.

² Human Rights Watch, Global: Older People at Heightened Risk in Conflict, February 23, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/23/global-older-people-heightened-risk-conflict>, and, on Ukraine, Human Rights Watch, Ukraine: Older People No Longer Invisible Casualties, May 2, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/02/older-people-no-longer-invisible-casualties-war-ukraine>.

- Regular data collection disaggregated by age, gender, disability, and other relevant characteristics. Age data should include specific older age cohorts.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you regarding these important issues. We thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Ramsey Alwin, President & CEO, National Council on Aging

Cindy Cox-Roman, CEO, HelpAge USA

Lindsay A. Goldman, CEO, Grantmakers In Aging

Jo Ann Jenkins, CEO, AARP

Peter Kaldes, President & CEO, American Society on Aging

Stephanie Lederman, Executive Director, American Federation for Aging Research

Katie Smith Sloan, President & CEO, LeadingAge and Executive Director, The Global Aging Network

CC: Sarah Charles, Assistant to the Administrator, Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs

Humanitarian Overview: Older People and the Conflict in Ukraine

One in four people in Ukraine is over the age of 60. Currently, 7.7 million Ukrainians are internally displaced, with 57 percent of displaced households having at least one older person. Among households that have not relocated, 57 percent also include an older person.³ In many towns most devastated by recent and active hostilities, older people and people with disabilities are the only people who remain.⁴ Older people also remain in nursing homes and residential facilities in conflict areas.⁵

In addition, nearly 5.6 million Ukrainians have fled as refugees. An estimated 9 to 11 percent of them are older.⁶

³ IOM, Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 3 (April 17, 2022), <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/ukraine-internal-displacement-report-general-population-survey-round-3-11-17-april-2022>, and OCHA, Ukraine: Humanitarian Situation Report, April 26, 2022, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2022-04-26_Ukraine%20SitRep%20Humanitarian%20Impact%20final.pdf.

⁴ OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Impact Report, April 4, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-impact-situation-report-1200-pm-eet-4-april-2022>.

⁵ HelpAge, Ukraine Situation Report, April 4, 2022.

⁶ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation, May 3, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>; UNHCR, Refugee Arrivals from Ukraine, April 18, 2022, <https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/868860ac/REACH-Whole-of-Ukraine-Refugee-Border-Monitoring-Update-2022-04-18.pdf> (11 percent reporting traveling with an older person over 65+); and IRC, Rapid Needs Assessment Poland, April 1, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/91748> (9 percent of survey respondents were over 60).

Approximately 32 percent of Ukrainians in need of humanitarian support are older, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (OCHA). Their urgent and longer-term humanitarian needs include access to food, water, medical care, psychosocial support services, adequate shelter, and hygiene.⁷ Many of those displaced report needing assistive devices, including eyeglasses.⁸

⁷ OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Impact Report, April 4, 2022; Help Age, Rapid Needs Assessment, Eastern Ukraine, March 4, 2022, <https://helpageusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Needs-of-older-people-in-Eastern-Ukraine-4-03-22-1.pdf>; HelpAge, Rapid Needs Assessment, Lublin, Poland, April 2, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/poland-needs-older-refugees-2-april-2022>; and HelpAge, Rapid Needs Assessment, Moldova, <https://helpageusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rapid-Needs-of-Older-Refugees-in-Moldova-10-03-22-3-Page-1.pdf>.

⁸ HelpAge Rapid Needs Assessment, Lublin, Poland, April 2, 2022 and HelpAge, Rapid Needs Assessment, Moldova, March 10, 2022.