

# Ukraine Situation Report

May 2024



## Key Figures



**9 million**

older people in Ukraine, out of a total population of 44 million



**14.6 million**

people in need



**6.48 million**

Ukrainian refugees across the world



**3.7 million**

internally displaced persons in Ukraine

## Context

The situation in Ukraine has worsened recently, with intensified conflict causing more people to leave their homes over the past few months. Many of those displaced have found refuge in the eastern parts of the country, especially in Dnipropetrovska and Kharkivska Oblasts. Those over the age of 60 are finding it increasingly hard to make ends meet, access pensions, and tap into the social support systems they desperately need. Also, the high cost of medicine means many are forced to go without necessary treatments.

The ongoing conflict has cast a shadow over the entire country, leading to widespread stress and anxiety. This has, in turn, led to a spike in mental health problems and a growing need for support services that are struggling to keep up with the demand.

Economic worries, concern for the safety of loved ones, the pain of being uprooted from homes, and the distress of being separated from family are

common and deeply felt. A worrying trend is the repeated displacement experienced by many, with about 30% of those aged 60+ having to move multiple times. For those staying in collective shelters, there's a lack of facilities that cater to those with disabilities. In addition, there's a severe shortfall of social workers, making it even tougher for local services to provide needed support.

Older refugees in Poland and Moldova face their own unique challenges, including language barriers that hinder their access to services and information. In these countries, older Ukrainian refugees often grapple with isolation and loneliness, exacerbated by being far from their homeland and communities.

HelpAge's commitment to older people in Ukraine remains unwavering. We are initiating new projects and extending our presence into additional regions, including Zakarpattia in the western part of the country.

# Ukraine

## Program delivery since Feb. 2022

- **28,155 older people** who have mobility issues and are often isolated are being provided with home-based care from trained HelpAge staff to help improve their well-being, maintain independence, and access basic goods and services. Many also receive a range of other assistance, including cash, hygiene kits, and winter items.
- **6,836 older people** regularly visited 15 HelpAge Community Safe Spaces where they could access a range of free support services, including fitness classes, arts and crafts, hairdressing, cultural excursions, and a psychologist. These centers are operational in several locations in Ukraine in the west (Lviv, Ivano Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi Oblasts) and in the east.
- **15,147 older people** received multipurpose cash assistance, which was sent through the Ukrainian post office to cover their basic needs between three to six months.
- **46,476 people** were provided with shelter, food, hygiene items, clothes, transportation, and psychosocial support.
- **10,375 older people with disabilities** received assistive products, including canes, toilet chairs, walkers, and crutches.
- **8,655 winterization kits** were distributed, which included blankets and warm clothes. In addition, 2,261 older people received winter vouchers of between 13,200 Ukrainian Hryvnia (\$360 USD) and 2,590 Ukrainian Hryvnia (\$70 USD) in 2023 to be spent on the purchase of key winter items from Epicentre, a large retailer in Ukraine.
- **1,044 people** received legal consultation on a range of issues, from internally displaced person (IDP) status to disability benefits, from our partner Right to Protection in the east.

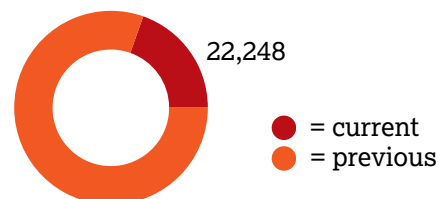
More than  
**153,000**  
people in need were  
directly supported in  
Ukraine.



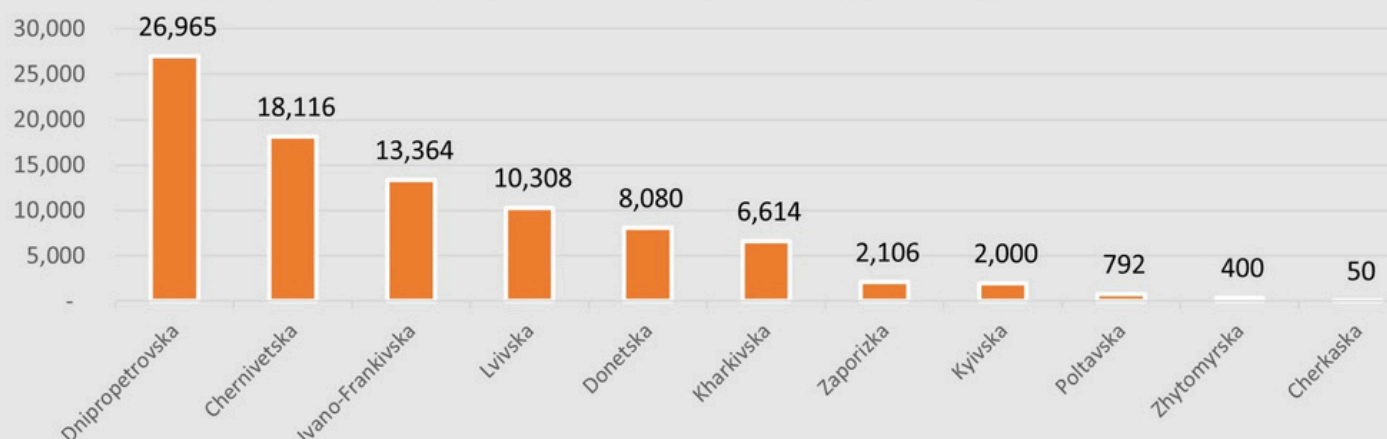
Worked with  
**51**  
local organizations to  
provide support and  
ensure older people's  
voices were heard.



### Current beneficiaries vs. previous



### Breakdown by oblasts since Feb. 2022 (does not include those who benefitted from small partner grants)



## Ukraine advocacy and communications update

To mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2024, HelpAge International released a short film highlighting the voices and experiences of older Ukrainians. Titled "We Are Still Here," the film features stories of three older people in a frontline region of Kharkiv. These stories speak of safety, health, and financial challenges, as well as awe-inspiring resolve and resilience. It is a stark reminder of the war's impact on older people and the importance of including their issues in the response and recovery agenda.



The anniversary also served as a perspective on HelpAge's work in Ukraine over the past two years and, more importantly, the diverse experiences of older people—including the dynamics of their lives and the adjustments they've had to make in order to cope with the new normal. Victoriia Panchenko, program lead in Western Ukraine and one of HelpAge's longest serving staff members, shared her personal experience with the conflict and the evolution of the team's support to older Ukrainians.

## Workshop on older people's rights and needs

HelpAge brought together older Ukrainians in the Dnipropetrovsk region for a workshop aimed at improving their understanding of their rights and needs and informing advocacy efforts for age-related policies and reforms in Ukraine. It also offered a platform for sharing experiences on available support and priorities for long-term solutions.

"Information about humanitarian assistance is available but not always accessible," 65-year-old Olha said. She's been displaced to the Dnipropetrovsk region as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion. "Text updates are usually sent out on social networks, but the problem is that you need a smartphone to sign up for these apps, which a lot of people don't have."

"I have problems with my leg, and I live on the sixth floor of the shelter for displaced people. Of course, the walking cane I received helps, and neighbors are very helpful, but it's still difficult," Oleksandra, 70, notes. She shares a room with five other people and, while she appreciates the togetherness of the community, she wants to be able to afford some privacy.

"Long-term housing solutions are necessary so older people can have some independence and stability," 59-year-old Olha explained. Taking care of her 89-year-old mother, she is not able to work and earn a living. "And we need a fair pension system so people can live in dignity."



## Advocacy with the government of Ukraine

In the reporting period, HelpAge was formally invited by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine to join a number of working groups, alongside the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We have started attending two working groups convened by the deputy-minister for social policy: a working group on home-based care and a working group on improving legislation around the development of social services for supported living.



## Trainings and workshops



HelpAge's recent initiatives in Ukraine highlight our commitment to gender equality and safeguarding measures to protect older people from harm, abuse, and distress.

In December 2023, HelpAge's Voice and Gender Workshop convened 21 participants from HelpAge Ukraine and

five partners to gain a deeper understanding of gender mainstreaming and integrating it into Ukraine humanitarian programs and organizational structures. They used their knowledge of the setting they operate in to strengthen cooperation and amplify community voices. Key takeaways included tools for gender equality, stakeholder mapping for advocacy, and conflict sensitivity principles.

In March 2024, we held a training of trainers on safeguarding, ensuring our staff and partners are equipped to protect at-risk older adults from harm. Discussions covered core principles and standards, including protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. We prioritize accountability and dignity in all our efforts.

Additionally, our Gender and Inclusion Advisor participated in the Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network meeting, emphasizing our commitment to upholding the highest standards of protection and ensuring at-risk older people are safe from sexual exploitation, harm, and abuse.



### ***"My life is forever changed"***

After the death of her husband a few years ago, 74-year-old Halyna lives alone in Kryvyi Rih—a town in the east of the country more than two years into the war.

"My life is forever changed. I now live from one anxiety attack to another. Most of the young people have left and a lot of my friends have died. I now sit alone on the bench outside where we used to gather."

Halyna has a disability that limits her mobility. However, she tries to remain active. To deal with the stress and find some company, Halyna attends classes at her local HelpAge Community Safe Space.

"I've always found handiwork very soothing. Sirens would start blaring outside and I would reach for my embroidery knit, like some crazy person," she laughs. "Then I thought, why do it alone when I can do it with others!"

# Poland

## Program delivery since Feb. 2022

- **3,837 at-risk refugees** received cash assistance. This involved three different rounds of distributions implemented by The Polish Center for International Aid in July–December 2022, October–March 2023, and April–August 2023.
- **10 local initiatives** were selected by our partner, Association E, and launched in 9 different regions of the country. These partners were selected due to their strong presence in the community with many working closely with the local government.

**4,392**

people in need were directly supported through local partners in Poland.



# Moldova

## Program delivery since Feb. 2022

- **20,216 people** in Moldova were provided with food. This includes refugees from Refugee Accommodation Centers across Moldova, who were provided with three hot meals a day.
- **2,194 people** received food packages, including dried fruits, nuts, canned fish, coffee, and porridge.
- **6,375 people** received personal hygiene kits. The content of the kits took into consideration the gender and age of the recipients. The individual hygiene kits included items such as cream, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, shower gel, powder detergent, protective masks, wet wipes, and socks.
- **3,905 people** were provided with dignity packs on arrival at the 32 collective centers, which included items such as a comb, flashlight, bath towel, manicure scissors, menstrual pads, razor blades, deodorant, socks, hand cream, and rope bags.
- **2,462 people** were provided with winterization kits with blankets and winter clothes. In addition, 100 received cash for winter.
- **8,094 older people** were given access to psychosocial, legal, counseling, and socialization services in several HelpAge Community Safe Spaces.
- **4,364 people** received food, hygiene, or medical vouchers.
- **1,269 people** received multipurpose cash assistance.
- **572 older people** received assistive products such as canes, wheelchairs, crutches, shower seats, and toilet seat supports.
- **2,388 people** were provided with gender-based violence (GBV) training. Meanwhile, 766 received support from a range of GBV services.

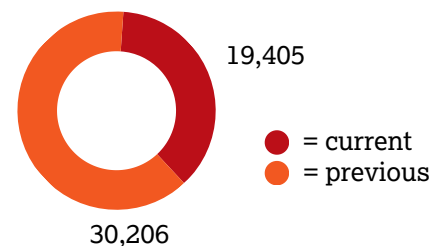
More than

**49,600**

people in need were directly supported in Moldova.



### Current beneficiaries vs. previous



## Communication

Visit [helpageusa.org/ukraine-crisis/](https://helpageusa.org/ukraine-crisis/) to get the latest updates on HelpAge's work, including testimonies from older people and our colleagues on the ground in Ukraine; needs assessments; interviews; and new releases.