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How would you describe the humanitarian situation in Ukraine today?

The ongoing humanitarian crisis is probably the worst since the Second World War. The sheer scale of the displacements and humanitarian needs is immense. As of the month of August 2022, around 18 million people across Ukraine were in need of protection and assistance. The context is constantly changing and continues to deteriorate.

Over 70% of the people in need are located in the worst-affected zones. Many of them are unable to move away and it is extremely difficult to safely access aid. The majority of displaced persons are women, children and elderly people who have left their homes, sons, fathers and husbands behind (due to the national mobilisation). Furthermore, due to the mass displacements and family separations, there is a high risk of gender-based violence, people trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Ukraine conflict is not only affecting the country itself, but has also created a global food security emergency which is rapidly worsening, in particular in certain regions of Africa and the Middle East.

What are the prospects for the future, in particular this winter?

If the front line continues to shift, more and more people will be affected by the fighting, which will lead to a continuous increase in the humanitarian needs and new waves of displacement.

Taking into account the steep rise in fuel and food prices, the harshness of the Ukrainian winters and the reduced gas supply from Russia, the future for Ukraine, in particular this winter, does not look very hopeful.

How is TGH positioned to respond to the population's needs (in other words, how has the organisation decided which activities to deploy)?

The TGH team is planning for an eventual deterioration in the situation in Ukraine and the corresponding emergency plans have been drawn up and put into place.



With support from various donors, TGH Ukraine has launched a protection intervention providing multipurpose cash assistance, psycho-social support and legal advice, with a specific focus on displaced persons and populations living in hard-to-reach areas.

What actions have been implemented and what results have been achieved so far? (implementation, difficulties encountered, acceptance from the population etc.)

In order to respond effectively to this crisis, TGH has opened four offices in the country: in Lviv, Cherkasy, Vinnytsa, and Dnipro. The team has grown considerably. TGH's programme strategy is focused on providing unrestricted financial assistance in the following thematic sectors: Protection, Shelter, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. These activities are either directly implemented by TGH or through national partners. TGH's partnerships aim to improve and build local actors' emergency response capacities.

The NGO has been working in Ukraine since 2015. How has this benefited the response?

Having worked in Ukraine since 2015, TGH has developed a capacity to implement high-quality humanitarian programmes with a high level of acceptance from the local authorities and communities. This has allowed TGH to establish solid partnerships with numerous national organisations in the country. When the war broke out in Ukraine, these partnerships and this experience facilitated TGH's operational deployment, as well as the identification of, and access to, isolated beneficiaries in the most difficult-to-reach oblasts. ■



Visit by the Fondation de France and TGH of the modular camps for displaced persons, Lviv, Ukraine, 2022 © Lucien Lung



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Ukraine

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UHF beneficiaries interview in Zhovanka, Donbass, Ukraine, March 2021 © A. Hetman

There have been more than 13,500 civilian casualties in Ukraine, 5,600 dead and 7,946 injured, according to official figures which are no doubt underestimates.¹ Around 6.6 million persons have been internally displaced, and almost as many have sought refuge throughout Europe. Thousands of homes and buildings have been bombed, economic activity has been brought to a halt, and access to water, food and health services in certain regions has been compromised, in particular in the east of the country. Since the war was triggered by Russia on 24 February 2022, the UN has deemed the humanitarian situation in Ukraine to be “extremely alarming”. Europe is facing its most serious crisis of the 21st century, and with no resolution to the conflict in sight, the toll is likely to increase still further. According to the United Nations, a new wave of displacements is expected in the run-up to winter, bringing with it an increase in the humanitarian needs.

Described as a “special military operation” by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, this invasion is part of a lengthy deterioration in relations between the two countries since 1991, following the break-up of the USSR. A complex web of geopolitical, economic, historical and identity issues led to Russia’s annexation of the Crimea region and destabilisation of the Donbas region in 2014 (with the proclamation of independent republics). According to OCHA, the UN’s humanitarian arm, more than 13,000 people died in this conflict, including 3,300 civilians, and nearly 9,000 were injured.

The period 2015 to 2021 was one of latent conflict with sporadic fighting along the line of contact separating the territories in the hands of the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk from the rest of the Donbas still under the control of the Ukrainian government. An active supporter of the separatist “republics”, Russia launched a “special military operation” on 24 February 2022, justified on the pretext of Ukraine’s supposed intention to join NATO. This operation was in fact an extremely violent invasion, an open declaration of Russia’s ambition to put an end to Ukraine’s emancipation, even if the price to pay is mass destruction and thousands of civilian casualties.

TGH’s response to the Ukraine crisis

Well before the Russian hostilities launched this year, TGH had been operating programmes in Ukraine since 2015, notably in the Donbas, close to the line of contact which separates the separatist areas from the areas controlled by the Ukrainian government. After conducting needs assessments the same year, the following year TGH organised its

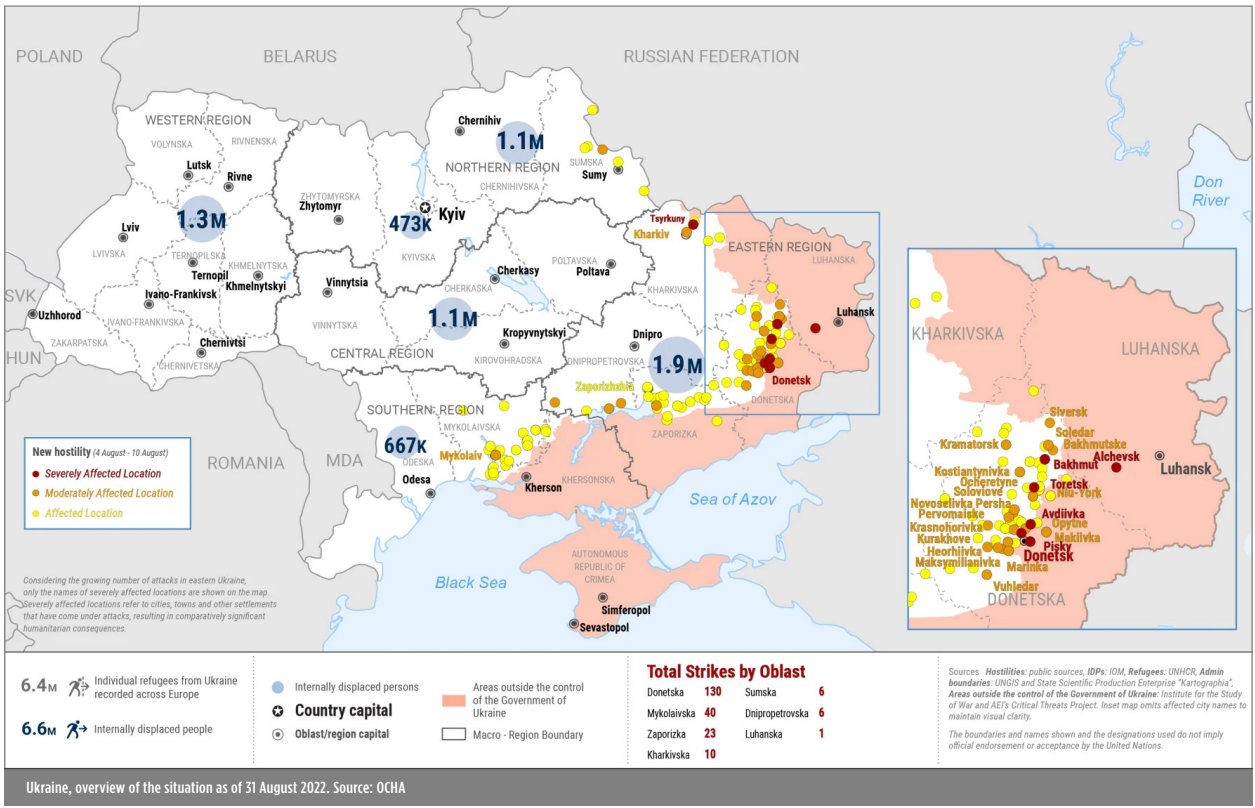
first actions in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, providing the populations of the villages located along the front line with electronic vouchers which can be used to purchase food and other goods from local stores involved in the programme.

This voucher assistance system was subsequently completed with a “vouchers for work” project aiming to reinforce social cohesion. People no longer able to support themselves were recruited in their communities to carry out home visits to elderly and isolated persons and in return received vouchers.

At the start of the Russian invasion, the TGH team left its offices in Kramatorsk in the east of the country for Lviv in the west. Their expertise, understanding of the country and their network meant they were rapidly able to adapt to the changing situation.

TGH very quickly developed an emergency response adapted to the needs caused by the war and the population displacements. ■

¹ - Guerre Ukraine: plus de 5 600 civils tués en six mois, UN news, 24 August 2022, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2022/08/1125872> (article in French)



Today, TGH’s activities are focused on the following areas:

- Implementing **unrestricted financial assistance**. This assistance is paid to the most vulnerable people directly with no conditions attached so they can purchase food, hygiene and health items or meet other needs.
- Access to **psycho-social support** thanks to consultations with mobile teams of psychologists, in particular targeting displaced persons. Remote consultations with psychologists are provided via a hotline. The protection actions implemented also include activities specifically targeting children.



- The implementation of **legal assistance** for displaced persons to help them exercise their rights.
 - **Financial and/or material support** for institutions and sites hosting displaced persons.
 - **Support for the initiatives led by Ukrainian civil society organisations**, both existing and new partners.
- These activities target nearly 100,000 people in 14 regions («oblasts») of Ukraine. Their implementation requires close monitoring of changing needs and preparing additional actions, such as rehabilitating or resizing infrastructure to cope with demographic changes.

