

STATUS
Ukraine – One year of war
Report on DRC's crisis response

Photo: Svitlana Vovk

We have reached 3 million ukrainians

I recently visited several areas in southern Ukraine. It is difficult to put into words the extent of the devastation I saw. After many months of intense fighting and shelling, several areas in the south of the country have recently become accessible. There, I saw how entire villages in ruins.

I have seen how the war has destroyed residential areas, schools and critical infrastructure. And people. And I have seen missiles sticking out of the ground close to houses. It is frightening to know what other unexploded remnants of war lie hidden beneath the rubble and snow. The need for mine clearance and long-term humanitarian support is enormous.

At the moment, the need for military support dominates the news, but it is important to stress the immense need for both emergency and long-term humanitarian support. Even if the war ended tomorrow, the humanitarian crisis would continue, and it could take decades for many people to get back on their feet. At the same time, mines and unexploded ordnance will threaten lives and livelihoods far into the future.

On the following pages you can read about our work to support displaced Ukrainians in Ukraine, neighbouring countries, Denmark, and the rest of Europe. DRC Danish Refugee Council have reached more than 3 million ukrainians with emergency aid and assistance the past year.

We also give voice to some of the people whose lives were changed forever on 24 February 2022. People for whom your support has made a huge difference. They share stories of trying



to spare children from seeing bodies in the streets, of sheltering from bombs in tiny basement rooms for days and sometimes weeks at a time, and of losing everything and starting over in a foreign country, not knowing if they can ever return home. Nor if they have any home to return to.

According to UNHCR estimates, 17.6 million people in Ukraine are in urgent need of emergency aid. One-third of Ukraine's 44 million people are either internally displaced or have fled the country. The consequences of the war in Ukraine are many and extend far beyond the country's borders. The humanitarian situation worsens and needs grow as the war continues.

Thank you very much for your support over the past year. It has made a huge difference.

Yours sincerely,
Charlotte Slente

Secretary General, DRC Danish Refugee Council

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After many months of intensive fighting and shelling, several areas in the southern part of Ukraine have recently become accessible. DRC Secretary General Charlotte Slente recently visited the area.

Food, shelter, and psychosocial support

The need for humanitarian support evolves, reflecting the changes of warfare and its impact on civilians. Thanks to flexible funding, we at DRC Danish Refugee Council are able to adapt our response to match the needs.

On 24 February 2022, Ukrainians' worst fears were realised: their country was suddenly under attack. The lives they had known were, overnight, marked by fear and an uncertain fate. In a matter of weeks, millions of people fled their home areas that had turned into war zones. Many have crossed borders into neighbouring countries and beyond, while others have sought refuge in more peaceful regions inside Ukraine. Others have had no chance to flee at all and are trying to cope as best they can while missiles and tanks threaten their lives.

Emergency aid

Since the outbreak of war, we have been providing multi-faceted humanitarian aid in large parts of the country. We have contributed to meet the most basic and urgent needs for food, blankets, and hygiene items such as diapers and soap through the distribution of relief kits and cash grants, but also through local partners who have, for example, set up food distribution sites for displaced and homeless people in areas we have not been able to access ourselves.

We have distributed building materials and helped renovate and furnish dormitories, schools, and day-care centres, as well as renovating private homes and apartment blocks where thousands of displaced families have found refuge.

Legal advice, psychosocial support, and awareness-raising on the dangers of leftover explosives are also part of our wide-ranging interventions that have a vital impact on war-affected

DRC Ukraine

DRC Danish Refugee Council has been present in Ukraine since 1998. Since 2014, DRC has responded to growing humanitarian needs in the country through the provision of protection, legal assistance, economic recovery, and humanitarian disarmament and peace-building activities. After 24 February 2022, DRC adjusted, rescaled, and expanded these responses, led by our more than 350 staff and a strong network of local partners.

Ukrainians across the country.

Mine clearance and clean drinking water

Our years of experience in humanitarian demining, particularly in eastern Ukraine, have put us in a key position to ensure safe movement and return to war-affected areas. In spring 2022, we partnered with the Ukrainian authorities to clear unexploded ordnance after military battles. Since then, we have carried out extensive clearance of missiles, landmines, grenades, and small arms, including in the capital Kyiv.

Further south, in the hard-hit city of Mykolaiv, we have secured sustainable supplies of clean drinking water for residents. 50 water treatment plants have been set up, with more on the way. Several hard-hit areas in southern Ukraine have recently become accessible to humanitarian assistance again. Months of fighting have caused massive destruction and there is a widespread need for humanitarian support. That's why we have expanded our presence, with a new office in Mykolaiv enabling us to better deliver much-needed crisis relief and reconstruction.

In the past year, our staff in Ukraine has doubled to just over 350 employees, with more being hired, and with the help of an extensive network of local partners, we are reaching war-affected people in large parts of the country.

These efforts, in both acute crisis relief and durable solutions, are made possible by the massive, and not least flexible, support of a wide range of foundations, institutions, and private individuals. This flexibility - that funds are not earmarked for pre-defined purposes - has been crucial to our ability to seek out and effectively meet the needs of war-affected Ukrainians. Needs that are constantly changing, depending on the time of year, the course of the war, and many other factors.



Previously, the residents of Mykolaiv struggled to find clean water. Now they can collect five liters per person every day from the newly established plant converting salt water into clean drinking water.

Plants turn salt water into drinking water

50 new water treatment plants now provide clean drinking water for the residents of the heavily bombed city of Mykolaiv. Secretary General Charlotte Slente visited the city, where she met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"For several months, we only had access to salt water," says 55-year-old Ivan.

He lives in the city of Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the war, the city has been subjected to massive bombardments that have driven thousands of people to flee and into homelessness.

"The violent attacks on infrastructure have left many cities without access to water, power and heating," explains DRC Secretary General Charlotte Slente during her recent visit to the war-torn country.

Here she met with the Danish Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister, as well as Ukrainian President Zelenskyy at one of the new water treatment plants supplied to Mykolaiv by DRC Danish Refugee Council.

Denmark has taken on a leading role in the reconstruction of Mykolaiv Oblast, at the request of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who addressed the Danish Parliament in March 2022.

Clean water prevents serious health hazards

With support from several foundations, private citizens, and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DRC has helped establish 50 water treatment plants in Mykolaiv, with more on the way.

Ivan, 55, said he spent nine months in a homemade shelter with 150 adults and children while the city was under attack. He lives close to the newly established water treatment plant, which makes a crucial difference in providing access to clean drinking water.

Ivan and the other residents can collect five liters of water per person per day at the treatment plant. This means clean drinking water, but also water for cooking and improved hygiene - all essential to sustain life and prevent serious health hazards.

The attacks on civilian infrastructure in many parts of the country means that many people have inadequate access to water, power and heating. Thus, there is still a great need for increased help across Ukraine.

UKRAINE



UKRAINE

A city without doors, windows, and half of its citizens

The remaining residents of Mykolaiv are struggling through a winter of freezing temperatures. For many, the main aim is to get through the day and organise practicalities - from finding drinkable water to staying warm and sourcing food, and hoping for electricity to heat water, charge phones and connect with loved ones.

By night, the streets of Mykolaiv are silent, dark, and nearly empty, with few people around and only some scattered lights in the windows – typically candles. When the sun rises, a different urban environment reveals itself.

The windows and doors of thousands of homes, shops, and offices are boarded up – either repairing the damage from previous blasts or protecting against future attacks. These emergency repairs with plywood are an interim solution, making spaces more protected, liveable, and easily heated.

Based on the water consumption, local authorities in Mykolaiv estimate that 300,000 of the pre-war population of 600,000 have left the city to find refuge elsewhere or have passed away.

Pointing to an apartment block that has been ripped apart by a blast, is a woman we meet in the street.

“The missile hit the block right here at 3 o’clock in the middle of the night,” she says: “There was a 16-year-old boy in his bed next to the living room. He survived, but both his parents were killed. The boy now lives elsewhere in Ukraine with his grandparents.”

Just like the 16-year-olds apartment are thousands of homes uninhabitable today. Some of Mykolaivs citizens find a tempo-

rary home in one of the shelters for the internally displaced. We at DRC Danish Refugee Council has amongst other projects contributed to a community-based and locally driven initiative that is restoring and improving the ground floor of a dormitory with ready-to-use rooms, communal bathrooms, and spaces for cooking. Around 13 rooms were ready as of mid-winter, including some with easy access and facilities for people with disabilities.

Rooms offered for free

The rooms are offered as interim housing free of cost to internally displaced people and others who have lost their homes and want to return to Mykolaiv. Not all floors are renovated yet, but the plan is that the tenants will improve and repair those. The hope is, that housing like this can attract skilled workers who are willing and able to help rebuild the city.

Electricity outages – some planned to reduce pressure on the damaged grid, but others unexpected after attacks - are the order of the day in Ukraine. As an Achilles’ heel of a functional state, energy infrastructure continues to be targeted, leaving transformer stations and power grids damaged and out of order. The disruption is severe.

To seal up missing windows and doors that have been blown out by bomb blasts, we have provided 100,000 m2 of plywood to the City Council of Mykolaiv with financial support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“Supplying plywood and enabling this emergency repair is a simple intervention that has had great impact. It has proven to be of critical importance, not least as winter temperatures are plunging and with people struggling to heat up their homes,” says Julian Zakrzewski, Country Director of DRC in Ukraine.

Thousands of homes in Mykolaiv Oblast are now uninhabitable. In other homes, shops and offices, windows and doors are often missing, and are now blinded by plywood as emergency repairs to damage caused by explosions. Plywood is a temporary solution for cordoning off and to protect spaces and enable people to better heat parts of their homes.



There was a 16-year-old boy in his bed next to the living room. He survived, but both his parents were killed.

Woman from Mykolaiv

Risk education saves lives in war-torn communities

What do you do if you find a mine, the remains of a rocket or other ammunition? Our team in Ukraine provide knowledge about safe behaviour around explosive remnants of war. Both online and in sessions around Ukraine, where hundreds of thousands have gained vital knowledge about the hidden dangers lurking.

Over the past year, fighting and attacks in Ukraine have left thousands of hidden and deadly threats in places previously safe for children, young people and adults: residential areas, playgrounds, roads, fields, forests and lakes.

“In addition to locating and marking mines, there is also a lot of work involved in teaching children and adults, in the cities and in the countryside, about all the risks associated with the remnants of war and how to react if you encounter anything resembling the remains of ammunition, bombs or mines. We also work with this in large information programmes and through education in schools and villages,” says Rune Persson, coordinator specialising in mine and ammunition clearance, DRC Danish Refugee Council.

Since 24 February 2022, many hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine have participated in DRC’s digital courses, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE), on war residues and the risks associated with it. In addition, our EORE teams in Ukraine have conducted more than 120 on-location educational sessions, advising thousands of people on safe behaviors around explosive remnants of war.

“Risk education activities often go together with our surveys. When our survey teams finish their search for explosive ordnance, we understand where the contamination is and where we need to prioritize risk education sessions,” says Ksenia, DRC EORE Facilitator, about her work in Ivankivska i Kyiv Oblast.

The color of danger and blood

Zaruddia village, 80km from Kyiv and home to more than 200 people, is one such settlement. The scene of active fighting in spring 2022, Zaruddia is heavily contaminated with explosive remnants of war.

“Signs about mine dangers are red – the color of danger and blood. For greater visualisation, it also has bones painted on it. This way, it is clear exactly what can await you if you enter this area,” explains Ksenia.

In Olyva, a village of 400 inhabitants, Oksana, a representative of the local authorities, shares that she has seen some of the mines depicted in the DRC risk education materials. Soon after reporting her findings, they were removed and destroyed by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine.

“Active hostilities took place here. The village was shelled, and such sessions are useful for people because they find a lot of explosive remnants of war. There are still areas with a lot of ammunition on the ground. These are marked with signs and red tape, and we are warned not to go there,” Oksana adds.

Family car hit anti-vehicle mine

In the village school we conducted several risk education sessions for children. DRC specialists try to engage children of all ages, using simple vocabulary, cartoons, and gamification. The school principal, Olena, explains how such sessions are extremely important in reducing the risk of deaths and injuries among civilians. She shares the story of a local family who ran over an anti-vehicle mine on a road near Olyva, killing the mother and her baby. Another accident happened when a farmer tried to cultivate his contaminated land. Luckily, he survived.

“Thanks to these risk education sessions, the villagers are more aware of the dangers they may face around their neighborhood and how to minimise the risks,” Olena says.



**Thanks to these risk education sessions,
the villagers are more aware of the
dangers they may face.**

Olena, school principal



Teaching what to do if you find a mine, the remains of a rocket or other ammunition is essential to save lives.



Safe spaces gives children room to talk about fear and grief

In Ukraine's neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania and Moldova, DRC Danish Refugee Council focuses on the mental health of people displaced by the war. As part of this mission, we ensure that there are places for children where they can safely play, learn, and talk about all their difficult emotions.

12 months into the war, bombings continue to threaten the lives of children, women, and men, sending them fleeing into shelters or to the front lines to fight. Many Ukrainians continue to escape to neighbouring countries seeking a safe place to stay, as close to their homeland as possible. Most of those crossing borders are mothers, children, and the elderly. The influx of refugees has presented challenges to neighbouring countries.

Poland, Romania, and Moldova are the neighbouring countries that have received the most refugees from Ukraine. Poland is

the primary country of asylum in Western Europe for Ukrainians, and it is therefore also the neighbouring country where our work is most extensive. We work primarily in major cities and at border crossings, where many displaced Ukrainians gather.

Creativity, play and community

A major focus area for our work in Ukraine's neighbouring countries is mental health. Among other things, we ensure psychosocial help for children and adults to support them in processing their traumatic experiences and the uncertainty of their current situation. We have also established special areas for children where they can safely participate in activities, socialise, play, learn and express emotions through creativity, stories, and community. In Romania and Moldova, we have a particularly strong focus on the protection of Ukrainian children and women.

Ensuring that people from Ukraine receive protection and humanitarian aid is an important principle for our work in the neighbouring countries. Our approach is multi-pronged: We

support national authorities, civil society, and the UN in dealing with the influx of displaced persons. And we support local actors in providing protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and host communities. Advantages of working with local partners include their deep knowledge of the local context and cultural and legal conditions.

Ukrainian diaspora groups are also an important local partner for us in the neighboring countries, as well as in Denmark and wider Europe. They are often the first point of contact for Ukrainian refugees and offer a valuable existing social community.

Winter cold hits hard

Many Ukrainians fled their homes with few possessions and little money. At the same time, the winter cold has hit hard in the midst of an energy crisis and global inflation, compounding the uncertainty of their situations. Therefore, ensuring access to basic supplies for the most vulnerable, including winter items such as warm clothes, is a priority.

We also provide legal support and information, adequate shelter, cash, and initiate a variety of other efforts addressing different humanitarian needs.

Safe and dignified humanitarian aid is an important principle for us. Therefore, our efforts in Ukraine's neighboring countries include training local organisations to be able to handle challenges that arise in working with the many new refugees. This is possible thanks to flexible funds. Through DRC's courses and seminars, local partners have, among other things, learned about the global Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), with a focus on responsibility towards the populations involved, as well as on protection of children and other particularly vulnerable groups.



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NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

From surviving in basements to safety in Moldova

For weeks – and in some cases months – in a row, underground spaces, storage rooms and small basements in Ukraine take on the role of bomb shelters. Spending time underground beneath houses, in metros and parking lots are protection measures known all too well across the country after war broke out.

Millions have been displaced since 24 February 2022 – both internally and across borders, where most refugees are women, children, and elderly. Many have fled to the neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, and Moldova. Here, DRC works to support refugees and enhance efforts to accommodate them in government-run centers.

“All the time, we heard the shelling”

17-year-old Anton is happy about being away from the bombing, but sad about being too far from the home, friends, and life in Ukraine that he misses. He recalls the last few weeks in his war-stricken homeland:

“There was just enough space to fit nine people in the tiny basement – and some had also brought their small pets with them. We – my parents and I – spent two weeks there, crammed together during some of the worst bombings in Mykolaiv we had seen since the war began. All the time, we heard the shelling. Sometimes we went out to do a little shopping in some of the markets and shops that were still working at the time.”

Anton and his parents left Ukraine in mid-March when the bombings near their home in Mykolaiv intensified. They drove through Odesa and were allowed to cross the border into Moldova.

Anton is under 18 and his father is 66, meaning both are just outside the age range that would otherwise oblige them to serve in the army. So far, Ukrainian women remain exempted from conscription and can freely leave the country.

“We came to Chisinau and were given a room here at the Refugee Accommodation Center,” says Anton in fluent English. They spent some time at the shelter but then took a flight to the United States where they have relatives and friends. After almost five months there, their money was running out and they needed a car to get around, so they decided to return to Moldova – also to be closer to home in Ukraine.

Creating more space

The Refugee Accommodation Center in Chisinau can host 220 people. Receptive capacity has nearly doubled since DRC began supporting the center with new bunkbeds, washing machines, stoves and kitchen supplies, and other items that allow residents to better manage their daily lives. They will be able to stay there as long as they need to.

“We have what we need here for now. There is space for us, warm water, and food,” says Anton’s mother. “There are also house rules to make sure that we all contribute to keeping the place clean and in good order,” she tells.

The Moldovan government runs 66 Refugee Accommodation Centers across the small country of 2.6 million people, and all but one – the center in Chisinau – opened in response to the February 2022 outbreak of war in Ukraine. The Chisinau center was originally a kindergarten but was converted into Moldova’s national refugee asylum center in 2003.

Anton’s father has heard news about their neighborhood back in Ukraine, which was recently hit by 10-15 rockets. He is still not sure how much damage has been done to their house, or how much of it is even left standing. He hopes to be able to return home soon, but still has no idea when that will be possible.

Anton will turn 18 in November 2023. Unless the war is over, he will then be asked to join the army. He wants to return to Ukraine and fight for his country, without concern for the many risks and dangers: ‘I’m not afraid of anything anymore’, says Anton.



I’m not afraid of anything anymore.

Anton, 17 year old ukrainian

NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES



A look down the stairs to an impromptu shelter in a basement in Mykolaiv. At one point, nine people, two dogs and a cat were together in the tiny space.

Emergency shelter in Poland for refugees from Ukraine

With millions of people fleeing war in Ukraine, temporary shelter is critical for people displaced within the country and across borders.

Less than 14 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, an emergency shelter in Poland has room for up to 50 refugees at a time. It is often the first peaceful place to relax and settle for the night. People here are relieved - but also tired, traumatized, and extremely vulnerable. Most have no destination, plan for their next step or any other place to stay. The refugees from Ukraine arrive with few belongings - mostly clothes for children and a few documents in bags, suitcases and what they were able to carry when they left home with little notice.

They tell stories of long and hazardous journeys with little sleep, attempting to flee multiple times, and spending days and nights

in trains or cars crossing the borders to Romania, Moldova, and in this case Poland, in search of refuge from the war.

A safe place to stay

The shelter opened in August 2022 and is run by the Association of Ukrainians in Poland. In November alone, they received 617 refugees from Ukraine. At the shelter, refugees get meals, hygiene kits, and guidance on where to find psychological counselling, medical aid, legal advice, support in finding a job or long-term accommodation, and other help to address a wide range of concerns and questions.

DRC Danish Refugee Council supports local aid organisations and initiatives such as the Association of Ukrainians in Poland to enable them to offer safe and dignified shelter at key locations.

In a shelter close to the border between Poland and Ukraine, refugees receive meals, hygiene packages and guidance on where to find psychological support, medical care, legal advice and help finding a job and long-term accommodation.



Elena: 'I thought that we would die'

Among the women in the shelter in Przemysl is 62-year-old Elena, along with her daughter and two grandsons. The boys are four and 11 years old. Elena has two sons as well, but they remain in Ukraine.

When the war broke out, Elena was living by herself. But soon after the war started, her neighbourhood was no longer safe.

"My daughter eventually called me. She asked me to move to her place and said that this is serious, and it can get worse."

Elena resisted:

"The problem is that I had a job as a sanitary worker, but I had not worked long enough to be eligible to retire and to claim my right to pension."

She left everything behind. In the part of Zaporizhzhia where her daughter lived, the safety situation worsened. It was no longer safe to stay. Elena recalls the sights and sounds of destroyed houses and towns, of bullets killing children. She tells how her grandchildren were getting more and more scared and panicking, especially when it was dark outside. At night, the air raid alarms warned people to hide, and she would hear shooting, or see buildings being hit. The situation became unbearable. One explosion sent glass shattering inside her son's house.

"I thought this was the end and that we would die."

Elena and her daughter had to make up their mind: stay or leave.

"We were worried about the children. We don't want them to grow up anxious and sick. We want them to look to the future and to believe in love. My daughter asked: 'What are we waiting for?'"

Elena sees now how one of her grandchildren has started playing again after they arrived at the shelter in the Polish town of Przemysl. She's also noticed that her daughter looks calmer:

"Before, she was so stressed that I could hardly recognise her. I also realise that I've forgotten when I slept the last time."

Elena and her daughter are planning to find an interim place for the four of them to settle for a while. Hopefully a place where the children can attend kindergarten and school for as long as they are away from home in Ukraine.

Lisa: Trying to wait out the war

Lisa, 59, is at the shelter in Poland with her daughter and two grandchildren who are four and seven years old. We spoke with her the day after they had fled Ukraine. They arrived with no luggage, as their sudden departure was a matter of survival. Her husband and son-in-law stayed in Ukraine.

Lisa did not want to leave her home. But then the shelling began. And the children became more and more scared. She recalls her own desperation and hysteria, as she calls it. And discussions with her daughter about when to leave.

Just like many others who have endured war and trauma in Ukraine, and who have escaped months of shelling, fighting and constant fear, Lisa has become very sensitive - she says that even the smallest sound will scare her now.

She is grateful for the assistance and the way that they were received in Poland.

"People are so nice here - and sincere. Everything that we need is given to us," she says.

Going to town to find a tailor to fix her backpack with no cash, Lisa recalls asking a tailor for his contact and bank details so that she could pay later. "It's alright," the tailor said, "you can come by another time and pay."

Lisa replied, "but you know I will not come back here anymore".

"So let it be, it is ok," said the tailor.

Lisa and her family still do not know what's next for them: "Most likely we will move on and see what happens," she trailed off.

But all Lisa wants to do is go straight back home when the fighting stops in Ukraine.

A safe haven and transit point

When her young children became afraid to go to school, Svetlana fled the war with them. In neighbouring Romania, more than 113,000 people from Ukraine have been registered as refugees. Svetlana and her sons are three of them.

It's a quiet mid-December day in Bucharest, at the large Reception Centre set up for Ukrainian refugees arriving in the Romanian capital. There are just a few short queues of people, mostly women and children, waiting in line to be registered by UNHCR. This atmosphere, however, is fragile and can quickly change depending on the circumstances in neighbouring Ukraine. When larger groups of refugees arrive after difficult journeys and recent escapes from areas of intense fighting, the atmosphere at the centre is different, and people are marked by fear, exhaustion, and trauma. But here they have finally reached safety, and a system ready to receive, host and console them.

Since the arrival of the first Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, there has been a reception structure, with integrated support and assistance delivered by national and international NGOs, in place. DRC Danish Refugee Council is one of the organisations that has been working with local partners to ensure access to a range of critical protection and legal aid services over the past year.

“Our children started to panic when the first rockets fell. Then the frequent air raid alarms started. Day and night. Sometimes only for some minutes. Sometimes for many hours, meaning that we would have to be in a bomb shelter or as safe a place as possible. And more attacks,” says Svetlana, a Ukrainian refugee woman in Romania. She came here in June 2022 with her children, two boys aged 12 and 6.

Svetlana is a trained engineer and was employed in this capacity until the war broke out, working with the water supply back home in the Black Sea port city of Odesa. Everything changed

after the first attacks, a warning of what would eventually turn their neighbourhood into a battle zone, ruined by months of relentless shelling.

“The kids soon became too afraid to go to school. That was when my husband and I agreed that it was time for me and the boys to leave for some time,” says Svetlana.

‘Nobody is alone here’

Svetlana now works at the Reception Centre in Bucharest, offering help to fellow Ukrainians at one of the information desks. Referral to free psychological counseling is among the services available via the Reception Centre - something that both she and her two boys are benefitting from as they, like many others, struggle to cope with what has happened, and with being far from their father, grandparents and all they know and love.

“There are psychologists attached to the Reception Centre here and many people really need counseling but have never been used to asking for help to solve psychological problems. We are used to either not dealing with personal problems at all, or in other ways and by ourselves, perhaps at best by talking with friends and family. So, being here in this centre where people need all kinds of help, I and other Ukrainians working here end up speaking to some of the many people who need to cry, share concerns, and just unload. I experience that, for many people arriving here, it is somehow easier to speak to me, being Ukrainian and having been through much of the same as them. Nobody is alone here. I know what they are going through, and I can help them sometimes by just listening or sharing my experiences and practical advice from life and living here in Bucharest.”

It is predominantly children, women, and the elderly who have fled the crisis in Ukraine in the past year, resulting in a set of specific and heightened protection risks and concerns present along the journey, in the countries of their first arrival, and other host countries.



Since the first Ukrainians arrived in Romania, there has been a reception structure with integrated support from national and international NGOs. DRC Danish Refugee Council is one of the organizations that works with local partners to ensure access to a range of critical protection and legal services.



'I couldn't let the children look around.

There were tanks and dead bodies on all sides.'

Galina fled the Ukrainian city of Bucha when it was under siege. Today, she lives in an asylum center in Serbia and is worried about her son and 14-year-old grandson, who are still in Ukraine. All she dreams of is peace – that the war will end soon.

"Bucha was under siege – surrounded by Russian tanks. There was no electricity, heat, or water and the temperature in the apartment was eight degrees. There was constant gunfire and infantry everywhere," says 69-year-old pensioner Galina.

All her neighbors went to the basement when the fighting began. But Galina initially refused.

"After a while, the food ran out. We were hungry. We lived like this for almost a month. When I arrived in Serbia and in the asylum centre, I ate bread every day. A lot of bread. I thought I would never get enough bread."

While Galina and her neighbors tried to stay hidden in Bucha, negotiations for civilian passage out of town were ongoing. Some residents were shot as they tried to flee the city. Finally, a message arrived: They could leave the city in case of emergency. It happened so fast that Galina left with nothing but her personal documents.

"We walked about five kilometers to a municipal building where we spent the day, and hid for the night. The next morning a bus came to pick us up but there wasn't room for all of us. I started walking behind the bus with a group of 14 people, including four small children, as well as a pregnant woman. I was told not to let the children look around. There were tanks and dead bodies on all sides," Galina says and continues:

"As we walked past these horrors, I grabbed the pregnant woman's arm and made her look me in the eye and talk to me about her baby so she wouldn't look around."

They had to walk fast to cross the river. On reaching the city of Irpen, Galina caught a bus to Kiev, where she stayed for several days. She recalls how surprised she was by the running water in the city:

"It's like we forgot how to use water. Kyiv looked like another planet – there was running water and food."

From Kyiv, she moved on to Serbia, where a friend lives in the same asylum center. In Ukraine, she was retired and lived alone.

"I had a personal trainer, friends, just a beautiful life. My son lives in Kyiv in Ukraine with his wife, while his ex-wife and my 14-year-old grandson live in another city. I'm so worried about my grandson because he spends hours in the basement while he's at school because of the risk of air strikes."

Her new life in Serbia is difficult for Galina, who does not speak or understand Serbian. One of DRC Danish Refugee Council's initiatives in the asylum centre is to ensure the availability of interpretation services for Ukrainian refugees. For Galina, DRC programmes in the centre have provided an important mental boost: She can once again live an active life, doing yoga and going to church, just like back home in Bucha.

"It's a way to stay true to myself. In the future, I dream of peace. But I don't think peace is coming anytime soon."

"My son lives in Kyiv in Ukraine with his wife, while his ex-wife and my 14-year-old grandson live in another city. I'm so worried about my grandson," Galina says.



We're ready with life-saving help across the European continent

Thanks to our many years of experience and presence, we have been able to respond effectively to the large influx of Ukrainians fleeing war, providing targeted crisis assistance in a number of European countries.

Millions of Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn homeland are looking for security beyond their immediate neighbours. There are many reasons for this. Some have family or other acquaintances in different parts of Europe, while others arrive there by chance. But the vast majority of people have one thing in common: they need help to cope. Help with a safe place to sleep, a hot meal, information and advice. And they need protection.

DRC Danish Refugee Council is present with comprehensive and targeted efforts for Ukrainian refugees in what we in our programs call 'Wider Europe'. This includes the countries of Georgia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Greece, and Italy. Countries that are now experiencing a large influx of Ukrainian refugees - almost 250,000 have crossed these borders since the war broke out.

As in Ukraine and its immediate neighbours, our humanitarian response in these European countries is multifaceted and varies from country to country. Our primary focus is to meet the concrete needs presented in each context. Whether there is a particular need for shelter, legal advice or psychosocial support

often depends on the resources of each country and the priorities of the authorities - but also, of course, on the individual family or person.

When everything is uncertain

One of our major interventions is cash support, which can cover a family's rent, or provide food, medicine and hygiene items for people identified as particularly vulnerable. We help those in need to cope with life as a war refugee with dignity.

But coping is one thing. When you've fled your home and everything you know and suddenly find yourself in a foreign country far away, everything is uncertain: How do I contact the authorities when I don't know the language? What are my rights? Can my children get an education and help to deal with trauma and anxiety?

Our legal advisers in these countries help Ukrainians navigate this jungle of legislation and social services every day. Through legal hotlines and other services, we assist with asylum applications and refer people to the correct services and officials, whether local authorities or other organisations providing services such as hospital treatment, employment assistance, or access to education.

DRC Danish Refugee Council also offers interpretation and English language training, and provides psychosocial support activities, especially for children and women who have been subjected to abuse or suffer trauma.



In a shelter in Serbia, exercise is one of the offers of activities that also help to create a community between the residents.

Fleeing war in Ukraine to find refuge in Serbia

A Ukrainian mother and her teenage son have found refuge from the war at a shelter in Serbia. Here, DRC Danish Refugee Council works with organisations to offer humanitarian assistance, and to help console and mend some of the invisible wounds that refugees carry.

Thousands of people from Ukraine have already passed through the Asylum Centre in Vranje, a town in the south of Serbia. Among them is a family of two, a mother and her teenage son from Donetsk Oblast. They explain how their lives were interrupted by air raid alarms and explosions moving closer and closer, and then by a terrifying silence.

"We packed everything in four hours and left the city via the evacuation zone that was set up. Certain that we could not stay, we simply set off, not knowing where to go at that moment. I will never forget standing in line at the train station, waiting among several thousand other people who were scared and desperate like us," says the woman when we meet her.

"When our wardrobe arrived from Ukraine, the first thing I did was smell those things for a long time," she says.

"We didn't know anything about Serbia before all this, we only knew about the Serbian-American inventor and engineer Nikola Tesla. Suddenly we are here, and are delighted with the nature, and above all with the people."

Support to the displaced

In Vranje Asylum Centre we provide several services for refugees and asylum-seekers, among them monthly cash vouchers allowing displaced residents to prioritise their own needs.

"Of course, financial support means a lot, but the attention given to us by DRC's employees and others is what warms our souls and gives us the strength to move on. There are also recreational activities, trips and visits, and educational workshops ranging from human rights to ecology and yoga exercises," the woman says.

Translation services are provided at the centre during the daytime as language is a significant barrier for newly arrived refugees seeking basic services and support.

At a DRC library at the centre, the mother, and in particular her son, spends hours reading books - especially from the selection of Ukrainian literature on offer.

DENMARK



"I feel like I've lost my identity and personality. I had a job, we lived in a house, and we weren't poor. Here I have to start all over again. Now I'm just Ukrainian. I am no one. And it's tough. It is a kind of normality in the midst of chaos to participate in a MindSpring course," says Anna, mother of two, aged 10 and 14, who fled from Ukraine to Denmark.

DENMARK

Loss, worries, powerlessness and uncertainty about the future

Answers to questions about rights and everyday life in Denmark were one of the first things we at DRC Integration could help the many Ukrainian refugees with. This was followed by, among other things, initiatives targeting employment, psychosocial challenges, and vulnerable families.

"They come with many of the same challenges that we see in other refugees. Loss, worries, powerlessness and uncertainty about the future. Some also have violent experiences in their baggage. Especially those who didn't flee right away."

So says Ane Hamilton, a social worker and coordinator of DRC Integration's psychosocial hotline. She is one of the experts who, based on many years of experience, helps Ukrainian refugees in Denmark to make sense of their new reality, and to overcome uncertainty and settle into a safe community.

Almost 35,000 Ukrainians have been granted a residence permit in Denmark under the Special Act since the war began. Most are women and children, and many are marked by trauma and uncertainty. We offer them advice, support and help socialising.

The circumstances regarding the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark differ greatly from those of other refugee groups that we at DRC had previous experience working with. Ukrainian refugees are governed by a different set of conditions and rights, and they were able to enter Denmark quickly and visa-free, with no registration required. We therefore saw the arrival of many Ukrainian refugees over a short period of time.

A great deal of inquiries

The actual number of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark was initially uncertain, as many of them were not registered by the authorities. In addition, many of them did not go through the asylum system. Certain logistical problems arose as a result: Challenges in accessing food, housing, economic benefits, and healthcare before being granted residence. In addition, refugees could apply for residence through the Special Act, which at the time was a new piece of legislation that caused some confusion.

There was a great deal of interest and many inquiries from Danes who wanted to help, from foundations, local and national authorities, and media. We received many questions about the rights and conditions extended to Ukrainians upon arrival in Denmark. We established hotlines where volunteers, people in contact with Ukrainians, and Ukrainians themselves could call and get answers to their questions about rights and everyday

life in Denmark. And we published a guide with frequently asked questions about rights and conditions in Denmark, translated into Ukrainian and Russian. Asylum counseling also quickly arranged for Ukrainian translators to be present twice a week.

Basic and diverse needs

We have Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking consultants and psychologists, and we have employees who have faced some of the issues that can arise when establishing yourself in a new culture and society. They have a thorough knowledge of the strengths refugees have and the barriers they face.

With initiatives on employment, psychosocial assistance, and aid to vulnerable families, we support the process of integration. Our nationwide network of more than 6,300 volunteers is behind a variety of projects around the country – this is Denmark's largest network of volunteers working exclusively with integration.

The past year has presented many new challenges associated with such a large group of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. The needs are both basic and diverse, and our employees and volunteers have done everything in their power to target their efforts in the best and most effective ways possible.

Initiatives and activities for Ukrainians in Denmark

- Individual guidance on seeking asylum and applying for residency by professional legal advisors.
- Counselling professionals on dealing with trauma, cultural sensitivity etc.
- Language training and social activities for children, youth, adults, elderly, and families and other activities with volunteers supporting integration in local communities.
- Hotlines offering counselling.
- Presentations with basic information about Danish culture, society, and everyday life, as well as presentations about Ukrainian refugees' legal rights and conditions in Denmark.
- Information to Ukrainians about everyday life in Denmark through the web page Ukrainian-in-Denmark.dk.
- Employment initiatives and psychosocial support to help adults and families cope with trauma caused by the war. This includes MindSpring-group sessions.
- Social activities for Ukrainian youth like 'food mekka', sports groups, and youth-to-youth activities organised by our youth organisation DFUNK.

DENMARK

Fellow countrymen help Ukrainian refugees in Denmark settle in

Stress, trauma, and parenting in a new country are recurring topics among the Ukrainian refugees that meet once a week at DRC Integration's MindSpring courses. Here, professionals and Ukrainians living in Denmark help recently arrived refugees get back on their feet in Denmark. The courses are an important resource, and beneficial to refugees' mental and social health.

"My boy refuses to clean up." "Is it true that you are not allowed to leave your child home alone in Denmark before the age of 12?" "Is it okay for me to contact the teacher?"

Four Ukrainian women are gathered around a table at Volunteer Center Aabenraa. They are mothers and, like many other Ukrainian women, have fled to Denmark without their husbands. Now they are faced with raising their children in a different country than they themselves grew up in, alone in a society with norms and unwritten rules they don't know. Through DRC Integration, they participate in a MindSpring group course for parents.

One of the mothers is 34-year-old Vira Ponomarenko. She is from Balakliya, Ukraine, a web designer, and was a new mother when the war broke out. Together with her mother and her then three-month-old son, she fled to Denmark. Today, her son is ten months old and has just started nursery.

"I don't know anything about Danish culture and what children in Denmark are allowed to do. But I would like to know. I don't know how long the war will continue and whether my child will grow up here," she says.

Inspiration to handle the situation

The mothers and their children are in a stressful situation with difficult emotions and trauma. Some children cry a lot and wake

up with nightmares. Others are testing boundaries because the framework for what children are allowed to do is not the same as in Ukraine. For example, three mothers at today's meeting find that it's difficult to get the children to clean up and that they are talking back more often. The parents have a hard time setting boundaries. At the same time, it can be difficult to deal with this because they themselves are stressed.

Helle Kløverhus, educational consultant at DRC Integration, holds MindSpring courses and has individual talks with women who are particularly challenged. And this is an issue she sees often:

"Feeling powerless, some will yell too much or hit. We try to give them a strategy to choose a different way and to understand their child's reactions."

Co-hosting today's meeting is Viktoria Andersen, who are trained to host MindSpring's psychosocial group course for Ukrainian refugees. Love brought her from Ukraine to Denmark 13 years ago. And together with other Ukrainians living here, she is now helping her fellow countrymen who have fled the war get settled in Denmark.

"I am very affected by the war, and I really want to help. I have started over in Denmark and know many of the emotions at stake even though I'm not a refugee," she says.

The courses for Ukrainians are conducted in Ukrainian and Russian. Municipalities, schools, and associations can book a course free of charge. The only requirement is that you can get 8-10 Ukrainian refugees together and have a room for the course to take place. We take care of the rest. There are courses for parents and adults, as well as for children and adolescents.

DENMARK

Vira Ponomarenko knows about the problem of being stressed and feeling like you're falling short: "My son needs my attention, even when I am tired and in a bad mood. So it's nice to get inspiration on how to approach the situation. He should have a good childhood."



DATA 24 FEBRUARY 2022 – 24 FEBRUARY 2023 **TOTAL REACH: 3,036,095**

UKRAINE

NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

WIDER EUROPE

SERBIA

DENMARK

DRC SECTORS	SECTOR COMPONENT	IMPLEMENTATION	GENDER	REACH
PROTECTION	Community-Based Protection Legal Aid Psycho-Social Support Protection Information Management	DRC	55%	53,455
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security Livelihoods	Partners	45%	165,086
HUMANITARIAN DISARMAMENT & PEACEBUILDING	Mine Action	Partners	45%	2,246,556
SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS	Emergency Shelter Permanent housing retrofit for recovery and resilience Shelter coordination and supporting service delivery	124	45%	24,345
WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)	Hygiene promotion			33,671
2,523,113				
PROTECTION	Child Protection Community-Based Protection Psycho-Social Support Protection Coordination Support	DRC	65%	10,032
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security	Partners	35%	2,221
SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS	Shelter Coordination and Supporting Service Delivery	4	35%	2,692
PROTECTION	Child Protection Legal Aid Community-Based Protection Psycho-Social Support Protection Information Management	DRC	66%	345,357
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Financial Inclusion	Partners	34%	1,373
SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS	Emergency Shelter	15	34%	18,849
PROTECTION	Child Protection Protection Coordination Support Protection Information Management	DRC	75%	27,948
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security Financial Inclusion	Partners	25%	6,295
SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS	Shelter Coordination and Supporting Service Delivery	4	25%	456
WATER SANITATION & HYGIENE	Water Infrastructures			2,000
417,223				
PROTECTION	Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid Psycho-Social Support Protection Coordination Support	DRC Partners: 0	61%	1,199
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security		39%	221
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security	DRC Partners: 1	63%	270
PROTECTION	Protection Coordination Support Psycho-Social Support Protection Information Management	DRC Partners: 0	81%	985
PROTECTION	Legal Aid Protection Information Management	DRC Partners: 0	80%	8,721
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Food Security Financial Inclusion	DRC Partners: 1	70%	248
PROTECTION	Child Protection Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid			178
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Financial Inclusion Livelihoods	DRC Partners: 0	75%	165
WATER SANITATION & HYGIENE	Hygiene Promotion		25%	77
PROTECTION	Community-Based Protection Legal Aid Psycho-Social Support Protection Coordination Support Protection Information Management	DRC Partners: 0	N/A	83,695
83,695				

Ukraine

DATA

DRC assists conflict- and displacement-affected people as well as institutions in Ukraine in coping with the effects of the crisis through:

- Implementing directly to meet humanitarian needs
- Complementing activities of local actors to ensure timely and relevant protection and services
- Supporting Ukrainian authorities, civil society, and the UN to respond to the emergency

SECTOR & COMPONENTS	Active / Not active	ACTIVITY	IMPLEMENTATION	TARGET GROUP	REACH
Child Protection Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid Community-Based Protection Protection Information Management Psycho-Social Support Protection Coordination Support	Active	Improve living conditions in 30 IDP collective centres/ temporary shelter facilities Working with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Legal hotline (phone line + social media) Legal information, counselling and assistance Protection monitoring Individual Protection Assistance (IPA) and referrals Psycho-Social Support (PSS) level 2	DRC Partners	Active / Not active IDP Returnee Refugee Other Host Community	53,455
Food Security Financial Inclusion Livelihoods	Active	Cash-for-rent support Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) Small grants to local partners to support Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected people Hot meals/catering for IDPs and conflict-affected people Business and vocational grants	DRC Partners	IDP Returnee Refugee Other Host Community	165,086
Conflict Management Mine Action Weapons and Ammunitions Management Security Governance	Active	Emergency Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) Mass Media Campaigns on social media, radio, and TV Task Impact Assessment (TIA) and Psycho-Social Support (PSS) assistance to Explosive Ordnance (EO) victims and survivors (incl. secondary beneficiaries) In-person and online EORE sessions to conflict-affected	DRC Partners	IDP Returnee Refugee Other Host Community	2,246,556
Planning and Strategy development Emergency shelter Temporary shelter Reconstruction of permanent homes Shelter coordination and supporting service delivery Capacity building and emergency preparedness	Active	Clothes distribution Infant winter clothes kit High thermal blankets Solar lamps Light and medium damaged houses / apartments repair Damaged public infrastructures repair, kindergartens	DRC Partners	IDP Returnee Refugee Other Host Community	24,345
Water supply Water infrastructures Sanitation Solid waste management Hygiene promotion Capacity building and emergency preparedness	Active	Distribution of hygiene kits Distribution of infant hygiene kits	DRC Partners	IDP Returnee Refugee Other Host Community	33,671
TOTAL REACH IN UKRAINE					2,523,113

24 FEB 2022 – 24 FEB 2023

UKRAINE

44 M
Total Population*
(Source: The World Bank)

35.6 M
Remaining in Ukraine
(Source: OCHA)

17.6 M
People in Need
(Source: OCHA)

6.3 M
Internally Displaced
(Source: OCHA)

14.6 M
In Need / Mine Action
(Source: Mine Action Sub-Cluster)

*Population as per 24 February 2022

DRC CORE SECTORS

- PROTECTION
- ECONOMIC RECOVERY
- HUMANITARIAN DISARMAMENT & PEACEBUILDING
- SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS
- CAMP COORDINATION & CAMP MANAGEMENT

COUNTRY SPECIFIC SECTORS

- WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)
- EDUCATION

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DRC present since: 1998 | Staff in Ukraine: ~ 393

♀ (~ 171) National (356) International (37)

♂ (~ 222) International (37)

*Gender not reported, but a significant majority of beneficiaries are women and children

Note: Numbers are not unique and may include instances of people benefitting from multiple sector activities

THANK YOU

to all donors who have supported our crisis response
– both the ones mentioned and the anonymous



Birgit Hunæus Mindefond

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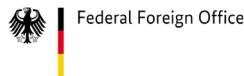
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DRC Danish Refugee Council is a leading international humanitarian displacement organisation, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. We provide protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. We support displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies - and we work with communities, civil society, and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence. Founded in Denmark in 1956.