HIGHLIGHTS

- The total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Crimea and Donbas (Eastern Ukraine) exceeded 460,000 as of 17 November, according to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine.
- The Ukrainian Parliament adopted the long-awaited law ensuring the rights and freedoms of IDPs on 20 October 2014.
- IOM assisted almost 6,000 vulnerable IDPs in 13 regions of Ukraine as of mid-November.
- 160,000 IDPs have registered under the recently adopted Government Decree as of 12 November, the Ministry of Social Policy reports.
- At least 4,035 killed (including 298 from flight MH-17) and 9,336 wounded in eastern Ukraine as of 29 October (source: OHCHR/WHO).

IOM’S RESPONSE TO DATE

IOM is targeting vulnerable IDPs in 13 regions of Ukraine hosting over 65 per cent of the displaced population. With funding from the U.S., Norway, Switzerland, and the UN, IOM has assisted almost 6,000 displaced as of mid-November – the majority being women and children (80 per cent) – with the distribution of relief such as warm clothes and shoes, blankets, household and hygienic items, medicine, school supplies and uniforms. Assistance was provided to IDPs in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Donetsk, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Ternopil, Lviv and Kyiv regions. Furthermore, IOM has been providing IDPs with psycho-social and legal support. IOM is acting through its country-wide network of NGO partners and in close cooperation with government authorities and the UN partners.
Given the high risk of IDPs falling in the hands of traffickers, and reported cases of fraudulent offers for work or refugee status abroad targeted at IDPs, IOM has re-upped its awareness information campaign about the risks of modern-day slavery.

A special leaflet on counter-trafficking was produced for distribution to IDPs. For the time being, 20,000 copies will be distributed in 13 regions of Ukraine by the end of the year as a pilot initiative.
When going to the Luhansk city hemodialysis centre on a hot summer day at the end of July 2014, Tamara*, 58, could hardly imagine that she would neither come home that evening nor for the next three months. Together with the other 50 hemodialysis patients there on that balmy afternoon, she was spirited from the hospital straight to the railway station and transferred to Dnipropetrovsk by the hospital’s medical staff. That was perfect timing, as the very next day the station came under withering artillery fire. In one sense, the patients were relieved to leave Luhansk, since the dialysis center was beginning to be appropriated for the treatment of wounded combatants. Dnipropetrovsk city hospital #4, which agreed to host the patients, sent ten ambulances to meet them at the railway station upon arrival. That was the beginning of their new life and hospital #4 became their new home. Tamara and her fellow patients are wholly dependent on dialysis. Like most of the patients at her advanced stage of kidney failure, she has to spend up to six hours three times a week undergoing this blood filtering procedure pending a kidney transplant. Dialysis is expensive, and requires advanced equipment and medical supplies.
Only a few of the patients from Luhansk can afford to live in Dnipropetrovsk due to their unstable financial situations, says Tamara. From Siverodonetsk (Luhansk Region), she worked for most of her life as a librarian at the local research centre before retirement. She had to commute to Luhansk for hemodialysis and more than 100 kilometers one way because of the lack of a similar centre in her town, which already placed quite a financial burden on her shoulders. Now, since the onset of hostilities, her son has had to move his family of wife and two toddlers to Kyiv Region. He is struggling to make a living working at a small local factory there and waiting for the chance to return to Siverodonetsk. Tamara cannot ask for money from him. And most of the patients are in a similar situation, in that their families cannot support them financially. Moreover, some of them do not even have a place to return to, as their houses have been destroyed.

“We are so grateful to everyone who tried to help us, and especially to the Dnipropetrovsk charitable NGO ‘Promin’, the IOM partner organization in the city who brought us bathrobes and duvet covers. We left Luhansk in the middle of the summer, had no warm clothes with us and the hospital covers are so thin”, said Tamara. Though she found herself in an unexpected and dire situation, she didn’t panic, and not only kept her composure but also managed to lead coordination with other patients and assist in volunteer work. She says they would stand to benefit from improved nutrition and a sufficient supply of medicine. Most of the IDPs from Luhansk and Donetsk wish to return to their homes soon but don’t know whether this could be possible, admits Tamara.

[1] In hemodialysis, an artificial kidney is used to cleanse the patient’s blood by remove waste, extra chemicals and fluid.

* The name has been changed to protect privacy
BACKGROUND ON THE CRISIS

In April 2014, armed groups in the Donbas Region of eastern Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk) began to seize buildings and arms. As a result of ongoing fighting between armed groups and government forces, as well as the events which occurred in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) in March 2014, people have been forced to flee their homes and have become increasingly vulnerable. Most have left with few belongings and are in need of shelter, food and non-food assistance, as their savings are often meager, social benefits take time to re-register, and livelihoods options may be restricted. Concurrently, while grassroots volunteer organizations, civil society and host communities have provided a robust response to the immediate needs of IDPs, the economic crisis in Ukraine has hampered their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance and more durable solutions, in part through employment and community stabilization. Those staying in Donbas Region, particularly in areas affected by fighting, face imminent security threats. The provision of basic services has been disrupted, supplies are increasingly limited, and economic activity has been crippled. Ongoing daily ceasefire violations continue to be reported, despite the ceasefire agreed from 5 September and the nine-point Memorandum agreed in Minsk on 19 September.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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IOM’S ASSISTANCE TO IDPS IN UKRAINE IS SUPPORTED BY:

In line with IOM’s global strategy, the IOM Mission in Ukraine aims at advancing the understanding of the opportunities and challenges of migration in the Ukrainian context. Maximizing those opportunities and minimizing the challenges presented by migratory movements are the guiding principles of all activities and programmes the Mission engages in.

IOM Ukraine fights trafficking in human beings, assists the Government in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons and dealing with irregular migration, improving its migration management system, and creating migrant-inclusive health practices and policies. At the same time, IOM Ukraine engages in exploring and promoting regular channels for Ukrainian labour migrants, harnessing the development potential of migration, disseminating migration information and managing migration movements and integration of ethnic minorities, promoting the benefits of cultural diversity, and counteracting xenophobia and intolerance.

During the 18 years of its presence in Ukraine, IOM has assisted over 300,000 migrants (Ukrainians and other nationalities), potential migrants, victims of trafficking and other vulnerable groups, directly or through its project partners.