

Ukraine

One in four Ukrainians are over 60, leading the current crisis to be referred to as the "oldest humanitarian crisis" in the world. Older people are especially at risk as many are unable or reluctant to leave their homes. As others flee, older people left behind often find themselves with limited support. This is especially concerning in the Donbass region, where the most intensive fighting is occurring. Those who can leave are often undertaking physically and emotionally challenging journeys. Furthermore, those displaced can repeatedly find themselves sleeping in centres which are not set up to cater for their specific needs.

Older people are also more likely to have health conditions and/or disabilities. Despite the need for support, the healthcare system in Ukraine is struggling with staff shortages and at times a lack of medicine. The challenges are especially acute for institutions which provide support to those displaced as they simply do not have the capacity to provide assistance to the numbers needing it. However, despite the risks older people may face, it is critical that their capabilities and wealth of experience are utilised when designing programming.

15.7 million need support (OCHA)

11 million Ukrainians are over 60 (Ukraine Gov)

7.1 million are internally displaced (IOM)

7.2 million refugees have fled Ukraine (UNCHR)

Ukraine: Rapid Needs Assessment of Displaced Older People: In May, HelpAge interviewed 557 displaced people in the oblast of Lvivska, Dnipropetrovska and Chernivetska in Central and Western Ukraine to better understand their needs. To click [here](#) to see the full report.



Case Study: Valentina, 81 years old

Valentina fled from Severodonetsk, where she lived for 50 years, to Dnipro on 31 March 2022 after her house was damaged when a bomb exploded nearby. She fled by bus with her deceased sister's husband, Sasha. She told HelpAge "First we stayed in an orphanage and then with my surviving sister, Tamara, 76, we rented a house. To begin with it looked like a mansion, and it had a lovely garden, but all the disadvantages showed themselves later. We realised how cold and damp it was and there is only electric heating, but that is too expensive to use". She subsequently told us that "in Dnipro I have lost my independence. I injured my knee in a fall some time ago and I barely go out now". Currently, Valentina is relying on assistance to provide her with food as well as medication for her lungs. However, she cannot afford to treat the problem with her knee. She is currently in discussion with her son, who is France, about leaving the country but she worried that with her bad knee she will not be able to manage the long journey.

People reached

- Distribution of food and hygiene kits has started in Lvivska oblast, and additional kits will soon arrive in our warehouses in Chernihivska, and Dnipropetrovska oblasts. In total, HelpAge will provide these kits to over 35,000 internally displaced people. They will be distributed by HelpAge volunteers as well as by partners Turbota pro Litnih v Ukraini (TLU) and Right to Protection.
- **2,690 older people** in the Donbas region are continuing to receive counselling calls from HelpAge's 189 volunteers. These older men and women are those that HelpAge provided support to prior to the current escalation of the conflict.
- **1,714 hygiene kits** were distributed via two local NGOs (Hands of Friends and Slavic Heart) and two municipal authorities (Psychoneurological Center and Social Centre for Mothers) in the Donetsk Oblast of eastern Ukraine. These kits include adult diapers, personal protective equipment, and absorbent pads.



HelpAge plans

- In the coming weeks, HelpAge will establish community safe spaces which will provide the opportunity for older people to gather and seek psychosocial support from peers and HelpAge staff as well as an opportunity to be referred to existing services. Currently several locations have been identified in the Lvivska oblast and staff recruitment is on-going.
- In the coming months, HelpAge plans to provide multipurpose cash to older people through the post office as well as cash grants and specialised equipment for institutions hosting older people as their numbers have increased as result of the conflict. Furthermore, special needs kits will be provided for those with incontinence.

Partners in Ukraine

Right to Protection has been a leading voice standing up for the rights of those most at risk in Ukraine since 2001. Since the start of the conflict, they have been active across much of Ukraine, providing food, legal advice, water, generators, and cash while also supporting Ukrainians in need to access medicine.

TLU is a Ukrainian NGO which has been providing support to older people since 1999. During the crisis, they have been working through their large network of volunteers across Ukraine to provide food, medicine, and hygiene items.



TLU volunteer providing medicine to an older Ukrainian.

Moldova

In Moldova, 491,144 people have entered the country, of which 9%, according to REACH, are over 65. While most have passed through Moldova to Romania and beyond, or have returned to Ukraine, 86,266 have chosen to stay. Of these 4,384 people are residing in 95 refugee accommodation centres while the rest are either staying with host families or friends or are renting private accommodation. Older people who arrive in Moldova have faced often difficult and traumatizing journeys, complicated by mobility issues that many face. Every person who arrives in Moldova has unique needs. Ensuring that support is tailored to the individual will remain critical.

86,266 refugees are remaining in Moldova (UNCHR)

Approximately, **7,764** refugees remaining in Moldova are over 65 (REACH)

People reached

- **2,350 refugees** are currently being provided with food catering or food vouchers in 49 refugee accommodation centres across Moldova. In total, HelpAge has have provided over **500,000 meals** to refugees in the last 2 ½ months.
- **5,000 refugees have received hygiene vouchers or kits** that were distributed at 45 refugee accommodation centres across Moldova, enabling refugees to access items such as soap, masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning products.
- **35 refugee accommodation centres received institutional hygiene kits.** These included washing mops, washing up liquid, hand sanitizer, and other items.

HelpAge plans

- Currently, HelpAge is setting up safe spaces, both in the refugee centres and the community, where older refugees can come together and access psychosocial support and legal support from a team of experts. It will also be as space where older people can gather and provide peer to peer support.

- In the coming months, HelpAge will provide older people with cash assistance, assistive products, and hygiene items. Furthermore, HelpAge will set up outreach programmes to provide basic services to those who are housebound or in the refugee accommodation centres.

Advocacy call:

We call on all parties to the conflict and on humanitarian actors responding to the crisis to ensure that:

- Safe, rapid, and unimpeded humanitarian access is in place to ensure older men and women and people with disabilities who have not been able to leave their homes, including those living in institutions, can be reached, can access essential life-saving humanitarian support and tailored and prioritised assistance, and can be evacuated to safety.
- Older Ukrainians who have fled to other areas of the country can access full basic services, including food and water, healthcare including mental health support, social services including pensions, transport, and information. Those who have been evacuated should not be forced to move into institutions.
- Refugee host countries must ensure that older people's rights are upheld, including ensuring dignified reception at border and transit points with prioritisation procedures for crossing of older people; respect for family unity and facilitation of older people reuniting and settling with family members; prioritisation of protection for those facing additional risks, such as older people and women with disabilities; and provision of access to national health and social protection systems.
- Older men and women should be included in humanitarian assessments and programme activities to ensure that they are provided with appropriate humanitarian protection and assistance.

For more information you access our latest advocacy brief: "[No time for Business as Usual](#)"

Communication

Visit the [Ukraine crisis](#) website page to get the latest updates on HelpAge's work, including testimonies from older people and our colleagues on the ground in Ukraine, Rapid Needs Assessments, interviews, and news statements.

To access our donations pages through our supporting members: helpage.org/donate

Below is some of our recent media coverage:

- Corriere Della Sera: [Ukraine and the elderly: the hidden victims of the war \(Italian\)](#)
- Al Jazeera: [100 days of the Russia-Ukraine war](#)
- HelpAge (Press Release): [100 Days on: Millions of older people missing out in the response to the world's oldest humanitarian crisis](#)

Donors:



Justin, CEO, HelpAge International, Sonja, CEO, HelpAge Deutschland, and Tatiana, Country Director, for Moldova, meeting with an older refugee group in Moldova

Orla, Humanitarian lead for Ukraine and Sasha, Dnipro area manager, listening to Iryna, 60, and her disabled son Anatoly, 41, in the transit centre in Dnipro



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