

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.

While throughout the crisis the government has been maintaining state pension payments to older people the amount remains insufficient to cover their basic needs. Furthermore, accessing these payments remains difficult, especially for those in the Donbass region, as when they arrive at their local ATMs, they often find them not working.

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.

15.7 million need support (OCHA)

11 million Ukrainians are over 60 (Ukraine Gov)

7.7 million are internally displaced (IOM)

6.2 million refugees have fled Ukraine (UNCHR)



Case Study: Anatoly, 66 years old

Anatoly from Kramatorsk fled his home city on 7 April 2022 after it was shelled by artillery and rockets. At the time he had pneumonia and was taken by train to Lviv accompanied by a doctor. In the beginning he was housed in a theatre downtown but now lives in a gym in the Lviv Polytechnic University with around 300 people. He told HelpAge "Here we are provided with everything we need, but it is very uncomfortable when there are so many people in such a small space. A Romani family lives next to me with three small children. They are very nice. But home is much better". Like for many the crisis has been emotionally very hard for Anatoly, he told HelpAge "every smile is difficult. This war and this situation is worse than a nightmare."

Needs Assessment

We interviewed 557 displaced people in the oblast of Lvivska, Dnipropetrovska and Chernivetska in Central and Western Ukraine to better understand their needs. Below are some the key findings for older people (60+). The full report will be released in the week of 23 of May.

- Older people interviewed were most in need of cash followed by healthcare support, hygiene items and clothes.
- 43% of older people had at least one disability and 87% suffered from a health condition such as hypertension,
- 26% of older people did not have a family member or friends who could support them and nearly half were currently not receiving any assistance.
- 88% of older people preferred assistance modality was cash.

People reached so far in Ukraine

- **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 in late March 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 June and July, with partners Turbota pro Litnih v Ukraini (TLU) and Right to Protection, HelpAge will provide over 35,000 internally displaced people with food and hygiene kits in Lvivska, Ivano-Frankivska, Chernihivska, and Dnipropetrovska Oblasts.
- At the end of May, HelpAge plans to provide 2,220 supermarket vouchers at the equivalent of £60 as a one-off amount to at risk families.
- HelpAge has also recently set up of office's in Lviv and Dnipro and it currently recruiting new local staff to help deliver future programmes at speed and scale.

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, 456,947 people have entered the country, of which 9%, according to REACH, are over 65. While most have passed through Moldova to Romania, or have returned to Ukraine, 93,000 have chosen to stay. Of these 4,384 people are residing in the 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.

93,000 refugees are remaining in Moldova (UNCHR)

Approximately, **8,370** refugees remaining in Moldova are over 65 (REACH)



Case study: Tatiana, 62 years old

Tatiana, from Odesa fled with her grandson and three other relatives to Moldova in early March. Currently they are being hosted by relatives, Sawn and Olesea in the capital, Chisinau. Tatiana was particularly concerned by accessing medication. She told HelpAge "I was diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago and had the tumour removed, but I need a certain medication that I take every day. I have another month's supply, but I am so worried that it might not be available here. I don't know if I need a prescription or not, nor do I know how to find a doctor to prescribe it". Also having to leave so quickly they do not have enough clothes, especially for winter.

People reached so far in Moldova

- **2,780 refugees** have been provided with food catering or food vouchers in 45 refugee accommodation centres across Moldova since the middle of March. In total we have provided

approximately **450,000 meals** to refugees in the last 2 months. HelpAge covers 55% of all food provided in the centres and operates in 22 from 32 districts of Moldova.

- **3,100 refugees have received hygiene vouchers** that were distributed at 45 refugee accommodation centres across Moldova, in April, enabling refugees to purchase soap and hand sanitizer at local stores.
- **30 refugee accommodation centres received institutional hygiene kits.** These included washing mops, washing up liquid, hand sanitizer, and other items.

HelpAge plans

- In the coming weeks, HelpAge will scale up and modify the provision of food assistance in the refugee centres, in collaboration with the World Food Programme.
- HelpAge is also aiming to provide more support to the refugees in the rural areas. This includes targeted support to older people. Currently partners have been identified and several projects are in development including establishing safe spaces for refugees to gather and providing cash assistance.

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.

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:

- INews: [Older people afraid of burdening their families are being left behind after Russian invasion](#)
- Guardian: [Alone under siege: how older women are being left behind in Ukraine](#)

Donors:



For more information contact

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