

UNHCR's Protection Response

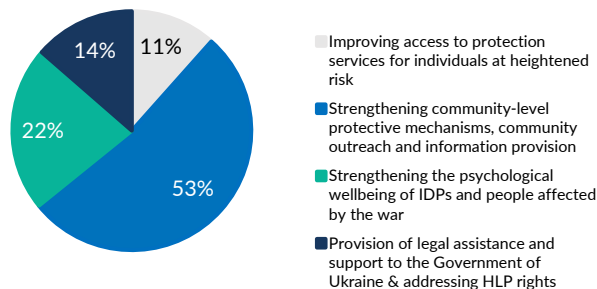
- The protection response by UNHCR and our partners provides tailored support to those most in need, aims to strengthen inclusive national systems and services, and encourages the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in decisions that affect them.
- Our protection response complements, reinforces and strengthens the capacity of national protection services to serve the growing population in need, in line with the Memoranda of Understanding with Ministries and Oblast authorities.
- In implementing our protection response, we work directly with communities, including our network of some 550 community-based organizations, some 100 IDP Councils and predominantly local NGO partners. In 2024, UNHCR works with 20 partners, of which 16 are national organizations.



On 27 and 28 August 2024, the All-Ukrainian Forum of IDP Councils took place in Kyiv. This is the second time this national forum was convened in partnership between SSS, UNHCR and IREX under the auspices of the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories. © Ievhen Vorontsov, August 2024.

- From January to August 2024, UNHCR's protection response has reached **440,921 people**. Of those, 76 per cent are females. 33 per cent or over 147,000 are older people above the age of 60 years, while some 16 per cent are minors. Over 42,000 people supported are living with a disability.
- UNHCR and partners promoted legal and policy developments through **90 advocacy and judicial interventions** aimed at improving access to rights for forcibly displaced, stateless, and other war-affected people.
- UNHCR and partners improved access to services for **29,700 people living in collective sites**. Of those, over 10,000 are older people and 3,000 are people living with a disability. UNHCR, in collaboration with authorities and alongside the Office of the Ombudsperson, also advocates for the implementation of the safety audit recommendations and the implementation of the standards set out in Resolution 930 to enhance the protection of those living in the sites, specifically through GBV preventative action and greater disability inclusion.

Protection response overview
January - August 2024



Protection response: regional reach
January - August 2024



*Figures adjusted following mid-year validation

Supporting a national system that protects

UNHCR's goal is to support and strengthen the national system protecting internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees, stateless as well as other war-affected people. To attain this goal, we work closely with Government counterparts at central and local levels and strengthen the role of communities who have stepped up since the onset of the war as first-line responders. Our work in support of a national system that protects contributes to the localization and greater sustainability of our protection response.

Key Government counterparts of our protection programme are the Ministry of Social Policy and its regional Departments of Social Protection, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories, the Ministry of Restoration, the Ministry of Justice and its Free Legal Aid Centres and Civil Registries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its consular services and cooperation on ['Ukraine is Home'](#), the State Migration Service and the State Border Guard Service of the Ministry of Interior as well as the Office of the Ombudsperson. Current key **priorities in the protection cooperation with the Government** include:

- Support for safe and dignified evacuations of people with specific needs and for enhanced social services capacity, including for services tailored to the needs of older persons and people with disabilities, such as psycho-social support or case management.
- Legal aid systems strengthening, support for rights awareness and IDP participation alongside material support for birth and identity documentation by civil registries.
- Technical assistance on asylum reform contributing to the EU accession process.

As UNHCR's protection programme is integrated with housing and cash assistance, it also supports critical initiatives such as the Perehid initiative aimed at supporting the development of an inclusive and shock-responsive social protection system, or the winter cash response.

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS: JANUARY- AUGUST 2024

The [2nd All Ukrainian Forum of IDP Councils](#) convened by SSS, UNHCR, IREX under the auspices of the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories, brought together over 340 participants, including 150 members of IDP Councils from all of Ukraine's regions. This 2nd national IDP Councils Forum demonstrated the [growing role and influence of IDP Councils as a participatory instrument of forcibly displaced people in public affairs on matters affecting their lives and future](#). The founding of the Congress of IDP Councils at this recent forum will help to further strengthen this important mechanism. A recent mapping found that there are over 800 active IDP Councils in Ukraine. UNHCR supports 100 of them with capacity development and material support so they can better carry out their important civil society role.

UNHCR works closely with Government counterpart, the State Migration Service, to support Ukraine's accession process to the European Union requiring [asylum reform to align with the EU asylum acquis](#). With the EU acquis in flux following the adoption of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, this remains a complex yet important undertaking. While supporting the asylum system, UNHCR and its partners continue to directly support asylum-seekers and refugees with legal and social assistance. 276 individuals or 115 families originating from 14 different countries were recently supported with cash. This assists the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees to cover their essential needs. Among them are families with children, unaccompanied or separated children, older persons, and people with serious medical conditions.

The protection of rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people is the starting point and end goal of UNHCR's efforts to protect and support durable solutions for those uprooted. To this end, [UNHCR's longstanding cooperation with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for human rights](#) for over 14 years is now more important than ever. On 19 August 2024, UNHCR [signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ombudsperson's office](#) to take this partnership into the future. From rights awareness, advocacy, policy development to cooperation in the regionalization of the Ombudsperson's office, the partnership seeks to create greater access to rights and rights protection for IDPs, returnees, asylum-seekers and refugees, stateless people, and others affected by the war.

UNHCR, together with UNFPA and UNICEF, [trained 20 national GBV specialists in Ukraine](#) to become certified trainers in managing gender-based violence (GBV) cases and support GBV case workers. The training of trainers is part of a broader [initiative to improve the quality of support provided to survivors of GBV](#), together with the Ministry of Social Policy, the National Social Service Centre, and National Training Centre for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence. The partnership with government institutions is crucial to ensure the GBV support systems are survivor-centred. By working together, the goal is to ensure that social services offer safe, ethical, and comprehensive support, focusing on an approach that respects and prioritizes the needs, safety, and dignity of those affected by GBV.

My story: Hope away from Home

Displaced twice, Yana, originally from Luhansk Oblast, decided to take her life and future in her own hands when she became a member of the IDP council in her new home in Ternopil'ska. 'When I was forced to flee for the second time, I knew I had to start from scratch again', she explained. 'It was very hard, but I received support from the community I fled to, and I volunteered to support those who arrived after me. I wanted to do something, not just receive support.'

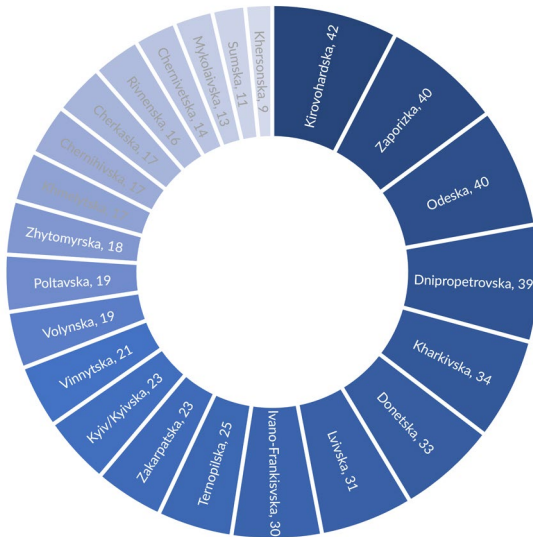
Determined to not only find a solution to her own displacement situation but also for others, she joined the local IDP council and advocates for measures for the socio-economic integration of IDPs and proposes ideas and suggests actions to the Hromada. 'People listen to my ideas and suggestions. I have been forced to flee twice. I know how it is and I know what it takes to re-start a life somewhere else.' Yana's role and advocacy through the IDP Council has helped to shed light on the needs of IDPs in the Hromada, to find a place to stay for new arrivals in the community and contributed to a harmonious living together. In this role, Yana found purpose and fresh hope away from home.

Ahead of the 2nd All-Ukrainian IDP Councils Forum, UNHCR documented other testimonies: [Displaced themselves, and now advocating for the rights and durable solutions for all internally displaced in communities across Ukraine](#) and [Twice displaced by war in Ukraine, but refusing to give up](#).

IN FOCUS: COMMUNITY-LED ACTION MATTERS

IDP Councils, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other community initiatives and volunteers are important constituents of civil society with critical contributions to the humanitarian response and recovery efforts in Ukraine. Every day, they show that community-led action matters in lives of people and in the communities they live in.

CBOs supported by Oblast
2022 - 2024



Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the **network of CBOs and community initiatives supported by UNHCR and its partners has grown and now encompasses over 550 such entities**. In 2022, the network included 173, and in 2023 458 CBOs and community initiatives. Such community-led action is diverse and unfolds impact locally in the Hromada in which these CBOs operate. The range of activities includes the following:

- Advocacy, humanitarian support and help in linking people up with social services and assistance.
- Direct social support, including basic psycho-social counselling, GBV prevention activities and other social support, such as childcare while parents attend to chores or social company for people at risk of isolation or with limited mobility.
- Initiatives to enhance the inclusion of people with disability or others at risk of marginalization, such as the Roma or LGBTQI+.
- Contributions to social cohesion and integration of IDPs through socio-cultural events and activities. These also include communal vocational trainings and workshops.

Almost one third of these CBOs and community initiatives are either members or have another link to the local IDP Councils, and over 200 of these community-based entities are either led by IDPs themselves or have IDP membership. Part of this network are community initiatives and organizations that are led by women, others by Roma and Crimean Tatars, or by members of the LGBTQI+ community. Several are led by persons with disability and by older persons, and others are youth-led. This diversity helps ensure that no one is left behind.

Our support has ranged from capacity development, including trainings, mentoring and peer-to-peer exchange, to material and in-kind support as well as financial grants.

Investing in **civic spaces for communities** enables easier access to information and services provided by Government and others. They also provide a platform for community members to offer support and help to others, and for social, cultural and other activities that bring the community together and foster social cohesion. This is a part of UNHCR's community-based protection approach to its response in Ukraine.

Tied to UNHCR's cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman, the opening of the **first regional human rights centre in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast**, is an example of such a civic space that brings the rights-restoring services of the Ombudsman closer to people. The centre also offers space for others to provide services there, for communities to convene, and to coordinate response efforts. For example, the local Protection Cluster meetings are carried out there. UNHCR supports the establishment of such centres in several other regions, jointly with other UN partners.



Looking forward, **in 2025**, UNHCR will continue to **strengthen these community-based protection systems** by leveraging and supporting the role and capacity of civil society, including community-based organizations, IDP Councils, other community initiatives and volunteers, so they continue to extend social support, enhance resilience and self-reliance capacities, strengthen social cohesion and improve access to rights and services, thereby **contributing to a national system that protects**.

PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING

UNHCR and its partners' protection and solutions monitoring activity is three-fold:

- Monitoring of the protection situation** of IDPs, returnees and other war-affected people in Ukraine, including as part of a Protection Cluster-led country-wide initiative as well as for thematic protection surveys. In addition, UNHCR and partners undertake legal monitoring to inform advocacy efforts.
- Border monitoring** at 30 international border crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. Border monitors provide information, legal assistance, protection counselling and social support to people leaving Ukraine to seek international protection as well as to those returning to Ukraine. From January to August 2024, nearly 11,154 people received support at the borders.
- Monitoring of intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine, refugee returnees and IDPs** twice a year to inform people-centered planning and support to returnees as they pursue a durable solution. The data collection for the second survey in 2024 concluded at the end of August.

The monitoring outcomes inform UNHCR's planning and programme and help identify those most in need. The outcomes are also shared through relevant coordination platforms to inform the wider humanitarian and recovery response.

Key Monitoring Findings

Round 16 of the **protection monitoring** (July 2024) reports that Sumska, Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska and Donetsk oblasts had the highest numbers of attacks on residential areas by shelling, missile strikes and drone attacks during the monitoring period. Overall, housing, land and property concerns were the top protection concern reported. The protection monitoring continues to highlight the particular risks and needs of people with disabilities in the response that remain unaddressed. Amongst the unaddressed needs reported are insufficient assistive devices, social transport and rehabilitation support. UNHCR and partner's monitoring of the legal landscape also continue to report difficulties for people in obtaining disability certification to obtain needed social assistance. In addition, the Protection Cluster's survey on the impact of the energy situation on people's lives and wellbeing found a disproportionate impact on people with disability and older persons as well as others with specific needs, and underscored the need for more nuanced attention to their particular situation and needs in the response, including in the winter response.

The **border monitoring** noted a steady monthly increase in cross-border movements from February 2024 onwards. Overall, during the first eight months of 2024, there was a greater outflow than inflow to Ukraine. From January to August 2024, an average of 28% left Ukraine for the first time since the onset of the full-scale invasion by Russia. A peak likely attributed to the deteriorating security situation in Kharkiv was observed in May when 35% of respondents left Ukraine for the first time. By August, the proportion of first-time departures decreased to 21%. Safety and security and energy-related considerations, notably access to electricity, water and heating, remain the two top consideration by those departing Ukraine. Of note is a growing uncertainty among those departing about the duration of their stay abroad, peaking at 71% of respondents in August. Family-related reasons and the need to check on property left behind remain the primary reasons for people returning to Ukraine. The majority of those returning during the first eight months of 2024, at 84 per cent, only intends to stay for short periods, typically less than a month.

DONORS

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by our top government donors and for the generous contributions from individuals and the private sector, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with softly earmarked and unearmarked funds.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit Ukraine's Operational Data Portal for more information products [here](#).
- Visit UNHCR Ukraine's Website [here](#).

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Contact **UNHCR's Hotline 0-800-307-711** for feedback and advice on assistance and services.