

UNHCR's Protection Response

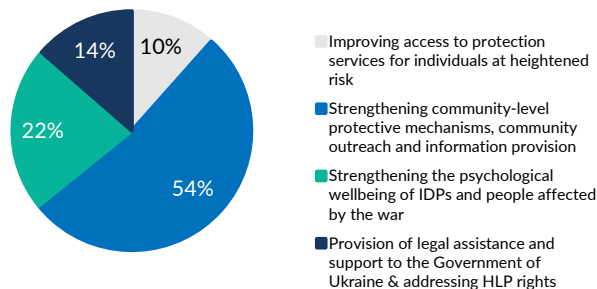
- The protection response by UNHCR and our partners provides tailored support to those most in need, aims to strengthen inclusive national systems and services, and encourages the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in decisions that affect them.
- Our protection response 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 25 October 2024, marking the 10th year anniversary of the UNHCR-led global #IBelong campaign to end statelessness worldwide, UNHCR and the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine hosted a forum to explore ways to prevent and reduce statelessness in Ukraine. ©UNHCR/Dmytro Babenko, October 2024.

- From January to October 2024, UNHCR's protection response has reached **545,730 people**. Of those, 76 per cent are females, 29 per cent or over 180,000 are older people above the age of 60 years, while some 13 per cent are minors. Over 44,000 people supported are living with a disability.
- UNHCR and partners promoted legal and policy developments through **109 advocacy and judicial interventions** aimed at improving access to rights for forcibly displaced and other war-affected people, and stateless persons.
- UNHCR and partners improved access to services for **30,640 people living in collective sites**. Of those, over 11,000 are older people and 3,000 are people living with a disability. UNHCR, in collaboration with authorities and alongside the Office of the Ombudsman, continued advocating 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 - October 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 and other war-affected people, asylum seekers, refugees as well as stateless 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 Ombudsman. 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.
- Legal aid systems strengthening, support for rights awareness and IDP participation alongside support for birth and identity documentation by civil registries as part of our effort to reduce and prevent statelessness and enable access to social assistance.
- 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 Prykhystok programme, 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- OCTOBER 2024

On 25 October 2024, marking the **10-year anniversary of the UNHCR-led global #IBelong campaign to end statelessness worldwide**, UNHCR jointly with the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine hosted a forum bringing together experts from government, parliament, judiciary, international community and civil society. The **Statelessness Forum**, a first of its kind in Ukraine, marked progress and achievements in eradicating statelessness in Ukraine, and generated dialogue on further collective action needed to end statelessness in Ukraine together. Efforts for inclusion of stateless people in national systems, simplified access to birth registration and identity documents, as well as opportunities for group solutions were identified. The forum paid particular attention to the situation of Ukrainians living in temporarily occupied or illegally annexed territories, as their lack of access to Ukrainian civil and identity documents raises concern over an emerging future situation of statelessness.

Since mid-March 2022, UNHCR and its partners Right to Protection (R2P), NEEKA, and The Tenth of April (TTA), have conducted border monitoring at 30 crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. The regular presence and monitoring role at the borders builds on **UNHCR's cooperation with the State Border Guard Services (SBGS)** of Ukraine. In September and October 2024, UNHCR, jointly with IOM, carried out a series of trainings to over 130 border guards stationed in different border locations. The trainings focused on countering and responding to human trafficking and on providing psychological first aid to war victims, self-help techniques, and addressing professional burnout. Additionally, in 2024, UNHCR supported the SBGS with technical assistance, notably ICT equipment as well as small refurbishments at border crossings, e.g. for waiting areas.

Russia's war on Ukraine has caused mass internal displacement and dramatically increased social needs putting a massive strain on the social services sector of Ukraine and those delivering these services. In light of this, the **Social Service Providers Forum** in Ternopil, supported by UNHCR and its partner SSS, brought together the Ministry of Social Policy and its Oblast Department and Centre for Social Service Provision, local self-government, social workers, non-state social service providers and community initiatives to identify solutions and discuss ways to optimize available social services resources and capacities. The forum triggered critical exchanges of good practices between hromadas and stimulated partnerships and ideas for strengthening the social services sector in the Oblast, including through the role of community-based organizations and initiatives.

My story: Now I Belong

Andrii Lii was born in the Republic of Tajikistan, at that time one of the republics of the Soviet Union. He and his parents moved to Ukraine when he was 18 years old. His parents had Soviet passport, while he only had a birth certificate. Andrii wanted to continue his studies and enter a university, but this was not possible without the needed documents. The long and arduous journey of Andrii and his parents to try and obtain Ukrainian documents started in 1995 in the now temporarily occupied hromada Skadovsk. "We realized that we were people without rights because we had no documents. Physically we were here, but at the same time we were not", Andrii explained his experience of invisibility that accompanies statelessness. Today, after receiving support from UNHCR partner Right to Protection, he is recognized as a stateless person in Ukraine and has a temporary residence permit. He is still in the process of obtaining citizenship. "I lived without documents for almost 30 years. I'm a living example of what can happen to people who now live in the occupied territories," Andrii added in conclusion at the Statelessness Forum.



IN FOCUS: LEGAL AID MATTERS

Ukraine's legal system is sophisticated and complex to navigate, even more so in times of war and displacement. Legal aid is a foundational part of the humanitarian response, critical in times of emergency and an indispensable enabler of durable solutions to displacement for millions of displaced Ukrainians and those who are stateless.

From January to October 2024, **UNHCR with partners provided over 130,000 legal consultations benefiting 87,500 forcibly displaced and stateless people with legal assistance.** UNHCR's legal aid response in Ukraine is the largest such humanitarian programme in country making up nearly 43 per cent of the Protection Cluster's legal aid reach. It is implemented with five national partners and in close cooperation with the National Coordination Centre for Free Legal Aid established under the Ministry of Justice.

Legal aid makes a difference in people's lives: A single mother who fled from the temporarily occupied territories received a birth certificate for her undocumented child through a court procedure; a widower who fled to Chernihiv had his pension rights restored; a young family in Khmelnytskyi can rebuild their destroyed home after receiving needed documents; an older woman with a Soviet Union passport received her Ukrainian nationality and access to social assistance; a young father with a disability now receives disability allowances after his disability status was legally recognized; an asylum-seeker can access the national asylum system and received an official document legalizing her stay. Without legal aid, all of them would still be in limbo, unassisted and unprotected.

Halyna, 84 years, was forced to flee her home in the village in Bilyi Kolodiaz near Vovchansk in Kharkiv region in July 2024 due to Russia's offensive into the area. As her home was shelled, she arrived in Kharkiv without any documents. With support of UNHCR's partner Right to Protection, she was able to restore her identity documents and find a temporary home in a collective site. With legal support, she was also able to access state benefits as an internally displaced person enabling her to address her most critical needs, and to apply for state compensation for her destroyed home.

"I worked hard all my life, and now I am left without anything. Even if the war is over, I will not be able to return. My home is destroyed, and the entire village is heavily damaged," Halyna said. Restoring her documents enabled Halyna to start re-building her life elsewhere.

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UNHCR's legal aid programme has five components:

- **Legal monitoring:** Monitoring and analysis of legal developments inform UNHCR's legal aid programme. Staying abreast of legal developments is essential to assure the quality of legal aid services and effectiveness of advocacy.
- **Legal aid service provision:** UNHCR's primary and secondary legal aid services center on specific areas of law, including access to government social assistance and services, personal and status documentation, housing, land and property rights restoration, and support to survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Free legal aid systems strengthening:** UNHCR's legal aid services complement Ukraine's free legal aid system and systematically strengthens it through trainings, technical assistance and other forms of cooperation.
- **Legal advocacy:** Legal aid service provision and monitoring inform legal advocacy, including strategic litigation, aimed at influencing reforms to bring about needed changes in laws, procedures and practices, in line with international standards.
- **Legal aid coordination:** Coordinating the Protection Cluster's legal aid working group, UNHCR convenes other humanitarian legal aid providers and enables a coordinated and harmonized provision of legal aid in the humanitarian response in Ukraine.

In November 2024, UNHCR, jointly with the National Centre for Free Legal Aid and the Protection Cluster, is convening a **country-wide forum bringing together government and humanitarian legal aid providers to launch a new initiative on the quality of legal aid in Ukraine.**

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 October 2024, nearly 14,000 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 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 17 of the **protection monitoring** (August-September 2024) continues to highlight the particular risks and needs of older people and people with disabilities in the response that remain unaddressed. Abandonment by family members was reported mostly in Ivano-Frankivska and Sumska oblasts. Unavailable specialized services for older people and persons with disability include social transport, home-based care, stationary care, social accompaniment, assisted living, medical rehabilitation as well as assistive devices. On access to documentation, key informants reported distance and lack of transportation as main barriers to access civil registries throughout the country. Lack of information and of civil documentation, particularly identity documents, are reported as key obstacles to access government assistance and services, social benefits, and formal employment.

The **border monitoring** noted a steady monthly increase in cross-border movements from February to August 2024, with a sharp decline with nearly a million people less crossing the borders in September and October compared to August 2024. Overall, from January to October 2024, there was a greater outflow than inflow of people to Ukraine. Safety and security and energy-related considerations, notably access to electricity, water and heating, remain the two top considerations by those departing Ukraine, with housing-related concerns on the rise from August to October 2024. Of note is a growing uncertainty among those departing about the duration of their stay abroad, peaking at 71% of respondents in August and levelling at 60% in October 2024. Read more in our monthly **border snapshots**.

The latest round of UNHCR's regional **intention survey** (July-August 2024) found that 61% of refugees hope or plan to return to Ukraine, a 4% decrease compared to the last intention survey of February 2024. Those undecided or not planning to return increased slightly by 3% and 1% respectively compared to six months ago. Return intentions of IDPs remain the same at 73%. See the results of UNHCR's most recent intention survey #6: **Lives on Hold: Intentions and perspectives of refugees, refugee returnees and internally displaced people from Ukraine**

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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.