

# INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

## UKRAINE SITUATION – REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

### Belarus

As of 10 April 2022

The Government of Belarus allows all refugees from Ukraine to access Belarusian territory and asylum procedures if they wish to seek protection. Foreigners fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and traveling to their countries of permanent residence are allowed to enter, transit and exit Belarus visa-free. All COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted at border crossing points with Ukraine and no PCR test is needed.

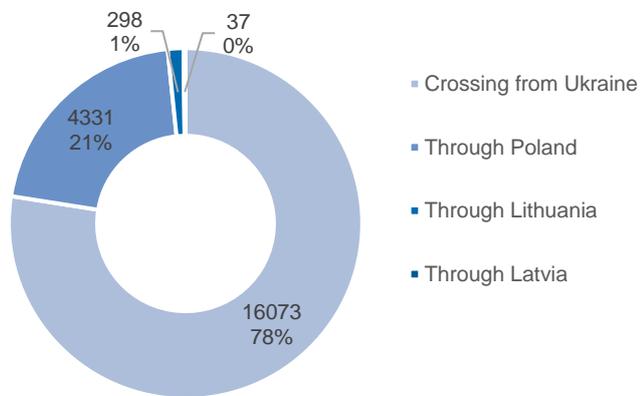
The majority of refugees from Ukraine in Belarus come from the regions around Kyiv and Chernihiv that are closest to Belarus. An estimated 40 per cent are women and 30 per cent are children. Groups of people at heightened risk include women single heads of household; children, especially unaccompanied and separated; elderly; and people with disabilities. Arrivals from Ukraine either self-accommodate with

relatives or friends or are temporarily accommodated while longer-term opportunities are identified by the local authorities. The Government leads the response to the Ukraine refugee situation in Belarus, with the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC) being the recognized channel of international aid delivery and distribution. An inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) led by UNHCR has been established at country level to complement the Government’s efforts.

#### KEY NUMBERS\*

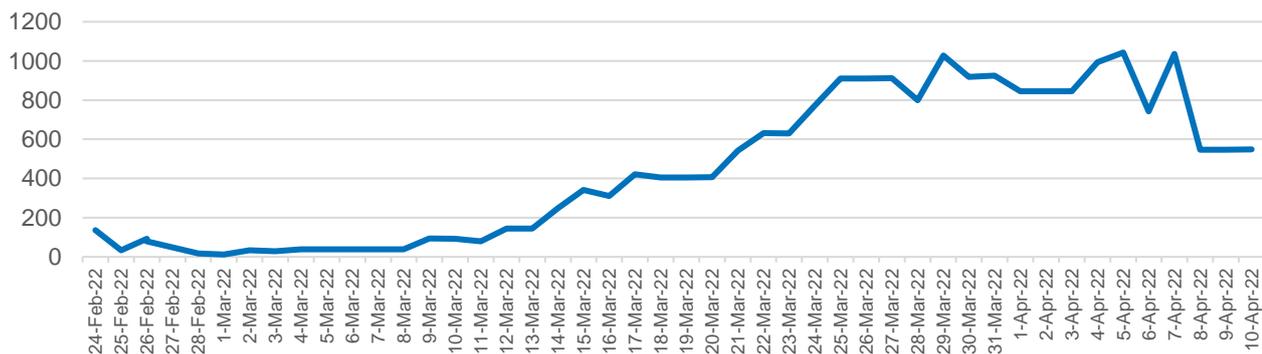
##### POPULATION OF CONCERN from 24 February – 10 April 2022

- 20,739** refugees from Ukraine arrived in Belarus.
- 4,666** entered Belarus through EU countries.
- 20,495** are Ukrainian nationals.
- 244** are third country nationals.



\* All statistics are based on data provided by the State Border Committee (SBC) of Belarus. The figures reflect border-crossings and may include circular and transit movements. The number of those remaining in Belarus is expected to be much smaller.

Arrival of refugees from Ukraine in Belarus



**PROTECTION****Achievements and Impact**

Partners regularly monitor the access to territory, reception conditions, and protection profiles. Legal counselling and referrals to asylum procedure are offered by partners, including to third country nationals who are not covered by the alternative stay arrangements for Ukrainians. Individual counselling is offered through available hotlines for people in need of legal assistance and for vulnerable people who may require referrals to adequate services. Nationals of third countries are assisted to voluntarily return to their countries of origin when it is possible to do so in a safe and orderly manner.

A key response priority are psycho-social support services particularly to children and their caregivers, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities, who might have suffered from or witnessed violence. A psycho-social mobile team has been started with capacity building for frontline workers working with children. Partners are also negotiating with the BRC and other partners to create safe spaces for children and families within transit points at the border and temporary accommodation facilities (TAFs) in different regions in collaboration with the BRC.

Partners are also working towards supporting the Government and local partners in providing psycho-social support to women survivors and those at-risk of GBV and efforts are made to strengthen the multi-sectoral response system, including referral procedures and safe space for counselling, as well as safe shelter, training sessions for service providers and volunteers on GBV prevention and response in humanitarian settings, provision of gender-responsive services, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

Partners expect that more assistance will be needed particularly in the areas of child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response with focus on women, older persons and persons with disabilities and are offering to assist with targeted and specialized interventions. Children and women fleeing Ukraine face enormous and multiple protection risks that require strengthening system measures to respond to immediate needs for safety, stability, and protection from risks of violence, exploitation and potential trafficking.

Women and child survivors of GBV and different forms of trafficking will need immediate support and referral. Gender, age and disability responsive GBV referral pathways and standard operating procedures need to be strengthened. Services and support also need to be expanded as the number of new arrivals increases, including safe spaces for counselling and service provision particularly for women, girls and boys; older women; and women, girls, and boys with disabilities. Close coordination with existing government structures across sectors and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Belarus will be essential.

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other children at heightened risks, will need to be identified immediately and referred to protection services, appropriate alternative care arrangements and other assistance. UN agencies are partnering with the Department for Citizenship and Migration to strengthen interagency mechanisms for case management, referral and support to UASC.

Given the expected high percentage of female headed households who may lack a regular income, one-time emergency cash assistance will be the most effective method of providing dignified assistance and gives the recipient a choice of prioritizing their needs. Partners so far have allocated USD 50,000 for this purpose. Identification of needs will be done on vulnerability basis, taking into account gender, age and disability specifics.



## EDUCATION

### Achievements and Impact

Refugee children from Ukraine have access to the national preschool and school education system and most do not face a language barrier to access education.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

School administration, teachers and other education specialists require additional support to identify and respond effectively to children's heightened levels of distress.



## HEALTH

### Achievements and Impact

To address the current crisis situation, the Ministry of Health (MoH) issued a letter, which stipulates that citizens of Ukraine who fled to Belarus through “*humanitarian corridors*” are eligible to receive medical treatment on an equal level with citizens of Belarus. The services are available in the local out- and in-patient healthcare departments in all regions where refugees from Ukraine are accommodated. These measures will be further defined in a normative act, which exempts citizens of Ukraine and stateless persons who have resided in Ukraine “*for not less than one year as a rule*” and are coming to Belarus “*to obtain permits for temporary and permanent residence*” from payment for medical services provided by state healthcare organizations. RRP partners offered to healthcare facilities in Minsk and Gomel to cover the costs of women health care above the national standards (e.g., some diagnostic procedures).

1,000 copies of first psychological aid information material on dealing with stress and assisting children in situations of anxiety, including support available in Belarus, is being distributed by partners among refugees from Ukraine at BRC transit points at the border and TAFs in Gomel and Brest regions.

RRP partners suggested to the MoH and BRC to reallocate a part of the 4 medical kits and 5,000 COVID-19 rapid tests that were previously delivered to Belarus for the mixed movements situation at the EU-Belarus border. Each medical kit can be used for providing medical care and treatment for a population of 10,000 for 3 months. A part of the medical kits has already been distributed to healthcare facilities in Gomel region.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Some groups of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus, particularly adult third country nationals who are in the asylum procedure, will have to pay for most medical services that go beyond emergency medical treatment. Given the circumstances and possible loss of income, it is expected that many will need financial support or medical services provided free of charge, particularly the most vulnerable and those accommodated in TAFs.

As per the needs assessed, many refugees arriving from Ukraine need mental health and psycho-social services. There are acute manifestations of mental health issues and psychological distress in children and adolescents, women, older persons who fled from Ukraine.



## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

### Achievements and Impact

More than 40,000 USD have been allocated to the BRC to provide supplementary food in TAFs in addition to the three meals a day. This amount will cover the needs for supplementary food for up to two months. In addition, almost 20,000 USD have been allocated for the provision of food parcels at border crossing points.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

The Government has expressed a need for food parcels and bottled water to be provided at border crossing points. BRC has also appealed to partners to support expenditures for meals provided at TAFs.



## WATER AND SANITATION

### Achievements and Impact

Refugees accommodated at TAFs have access to safe water and sanitary facilities. 15,000 hygiene kits have so far been provided by partners, 3,600 more have been procured locally and 3,000 have been requested from HQ supplies.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

As per the needs assessed, hygiene items, including for menstrual hygiene management, and basic medical kits will be procured.



## SHELTER AND NFIS

### Achievements and Impact

Refugees from Ukraine may either self-accommodate with their relatives or friends or receive temporary accommodation in designated facilities – TAFs – while opportunities for longer-term accommodation are being identified by the regional authorities. Gomel and Brest Oblasts are the primary regions to accommodate refugees from Ukraine, but other accommodations have also been identified throughout Belarus. The average stay by refugees housed in the TAFs is about 10 days before moving to cities and farms with employment opportunities or moving on to other neighboring countries.

The beneficiary population at the border and the TAFs is about 400 persons at any given time. It is important to note that these are not the same people, as people in TAFs rotate leaving for a more permanent location.

70,000 USD have been reallocated to the Ukraine refugee situation to procure clothes, shoes, toys, games, stationery, hygienic items for children and an additional 30,000 USD have been made available for adults. 8,000 thermal blankets and 2,000 mattresses are also re-channeled to the Ukraine refugee situation. Partners are prepositioning aid items from their HQ supplies due to shortages in Belarus, including 3,000 sleeping bags and 3,000 bed linen.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

The TAFs are sanatoriums that cater to Belarusian citizens during the tourist season that starts in late May. These sanatoriums are fully booked for the whole season. This fact could hamper further use of sanatoriums for temporary accommodation. Other options must be sought ahead of time in collaboration with the host government and local authorities. Some refugees from Ukraine have been accommodated in the state dormitories.

BRC has appealed to partners to support expenditures for accommodation provided at TAFs. Some new arrivals expressed their need for clothing as they travelled in a haste. Due to increasing arrival numbers, the Government will also need to be supported with additional mattresses, blankets and bed linen.

The transit points will need additional support by RRP partners to establish a safe space for children and mothers, provide basic service responses, and for information outreach.

Partners face issues with the local market and local procurement due to sanctions that have been applied to Belarus as well as limited local production capacity.



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

### Achievements and Impact

Employment opportunities are published by the Government in TAFs. Most are available in rural locations and collective farms and the spring agricultural season will create more work opportunities. The authorities are ready to relocate those people who are willing to seize these accommodation and employment possibilities. Work permit procedures are being expedited.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Partners will need to ensure that individuals have access to accurate and timely information to make informed choices. Channels of preferred and trusted communication to engage with partners should be established. Communities should have opportunities to be engaged in programme design, implementation and monitoring – so that communities' voices drive decision-making.



## LOGISTICS

### Achievements and Impact

Partners are supporting with transportation of new arrivals from border crossing points to TAFs and with transporting items that have been re-channeled to the Ukraine situation. So far, 10,000 USD have been allocated for this purpose.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

BRC has noted that transportation is currently one of the urgent needs to respond to the emergency situation.

Additional warehouse space also needs to be made available. The current capacity of the BRC is just 70m<sup>2</sup> of space, which is not sufficient to accommodate all incoming supplies.

## Working in partnership

The Government of Belarus leads the response to the Ukraine refugee situation engaging the BRC as a main channel of international aid delivery and distribution. UNHCR is leading the inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) that has been established at country level to complement the efforts of the Government of Belarus. RCF partners include the MOI's Department of Citizenship and Migration (DCM), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC), with the Resident Coordinator's Office in an observing role. The RCF can expand to include other actors as required and agreed. The regional Governor and Governor's office in Gomel, as well as regional service providers are among other important counterparts that the RCF works with in close liaison.

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### LINKS

Regional portal - [UNHCR operation page](#)