



# Belarus

31 July 2022

The Government of Belarus allows all refugees from Ukraine to access Belarusian territory and asylum procedures if they wish to seek protection. Third country nationals fleeing the war in Ukraine and traveling to their countries of origin or permanent residence are allowed to enter, transit and exit Belarus visa-free. All COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted at border crossing points.

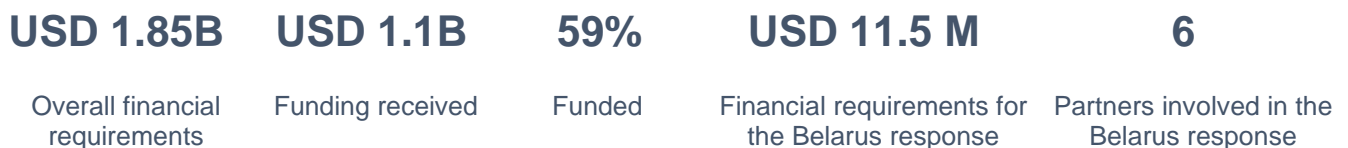
Since the second half of April 2022, border crossings from Ukraine remain very low. Most refugees from Ukraine transit through the EU, primarily through Poland. The majority are hosted in Belarus by relatives or friends. Others are supported by the local authorities and partners in identifying accommodation and employment opportunities.

The Government leads the response to the Ukraine refugee situation in Belarus, with the Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) 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 FIGURES (as of 31 July)\*



## REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) FOR THE UKRAINE SITUATION\*\*



\*See the [Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation](#) for more details on refugee population figures and information resources. The statistics are based on data provided by the State Border Committee (SBC) of Belarus. The figures reflect border-crossings and may include pendular and transit movements. The age and gender breakdown are estimates based on data collected by the BRCS as of 9 August 2022 (sample size: 2,538 individuals).

\*\*See the [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) and the [Belarus Summary Document](#) for a breakdown of sectoral response priorities and requirements. See the [Refugee Funding Tracker](#) for RRP funding information.

This report was produced by UNHCR in collaboration with inter-agency partners.

**Operational Context**

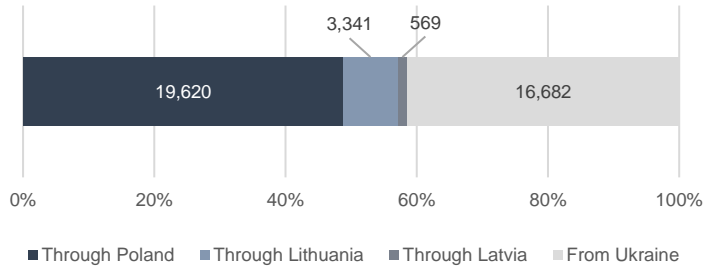
As of December 2021, Belarus was host to 2,732 refugees and 128 asylum-seekers. Amongst those, 2,378 refugees and 14 asylum-seekers were Ukrainian nationals, most of whom arrived in Belarus due to conflict that had erupted in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014. Asylum-seekers and refugees also come from other countries of origin, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

A total of 40,212 refugees from Ukraine have crossed the border to Belarus from 24 February to 31 July. 244 persons are third country nationals (including from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, USA). Valid ID documents or international passports are not required for persons seeking protection in Belarus. 23,530 persons have transited through EU countries before entering Belarus, while 16,682 have crossed directly from Ukraine. Due to the absence of border controls, it is unclear how many Ukrainians are transiting through Russia.

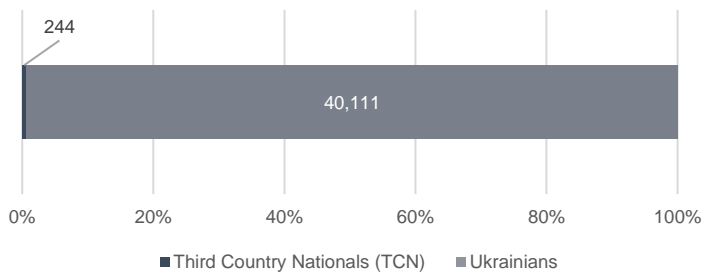
Since 24 February and as of 26 July, 10,857 refugees from Ukraine have registered with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) for a legal status in Belarus. 6,289 Ukrainians have been recorded by the MOI’s Department on Citizenship and Migration (DCM) as persons with permits for temporary stay up to 90 days. 1,364 Ukrainians have applied for asylum in Belarus. Out of those, 673 have been granted complementary protection. The other applications remain pending. 2,134 have applied for 1-year temporary residence permits. 1,072 have applied for permanent residence permits.

During the first two months of the crisis, refugees from Ukraine were sheltered in sanatoria as temporary accommodation facilities (TAFs). These have been vacated to use the facilities for commercial purposes. Refugees who were temporarily accommodated at the TAFs were assisted by the BRCS and local authorities in identifying employment and accommodation opportunities.

40,212 refugees from Ukraine have crossed to Belarus (since 24 February 2022)



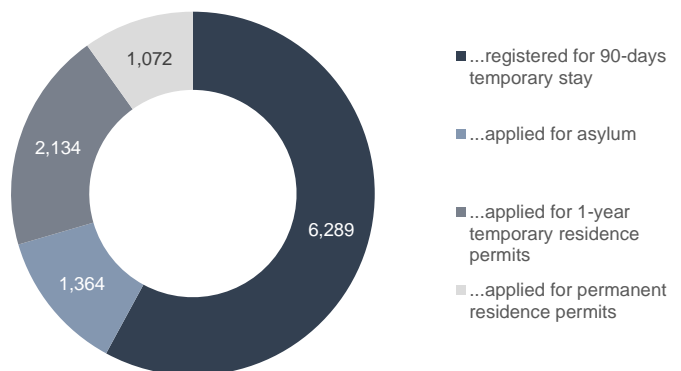
244 Third Country Nationals



Registered refugees from Ukraine

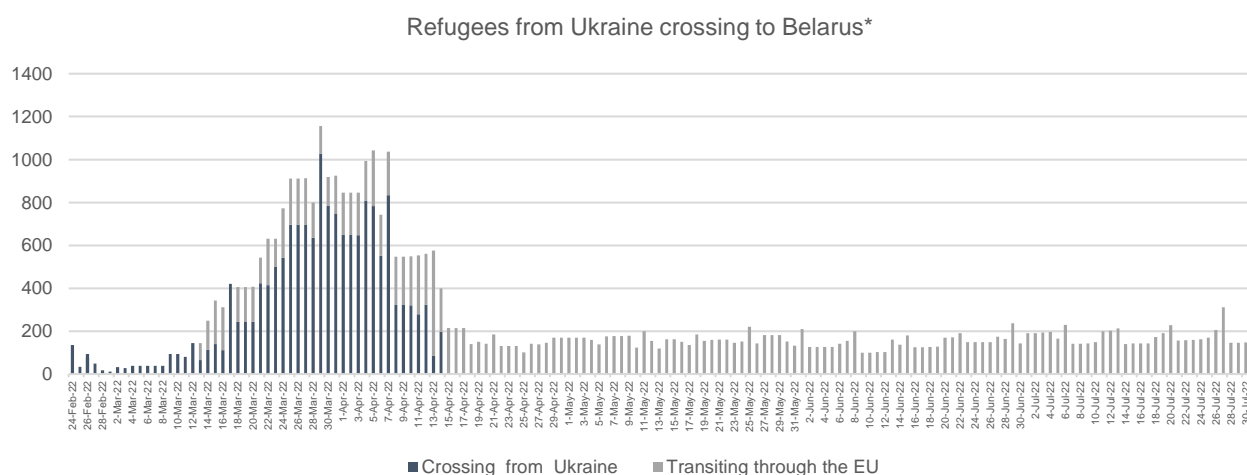


Registered refugees from Ukraine that have...\*\*



Refugees from Ukraine in Belarus originate from all regions of the country, particularly from Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Kyiv. Groups of people at heightened risk include elderly people; women at risk; female-headed households; children, especially unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); people with disabilities; and people in need of medical support. The number of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus is relatively small compared to other neighbouring countries. However, the Government and inter-agency partners need to be prepared for an increase in arrival numbers as the crisis in Ukraine unfolds in an unpredictable manner.

Inter-agency partners continue to strengthen the response in Belarus, supporting Government-led efforts by fostering solidarity and collaboration, responsibility-sharing, and inclusion in national responses and local host communities, in line with the guiding principles of the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#).



\*The statistics are based on data provided by the State Border Committee (SBC) of Belarus. The figures reflect border-crossings and may include pendular and transit movements.

\*\*The statistics are based on data provided by MOI's DCM.



## PROTECTION

### Achievements and Impact

UNHCR regularly monitors the **access to territory, temporary stay, and asylum procedures, as well as reception conditions** of refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR provides legal counselling and referrals to asylum procedures through the joint project “Refugee Counselling Service (RCS)” together with its national legal partner, Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers (BMMW). This includes third country nationals who may be in need for international protection and who are not covered by the temporary stay arrangements for Ukrainians. During the month of July, 189 persons (101 cases) have been counselled by the RCS at their offices and through phone calls, reaching a total of 1,187 persons (634 cases) from the beginning of March to the end of July. Out of those, 730 persons have applied for asylum in Belarus and 457 benefitted from temporary stay arrangements for Ukrainians. The RCS also conducted five visits to TAFs where it provided counselling to about 120 persons through individual and group sessions. The information provided to refugees includes how to lodge an asylum application in Belarus, other options for regularization of stay / residence in Belarus, modalities for employment, as well as regulations and practical aspects related to medical treatment, education, and receipt of allowances from the Government, including pensions. In addition, UNHCR has counselled 81 refugees from Ukraine through its hotline and counselling sessions at its office in Minsk.

In collaboration with BRCS, two **information points** were established by UNICEF at the Polish – Belarusian border crossing point, “Warszawski bridge”, and at Brest city central bus terminal. Both points are supplied with child-friendly spaces, information leaflets on various topics (e.g., registration in Belarus, medical and social care, employment, education), hygiene kits, and water.

IOM assists nationals of third countries who are not in need for international protection to **voluntarily return** to their countries of origin when it is possible to do so in a safe and orderly manner. Two nationals from Tajikistan have been assisted in returning to their country of origin and two persons with dual nationality (Ukrainian-Russian) were assisted in moving to Russia.

UNICEF has signed a case management partnership agreement with a Gomel-based CSO “Let’s Help Children Together” to assess and identify the needs of **families with children** and refer them to the relevant services. Since the end of May and until the end of July, 134 families with 195 children (104 girls and 91 boys) have benefitted from case management in Gomel and Brest regions through the partner. UNICEF with other UN agencies is partnering with MOI’s DCM to strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for case management, referral and support to **unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**.

Inter-agency partners are also working towards supporting the Government and local partners in providing assistance and psychosocial support to **women survivors and those at-risk of gender-based violence (GBV)**. UNFPA and the BRCS Gomel and Brest branches established a counselling and referral mechanism based on the emerging needs of women, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. The piloted mechanism will be scaled up in other oblasts of the country. UNFPA supported the establishment of Orange Safe Spaces in Gomel and Brest for counselling and service provision particularly for women with children, elderly women, and women with disabilities. In July, 110 persons in Brest and 196 persons in Gomel were supported through the Orange Safe Spaces and referred to needed services.

UNFPA supported the establishment and equipment of the BRCS crisis center in Brest, which will serve as an entry point for immediate support and referral for essential services. The crisis center has been

operationalized on 16 June and is fully equipped for temporary accommodation of up to 10 persons, including infants and children. In July, UNFPA provided technical expert support to the staff of the crisis center to ensure that the needs of refugees from Ukraine at risk of GBV (primarily women with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities) are met. The capacity building sessions strengthened the participants' understanding of GBV and domestic violence and its consequences. They equipped them with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide assistance and ensure safety and confidentiality. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed and put in practice for the management of the crisis center and for case management. As of the end of July, one Ukrainian family with four children (one of them was born in Brest in June) was accommodated in the center. All family members benefited from support and counseling by specialists.

UNFPA has conducted three trainings for 47 service providers and volunteers on GBV prevention, gender-responsive services and protection from **sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)** in humanitarian settings and is planning to conduct additional trainings in different regions until the end of the year in collaboration with UNICEF.

Given the high percentage of female headed households, elderly and disabled people who lack a regular income, **one-time emergency cash assistance** is the most effective method of providing dignified assistance and gives the recipient a choice of prioritizing their needs. UNHCR supports refugees from Ukraine with specific needs or vulnerabilities with one-time emergency cash assistance through its partner – the BRCS. A Commission on Assistance assesses the cases and decides whether the conditions for cash payment are fulfilled. The family or individuals receive the payment either in cash or on their bank card if available. During the month of July, 195 individuals received one-time emergency cash assistance, reaching a total of 628 individuals (170 women, 108 men, 72 girls, 96 boys, 130 elderly women, 52 elderly men). The largest group of vulnerable persons were elderly people, followed by persons with serious medical condition, women at risk, single parents, and persons with disabilities. In assessing the needs of refugees, UNHCR takes into consideration that some families may need additional payments, which may be granted on a case-by-case basis and depending on the availability of resources.

#### Global Compact on Refugees

Multi-purpose cash assistance enhances refugee self-reliance in line with the objectives of the GCR. It serves as a transitional safety net pending the individual's ability to find a job or be included in national social protection schemes. Families can purchase goods and services from local businesses which boosts the economy. Most importantly, cash assistance respects the dignity of choice and independence of people forced to flee, and gives them a sense of normality and ownership, allowing them to decide what they need most to support themselves and their family. A total of 628 individuals were assisted with one-time emergency cash assistance in Belarus.

A key response priority is **psycho-social support (PSS)** particularly for children and their caregivers, women, elderly people, and persons with disabilities, who might have experienced stress and anxiety including those who witnessed violence. A psycho-social mobile team was started by UNICEF. Until the end of July, 390 children (183 boys and 207 girls) benefitted from PSS activities. 1,000 copies (5,000 printed in total) of psychological first aid information material on dealing with stress and assisting children in situations of anxiety, including support available in Belarus, have been distributed by UNICEF among refugees from Ukraine in TAFs in Gomel and Brest regions.

Inter-agency partners are collaborating on conducting **joint training sessions**. UNICEF has joined a two-days PSS training organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for 20 BRCS specialists and volunteers with a session on psycho-social support for children in conflict situations. Through UNICEF's partnership with the Republican Center for Psychological Aid, 90 pedagogues

and psychologists working with children and refugees, volunteers and frontline workers of the BRCS, NGOs and service providers received training on working with children in crisis situations and stress resilience for frontline workers.

Within the framework of UNDP's support for the BRCS, 165 volunteers and specialists were trained to provide assistance to refugees, including psycho-social support.

In July, two structured debriefing and counseling sessions were conducted by UNFPA's Mental Health and Psychological Support Consultants for 20 volunteers providing support to refugees within the Gomel BRCS branch. During the sessions, peer support groups modeled support techniques and tools to manage their workload and they were equipped with practical guidance and techniques on how to avoid burnout and maintain professional boundaries. During the preparatory stage in June, the team had conducted a primary assessment of the psychological state, needs, and perceived risks, as well as preferred forms of support of BRCS volunteers on the individual and team level.

Inter-agency partners are working together towards strengthening the capacity of the BRCS in **collecting age and gender disaggregated data** under the leadership of UNHCR. 19 participants of local partners have been trained on protection sensitive data collection. These efforts will provide a better understanding and regional comparability of the profiles, intentions and needs of refugees coming from Ukraine to Belarus. This analysis is important for forward programme planning.

### **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

After the TAFs have been vacated to use the sanatoria for commercial purposes during the tourist season, partners are adapting their programming to the **rapidly changing situation on the ground**. Refugees who were temporarily accommodated at the TAFs were assisted by the BRCS and local authorities in identifying employment opportunities with accommodation or other private accommodation. Partners are therefore working with refugees who are dispersed through all regions of the country and adapt their services accordingly.

UNDP Accelerator Lab partners with the BRCS to develop a **digital platform** that will better connect refugees with support services and opportunities available for them across Belarus. The platform will also be used by BRCS volunteers as a tool to support counselling for refugees. UNDP advocates for digital solutions that are inclusive. The platform will also benefit local communities and vulnerable groups. The design of the platform will be demand-driven and informed by the results of a continuous needs assessment of the target groups. Capacities of the target groups will be considered to ensure the accessibility and user-friendly presentation of the information.

More assistance will be needed particularly in the areas of **child protection** and **GBV prevention and responses** with focus on children, women, elderly people, and persons with disabilities. 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. UASC and other children at heightened risks, need to be identified immediately and referred to protection services, appropriate alternative care arrangements, and other assistance.



## 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

Additional outreach interventions are being conducted in collaboration with the BRCS and CSOs to identify refugee children and support them with essential supplies and uniforms before the new school year starts in September. School administration, teachers and other education specialists require additional support to identify and respond effectively to children's heightened levels of distress. UNICEF is working with key partners, including local authorities, social-pedagogical centers, the BRCS and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to strengthen and scale-up Safe Space programmes in schools in the regions where there may be a high presence of refugees, in particular in Gomel and Brest regions.



## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### Achievements and Impact

To address the current crisis situation, the Ministry of Health (MoH) issued a letter, which stipulates that Ukrainian citizens who fled to Belarus through "humanitarian corridors" are eligible to receive medical treatment on an equal level as 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" and are coming to Belarus "to obtain permits for temporary and permanent residence" from payment for medical services provided by state healthcare organizations.

IOM established referral pathways for refugees from Ukraine with serious medical conditions to the Gomel regional hospital and to Minsk medical institutions for further **medical examination and treatment** and covers related costs. If needed, one-time agreements with medical institutions in other regions are concluded to ensure medical support for refugees in these regions. Eleven beneficiaries were referred to the medical institutions for further assistance. Another 17 persons benefitted from other types of medical support (e.g., payment for medicines, PCR tests).

UNFPA established a referral procedure for sexual and reproductive health services (SRH) to healthcare facilities in Minsk and Gomel region and covers the costs of **women health care** above the national standards (e.g., some diagnostic procedures). So far, two high-cost medical interventions were covered for two Ukrainian women staying in Belarus.

WHO in collaboration with the MoH and the BRCS reallocated parts of four **medical kits** and proposed to redistribute 5,000 COVID-19 rapid tests, which were previously delivered to Belarus for the mixed movements situation at the EU-Belarus border, to the Ukraine refugee situation. Each medical kit can be

used for providing medical care and treatment for a population of 10,000 for three months. One part of the medical kits has been distributed to healthcare facilities in Gomel region. IOM has procured a pack of vouchers, which can be used by beneficiaries for the procurement of medicines in local pharmacies. 78 beneficiaries were supported with these vouchers.

IOM has hired one psychologist to receive referrals from psycho-social services and provide follow-up **mental health consultations** to those in need. 52 refugees and migrants have so far received psycho-social support and psychological assistance and counselling.

An online **training on immunization** and health for BRCS specialists was organized by UNICEF. 18 BRCS specialists from across Belarus were trained on main child immunization issues and the importance of immunization promotion for Ukrainian refugees; access to healthcare services for Ukrainian refugees; and availability of hotline support for children and parents in crisis situations including for victims or witnesses of violence and/or abuse.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Some groups of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus, particularly adult third country nationals who are still in the asylum procedure, will have to pay for most medical services that go beyond emergency medical treatment. According to some reports, the letter by the MoH leaves room for interpretation in regions other than Gomel region. Individual cases of persons in need for medical treatment whose medical expenses were not covered have been reported. Given the circumstances and possible loss of income, such individual cases need **financial support or medical services provided free of charge**, particularly the most vulnerable.

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



## FOOD SECURITY

### Achievements and Impact

UNHCR has allocated USD 18,000 for the provision of **food kits** to reach about 1,200 refugees from Ukraine. As of 31 July, IOM has assisted 432 individuals directly with food kits. IOM re-channeled for distribution in all regions of Belarus 12,400 food kits that had been purchased previously by the BRCS.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Two BRCS tent transit points at border crossing points with Ukraine are currently not operational because of low arrival numbers directly from Ukraine. The BRCS has the capacity to re-open the transit points whenever and wherever the need is identified.





## SHELTER AND BASIC NEEDS

### Achievements and Impact

Since the closure of the TAFs, refugees from Ukraine arriving in Belarus self-accommodate with relatives or friends or seek other accommodation. The BRCS and the regional authorities are supporting refugees in identifying opportunities for accommodation, some of them linked to employment opportunities.

UNHCR is supporting refugees from Ukraine to self-accommodate in the host communities through providing them with needed textile products in Gomel region. In July, 57 persons have received assistance reaching a total of 114 individuals (33 women, 21 men, 10 girls, 19 boys, 23 elderly women, 8 elderly men). More items are being purchased as the needs are identified.

IOM is providing direct assistance to refugees from Ukraine and third country nationals not in need for international protection who approach IOM's office in Minsk and IOM's project sites in Gomel, Brest, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. The needs of those approaching IOM are being assessed. Since the closure of the TAFs, 776 individuals in need for assistance have approached IOM. As of the end of July, 432 refugees from Ukraine were assisted directly with hygiene items, and non-food items. Clothes and shoes for the total amount of around USD 11,000 were donated by IOM to the Gomel branch of the BRCS for further distribution among refugees from Ukraine. Three kitchen and household sets were procured and handed over to one family in Gomel region.



Inter-agency partners have re-channeled funds and assistance that had previously been allocated or purchased for the EU-Belarus mixed movement situation in Grodno region. UNICEF has reallocated USD 70,000 to the Ukraine refugee situation to procure clothes, shoes, toys, games, stationery, and hygiene items for children and an additional USD 30,000 have been made available for families. UNHCR has re-channeled 8,000 thermal blankets and 2,000 mattresses to the Ukraine refugee situation. More than 280 blankets have been distributed to refugees from Ukraine at border crossing points during the registration process and to TAFs as needed. UNICEF procured locally 3,600 hygiene kits for approximately 6,600 individuals. As of the end of July, 884 individuals, including 744 children (370 girls and 374 boys) have received the kits. 7,800 hygiene kits that had been purchased previously by BRCS were re-channeled for refugees from Ukraine. The kits are being distributed in all regions of the country.

In June 2022, IOM started to provide assistance with accommodation and as of the end of July, eight persons were already assisted with sheltering.

Last year, UNHCR supported the renovation of the BRCS crisis center in Gomel with USD 25,000. The crisis center provides temporary accommodation to families in need, particularly women at risk or survivors of violence. Since the beginning of the Ukraine emergency, the crisis room is increasingly needed. UNHCR is investing another USD 10,500 for further expansion and winterization.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Due to decreasing numbers of arrivals and the sanatoria being booked for commercial purposes, the TAFs have been fully vacated. The dormitory in Brest region and the regular TAFs that host asylum-seekers in Gomel and Vitebsk regions continue to temporarily host a small number of refugees from Ukraine. Other options have been identified by the local authorities and the BRCS. The programmes by inter-agency partners are being adapted accordingly. Inter-agency partners are also planning for interventions related to winterization while receiving an increasing number of requests for warm clothes and shoes in all regions of the country.

Some refugees who are relocating to private accommodation in the host communities have expressed their need for basic needs items including blankets, pillows, linen, towels, kitchen items, cleaning material, furniture, large household appliances, stationery for school children, clothes, shoes, and medicines. Inter-agency partners are assessing the needs and address these through providing basic needs items and cash assistance to vulnerable populations.

Inter-agency 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

The Government published employment opportunities at the TAFs while these were operational. Most employment opportunities are available in rural locations and collective farms. By the end of July, 67 persons have benefitted from employment facilitation and legal aid services provided by IOM: 26 state fees for employment permits were paid; 30 persons received employment related assistance and legal aid (payment for services); and 11 persons were assisted through IOM sponsorship for vocational training.

UNDP has engaged UN Volunteers (UNVs) to strengthen the BRCS' capacity to deliver crisis response. UNVs assist with information management and conducting a continuous needs and capacity assessment of refugees and local communities to inform comprehensive activities for socio-economic integration of refugees from Ukraine. The assessment is human-centered and continuously engages key stakeholders to inform the development of context-driven solutions. Local communities, vulnerable populations and gender will be an integral part of the assessment.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Inter-agency partners will need to ensure that individuals have access to accurate and timely information to make informed choices. Inter-agency partners are planning a mapping of service providers and referral pathways. 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, SUPPLY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### Achievements and Impact

UNHCR has provided telecommunication equipment to the BRCS to strengthen data collection and allocated USD 10,000 to support related transportation.

IOM started assisting with transportation for arrivals from Ukraine. As of the end of July, 14 beneficiaries were assisted with transportation by IOM.

UNHCR has rented a warehouse in Gomel region to store stocks of non-food items (NFIs) to be able to provide humanitarian assistance quickly.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Additional warehouse space needed to be made available. The capacity of the BRCS was just 70m<sup>2</sup> of space, which was not sufficient to accommodate all incoming supplies.

## Working in partnership

The Government of Belarus leads the response to the Ukraine refugee situation engaging the BRCS as the 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, IFRC, BRCS, and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in an observing role. The RCF can expand to include other actors as required and agreed. Regional local authorities as well as regional service providers are among other important counterparts that the RCF works with in close liaison. The work of the RCF is supported by an Operational Working Group and a Working Group on data collection.

UNHCR leads and coordinates the implementation of the **regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Ukraine situation** in line with the **Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)** and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant Government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. The RRP was officially launched on 27 April. Belarus is reflected under the "Other Countries" chapter. The six RRP partners in Belarus have developed a summary document to outline the multi-partner, multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements in Belarus.

IOM | UNDP | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WHO

### CONTACTS

**Denise Baruch-Kotulla**, External Relations Officer,  
kotulla@unhcr.org, Tel: +375 17 328 69 61

**Katsiaryna Golubeva**, Communication and PI Specialist,  
golubeva@unhcr.org, Tel: +375 17 328 69 61

### LINKS

[Regional data portal](#) – [Ukraine Situation RRP](#) – [Belarus RRP Summary Document](#) – [Refugee Funding Tracker](#)