

UNHCR's Protection Response

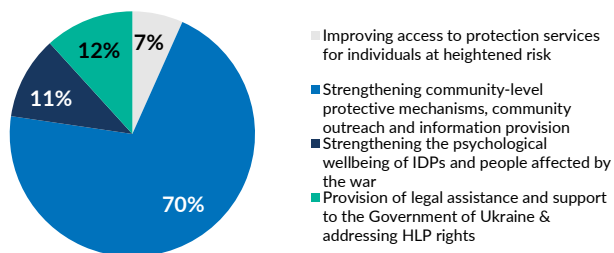
- The protection response by UNHCR and our partners provides tailored support to those most in need, aims to strengthen inclusive national systems and services, and encourages the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in decisions that affect them.
- Our protection response 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 450 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.



Maksym was evacuated from his home in Donetsk oblast. UNHCR partner Proliska provides psycho-social support to Maksym, who now lives in a collective shelter in Vinnitsya oblast. 'Where is home now' is a dominant dilemma many forcibly displaced are confronted with, according to UNHCR's MHPSS providing partners. © UNHCR

- From January to June 2024, UNHCR's protection response has reached **388,714 people**. Of those, 76 per cent are females. 29 per cent or nearly 113,000 are older people above the age of 60 years, while some 14 per cent are minors. Over 34,000 people supported are living with a disability.
- UNHCR and partners promoted legal and policy developments through **82 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 **30,950 people living in collective sites**. Of those, nearly 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 - June 2024



Protection response: regional reach
January - June 2024



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 pursues both, 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 as well as individual 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, the Prykhystok financial support for families hosting IDPs or the winter cash response.

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS: JANUARY- JUNE 2024

Ukraine's sophisticated legal system makes free legal aid indispensable, a foundational part of the humanitarian response and enabler of durable solution to displacement for the millions of displaced Ukrainians. During the first half of 2024, UNHCR with partners provided **over 81,500 legal consultations benefiting over 50,000 people with legal assistance**. Our legal aid enables people to access Government social assistance and services, personal documentation and recover their housing, land and property rights. Legal aid makes an important difference in the lives of people: A child born in the temporarily occupied territories receives a birth certificate and is no longer at risk of statelessness; an older couple in Lviv that fled from Mariupol gets access to their pensions; a young man with a disability now receives social assistance and services; a widow obtains the property title for her home in a de-occupied area; an asylum-seeker can access the national the asylum system and receives an official document.

UNHCR's legal aid programme reinforces and complements Ukraine's free legal aid system and systematically strengthens the capacity of the Free Legal Aid Centres (FLACs) across the country. In the first half of 2024, **UNHCR with its partners conducted nine capacity building initiatives for lawyers of the FLACs from 18 regions**. The capacity building initiatives covered a range of legal topics, including on housing, land and property rights restoration and identity and civil documentation, as well as access to Government assistance and services. UNHCR partners also organized several round tables and trainings for staff of the Ombudsperson office and FLACs from 12 regions on the asylum procedure, rights of refugees and asylum seekers and current challenges they are facing.

Based on a mapping of community organizations of refugees, complementary protection holders, and asylum seekers in Ukraine and building up to World Refugee Day, UNHCR and partners continued advocacy efforts for the integration of refugees through a **roundtable highlighting the experience of refugee communities**, their challenges, and their prospects. UNHCR and partners convened experts, Government representatives, representatives of the Employment Centre, leaders of refugee communities, and public organizations. Participants discussed the need for language courses, opportunities for socio-cultural orientation, and employment support.

UNHCR and partners continue to invest in community capacity and resiliency and contribute to the important role of an inclusive civil society in humanitarian and recovery efforts. One such example is the **'RIKA Club' - a support tool for hromadas for maintaining social cohesion and enabling IDPs' early inclusion in their community**. These clubs are implemented in rural and urban areas of eight oblasts by UNHCR's partner TTA, including in frontline oblasts such as Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, Khersonska and Zaporizka. They apply a methodology centred on dialogue, language and communication in stressful times. The RIKA clubs take place at community centres or other safe spaces and invite a wide variety of participants of all ages and backgrounds – including minority groups and persons with specific needs. Benefits observed from RIKA clubs across Ukraine include encouragement to speak and practice the Ukrainian language, the opportunity to make connections especially among older persons above the age of 60, reduction in self-doubt among youth, and breaking down of stereotypes among people from different backgrounds. On 18 June, a RIKA club devoted to World Refugee Day was held in Mykolaj-Pole, Shyrokiwska hromada of Zaporizka oblast in which the Mennonite Family Centre participated, promoting unity, humanity, support to each other and peaceful living together.

My story: Hope away from Home

Olena and her husband, both in their 60ies, were forced to flee their home in Kramatorsk early in the war and arrived in Chernivtsi. They left behind their house, in which they lived their entire life. Their only son is not with them as he serves in the Ukrainian armed forces. The separation from their home and their son weighs heavily on Olena's wellbeing. Upon arrival in Chernivtsi, Olena and her husband struggled to find a place to stay, had uncertainties about the continuity of their pension payments, and suffered of anxiety and sleeplessness due to fear and sorrow. UNHCR and its partner were able to provide psycho-social support and legal aid to the couple and introduced them to the '3d Age University' in Chernivtsi, a community initiative supported by UNHCR offering a host of learning opportunities and social and cultural activities for older people. Since, they have regularly visited '3d Age University' to participate in its activities and found a new social support network, which gives them hope away from home.

IN FOCUS: ADDRESSING STATELESSNESS

In 2024, UNHCR is marking 30 years in Ukraine. The agency started its journey in Ukraine with partner 'Assistance' in 1994 by supporting mainly Crimean Tatars to return from forced exile and acquiring Ukrainian nationality. 30 years later, reducing, preventing and addressing statelessness remains an important pillar of UNHCR's work in Ukraine closely collaborating with the State Migration Service and NGO partners.

A stateless person is someone who does not have a nationality of any State. Some people are born stateless, but others become stateless later in life. Statelessness can lead to a devastating cycle of deprivation, vulnerability, and exposure to risk, abuse and exploitation. A person without nationality is often denied other basic rights such as medical help, going to school, or moving freely. **For many, it is a life in invisibility.**

- During the first six months of 2024, UNHCR and its partners worked in 15 regions of Ukraine to extend support to stateless people. Our legal assistance helped **nearly 2,000 stateless persons, persons with undetermined nationality and persons at risk of statelessness**, of whom 38 per cent are women. The nearly 2,000 people have documents now and their nationality or statelessness status confirmed, which means that they can equally access administrative, judicial and social protection services, the labour market, and no longer live in invisibility.
- By mid-2024, our **advocacy efforts to reduce fees for identity documentation** was successful in 11 hromadas in Zakarpatska, Kirovohradska and Cherkaska where local councils approved the reduction of fees.
- Our **material support with equipment to Civil Registries** in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyivska, Khelmytskyi, Cherkasy and the city of Kyiv helps to improve the issuance of birth and identity documents.
- UNHCR and partners opened two **Roma Hubs** in Mukachevo and Berehovo city of Zakarpatska oblast, in alignment with the Government Action Plan implementing the National Roma Strategy by 2030 ([see press release](#)). The hubs were refurbished and equipped as multi-functional spaces for Roma communities. Activities include Ukrainian language classes, literacy and vocational training, child education, and rights awareness, alongside legal and psychosocial support.
- For **peer support among stateless people**, online channels were set up to exchange, share experience, seek support and provide advice. UNHCR's legal aid partner, R2P, also set up a channel in which legal and other relevant information is shared quickly and efficiently for awareness. These channels are in active use.



Akhmed provides his fingerprints for the purpose to verify his identity at the office of the State Migration Service. © TTA

Akhmed was born in Azerbaijan in 1991. He is of Armenian ethnicity. Forced to flee Azerbaijan when the war in Karabakh started, his parents did not register his birth and arrived in Ukraine with their undocumented son in 1992. His parents tried to obtain a document, but Akhmed was left in a limbo. Azerbaijan did not recognize him as a national and in Ukraine he could not obtain an identity document as his birth was not registered. As a result, Akhmed lived his life without document, and while he attended school in Ukraine, he could not obtain a certificate. He could also not officially register his marriage or legal paternity for his children. He approached UNHCR's legal partner TTA in October 2020 to embark on a long and complicated legal journey to obtain a document. In November 2022, he received his birth certificate after the fact of birth was established by court, and in spring 2023, after being recognized as a stateless person by Ukraine, received his first identity document.

2024 is an important year in our global efforts to eradicate statelessness. After 10 years and important progress made, UNHCR concludes its '#I Belong' campaign and launches the **Global Alliance to End Statelessness** on 14 October 2024 to carry this important work forward.

In Ukraine, UNHCR jointly with Government counterparts and partners will organize an event to mark the conclusion of the '#I Belong' campaign and highlight the progress made in reducing and preventing statelessness in Ukraine, while charting the way forward on this important endeavour to end statelessness as one stateless person is one too many.

PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING

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

1. **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.
2. **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. During the first half of 2024, nearly 8,000 people received support at the borders.
3. **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 is scheduled for July and 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 15 of the **protection monitoring** (May 2024) reports that the destruction of civilian property and public infrastructure followed by the contamination with explosive hazards remain key safety and security concerns, predominantly reported in the crescent, with civilian death and injury due to war most commonly reported in Dnipropetrovksa, Sumska, Kharkivska and Zaporizka oblasts. UNHCR's legal aid partner reported a pattern of difficulties for people to obtain war-related disability status if they sustained the injury in an area not included in the list of territories in which hostilities are/were conducted or that are temporarily occupied. A finding which the Protection Cluster's monitoring confirmed. Lack of civil documentation remains a main obstacle to access formal employment, governmental social benefits, assistance and services, while length, cost or complexity of legal processes are reported as key barriers for people to restore their housing, land and property rights. Older people and people with disabilities lack access to specialized services. Limitations to critical social services, notably for home-based care and assisted living amongst others, can mean that people able to live independently risk ending up in institutions in the absence of a viable alternative.

The **border monitoring** noted an increase in cross-border movements from February 2024 onwards. Overall, during the first half of 2024, there was a greater outflow than inflow to Ukraine. The highest net outflow to date was recorded in June likely related to summer vacation and seasonal work abroad. 29 percent of those interviewed upon departure said they were departing Ukraine for the first time since the onset of the full-scale invasion, with a peak in May, potentially linked to the escalation in Kharkiv. Family-related reasons and the need to check on property left behind remain the primary response for people returning to Ukraine. The majority of those returning during the first half of 2024, at 84 per cent, only intends to stay short-term, while 46 per cent of those departing Ukraine are uncertain about the exact period of their stay abroad. Safety and security considerations remain the top consideration by almost all who depart. In June, lack of access to electricity, water and heating likely linked to the energy situation is reported as a reason for their departure by an increasing number of people (25 per cent).

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](#).

CONTACTS:

- Nina Schrepfer, Assistant Representative - Protection, UNHCR Ukraine schrepfe@unhcr.org

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