

Alert

Ukraine

Further Humanitarian Assistance to IPDs and Refugees from Eastern Ukraine in Russia & Ukraine - *Follow on response to ACT appeal UKR151*

Geneva, 27 July 2015

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

The humanitarian situation in Eastern Ukraine deteriorated dramatically in the spring of 2014 as a result of fighting clashes between militia armed groups in Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine. The militia proclaimed autonomy of their territory from the central authorities of Ukraine.

As a result of active hostilities which involved use of war planes, tanks, heavy artillery and multiple rocket launcher systems; the industry, agriculture, homes and infrastructure in the two regions were largely destroyed.

One of the consequences of hostilities has been thousands of refugees fleeing to neighboring regions of Ukraine, and to the territory of Russia.

The main factors that continue to define this humanitarian situation are:

- Uncertainty about the future (including political and economic situation) of the conflict territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine,
- No possibility of the affected civilian population in these areas to predict and plan for the future and to return to peaceful life.

To date, according to the Federal Migration Service (FMS) of Russia there are 2.6 million Ukrainians in Russia. They are the ones who come to visit their relatives; on private business; in search of work; had fled from conscription to the military regular service and participation in hostilities; as well as refugees from the south-eastern Ukraine. Of these, about 550 thousand persons received either refugee status or temporary asylum or a temporary residence permit. These statuses, in accordance with Russian law, allow them to stay in Russia for a long time, a year or more. Other types of permits for stay in Russia were given to about 500 thousand persons.

By 10 July, 2015, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (MoSP) had registered 1,381,953 IDPs in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2014 at least 6,764 people were killed and another 16,877 wounded in the conflict zone of eastern Ukraine. Fighting is going on both in government controlled and non-government controlled areas such as Donetsk city and Donetsk airport, Spartak, Piski, Yasinovatskiy district, Staromikhailovka, Avdiivka, Horlivka, Krymske, Katerynivka, Tryokhizbenka, Troitske,

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Bakhmutskiyi. Shelling continues to damage basic services infrastructure, leaving many civilians without access to safe water, power and other essential services. In mid-July, 2015 the situation became more complex and alarming when in Western Ukraine in Mukachevo/Munkács close to the Hungarian border, clashes occurred between nationalist militias and government armed forces.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

Refugees and IDPs who have left the combat zones were only able to take with them a minimum amount of household items. Due to the harsh conditions of winter in Ukraine and Russia, winterization is considered as lifesaving assistance and considered one of the most important objectives of this ACT Alliance follow on response.

According to local church structures in Russia and Ukraine who are providing assistance to refugees and IDPs; the highest concentration of the most needy refugees and IDPs is the border and neighboring areas of Russia and the Kiev and eastern regions of Ukraine. These areas are currently in dire need of hygiene items and psychosocial assistance. According to a survey conducted by the Hungarian InterChurchAid in June this year most IDPs from the Eastern region are in need of food and non-food items, and medication.

3. National and international response

Besides various support of the Ukrainian and Russian governments, UN bodies, international aid organizations and local NGOs are actively providing assistance. However, according to UNOCHA, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Ukraine is significantly underfunded. At present, both in Ukraine and in Russia the economic crisis is developing; production declines, jobs are cut, and inflation is rising. In 2014-2015 the local currency devalued significantly (the Russian Rouble by 85% against the dollar, Ukrainian Hryvnia – by 250%). The living standards of refugees/IDPs-receiving families and communities continue to drop significantly.

4. ACT Alliance response

ACT members the Hungarian InterChurchAid (HIA) and Russian Orthodox Church – Department for External Relations (ROC/DECR) will respond.

Since January, 2015 HIA is one of the implementing agency of ACT Appeal UKR151 and has been providing assistance in 10 regions of Ukraine (Donetsk/Mariupol, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhia, Ivano Frankivsk, Lviv, Transcarpathia, Kyiv) supporting a total of 18,096 people. Support has also been sought from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and private donors. In Ivano Frankivsk the IDP coordination center has been established on the basis of an earlier HIA capacity building process for Western Ukrainian stakeholders.

Since the beginning of the conflict the ACT member - Russian Orthodox Church/Department for External Church Relations provided assistance to refugees and IDPs from Eastern Ukraine on the territory of Russia and Ukraine. More than 128 mln Roubles (about 2.3 million US dollars at current exchange rate) were collected to help the affected civilian population in Eastern Ukraine and refugees. Dioceses, parishes and church organizations used these funds for ongoing assistance to the most needy. Support has also come through ACT Appeal UKR151, the Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

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5. Planned activities

The ROC / DECR plans to focus on two sectors of response which are hygiene; and psychosocial assistance. The regions of implementation will be Kiev region of Ukraine, and the border and neighbouring regions of Russia.

HIA plans to respond in the food security; water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter and non-food items; and health. The planned geographical areas of intervention are: Kharkiv, Kiev, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk, Transcarpathia

The New ACT appeal will be from 01 September 2015 to 31 August 2016.

6. Constraints

The main difficulty is the unpredictable political and economic situation in the geographical areas of conflict, and possible resumption of hostilities. Difficulties are likely to be experienced regarding cooperation with state authorities and unclear and changing rules. Other constraints include difficulties in transporting aid relief items to non-government controlled areas (NGCAs); obstructed movement of humanitarian shipments within the country; outages in water, electricity and gas supply.

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