

# Alert

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Ukraine, Russia

## Support to cold snap affected people from East Ukraine (IDPs, refugees and non-displaced conflict population)

Geneva, 17 January 2017

### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

In January 2017 arctic cold, which brought a record breaking low temperature, paralyzed Russia, Ukraine and the whole Eastern Europe. The temperature in the region dropped to -30°C, resulting in transport collapse and damage to communal infrastructure, disruption of heat and electricity supply, frostbite of hundreds of people and a rapid growth of flu and other diseases rate in many places. Harsh weather has led to a drop of temperature in the places where Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees found shelter and which were constructed not for low temperatures<sup>1</sup>. The frosts damaged heat systems and led to disruptions of heat supply. According to the meteorological forecast, Ukraine and Russia expect new bursts of cold weather in February, with temperatures that can plunge down to -20°C.

The cold snap, affecting IDPs, refugees and the local population alike, further exacerbates the negative impact and increases the level of vulnerability caused by the violent conflict. As a reminder, since April 2014 the conflict between militia armed groups in Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine as well as the forces and armed groups under the central government in Kiev resulted in a humanitarian crisis with over almost 2 Mio. people internally displaced and almost 1 Mio. people becoming refugees in Russia<sup>2</sup>.

### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

As mentioned above, refugees and IDPs found themselves further at risk and additional humanitarian needs arose due to the harsh winter. At the same time, both in Russia and Ukraine, the ongoing economic crisis strictly limited funds that can be spent on emergency assistance to the refugees and IDPs to fight cold. In addition, the international funding to support the basic needs of IDPs and refugees remains low<sup>3</sup>. All of this has critically worsened their situation and requires urgent action to save lives and health. Besides the harsh winter continuation of fighting also further impedes access to basic services. As damage to private housing continues to be recorded, amidst rising costs for heating material and utility tariffs, winterization assistance is urgently needed.

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1 Inside temperatures in houses reaching only +7 to +9°C.

2 For more information please read the ACT appeal 'IDPs and Refugees in Ukraine and Russia' available online: <http://actalliance.org/appeals-rapid-response-funds/idps-and-refugees-in-ukraine-and-russia-ukr161/>

3 The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 in Ukraine received only US\$97.5 million, or 33% of the required US\$298 million. The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 has already started, but it is likely that this year the plan will not receive sufficient funding either.

### 3. National and international response

Local authorities, LNGOs, INGOs, volunteer groups are trying to secure IDPs all over Ukraine, especially in the east of the country with necessary winterization materials. The most significant part of aid is traditionally provided by the synergy of INGOs and Ukrainian NGOs - according to the previously approved Winterization Plan 2016/17 such organizations like UNHCR, ADRA, DRC, NRC, PIN, HelpAge International, Right to Protection, Crimea SOS, Stanstia Kharkiv, Slovianske Sertse – targeted 5,000 vulnerable households (2,000 in NGCA Donetsk and 3,000 GCA Donetsk and Luhansk) to distribute heating material. Nevertheless the Plan is by far not enough to cover all urgent winterization needs of vulnerable population especially non-displaced conflict affected population residing near the line of contact, experiencing ongoing damage to shelter and infrastructure and/or restricted access to markets.

### 4. ACT Alliance response

From the very beginning of the conflict in 2014, the ACT members - Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) and Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) have been providing assistance to refugees and IDPs from Eastern Ukraine on the territory of Russia and Ukraine in the sectors of food security, water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH), health, nutrition and psychosocial support, Shelter & Non-Food Items (NFI) within ACT Appeals UKR151, UKR152 and UKR161 to assist the most affected refugees and IDPs in Ukraine and Russia. Besides ACT Appeals, ROC and HIA used their own funds and assistance of inter-Christian Church partners.

### 5. Planned activities

ROC: NFI - emergency provision of warm blankets and bedding to the most vulnerable refugees from south-east Ukraine in Belgorod region, Russia in January-February 2017 (within one month).

HIA: NFI - emergency provision of heating material for IDPs and most vulnerable non-displaced conflict affected population residing near the line of contact (especially for single pensioners, families with 2 or more children, people with disabilities, and people who did not receive support). In order to cover additional needs of winter NFIs, ROC and HIA request for Rapid Response Funds with a total of USD 60.000.

### 6. Constraints

- Possible traffic jams on the roads to the places of IDPs accommodation due to heavy snowfalls.
- Possibility of black ice that would make target settlements in rural areas temporarily inaccessible.
- Repatriation of damaged houses is still a problem, since fighting going on at different conflict zones.
- The continuation of the hostilities might affect the implementation.

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