

Briefing Note – 10 March 2015

Eastern Ukraine: Conflict



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Urgent
Expected impact	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Major

Crisis Overview

- A surge of violence since mid-January, including battle for the city of Debaltseve in mid-February, has caused a wave of new displacement into government-controlled areas.
- Food security and protection continue to be major concerns for people in non-government-controlled areas who are cut off from supplies, especially older people who did not register as IDPs before the 1 February deadline, and other vulnerable groups. Food security is further constrained by rising food prices.
- The local currency (hryvnia) has been devalued by 50%, contributing to a reduction in households' purchasing power.
- In Luhansk region, the shortage of medicines and essential supplies, including food, is even more acute, and the humanitarian situation is particularly alarming.

Affected groups	Number affected
No. of affected people	5,000,000
No. of affected children	1,700,000
No. of people killed	> 6,000
No. of children killed	> 63
No. of people injured	> 10,740
No. of children injured	> 169
No. of people missing	unknown
Total IDPs in Ukraine ¹	> 1,099,600
Registered internally displaced children	> 140,483
External displacement to neighbouring countries	> 707,000

Sources: HCT 24/02/2015; OCHA 02/03/2015, UN 02/03/2015, UNHCR 23/02/2015; UNICEF, 06/03/2015.

Key Findings

Anticipated scope and scale

Close to 1.1 million people displaced. Key reception areas are areas under government control in Donetsk (390,500) and Luhansk regions (138,500), Kharkiv (145,100), Zaporizhzhia (79,100) and Dnipropetrovsk regions (71,000), and Kiev (80,100). In February, 56,000 people were newly displaced in Donetsk, 26,500 in Luhansk and 23,000 in Kharkiv. If the 15 February ceasefire does not hold, further displacement is likely and the situation in non-government-controlled areas is likely to worsen due to insecurity and access constraints. See map page 6 for details on displacement.

Priorities for humanitarian intervention

Protection: Support to those not registered to the national pension fund; prevention of rising sexual violence against women and improving their access to information.

Food security and livelihoods: Support for small-scale farmers; support to populations to counter the rise in food prices.

Health: Improved access and availability of medicine and healthcare in government- and non-government-controlled areas; enhance psychological care for children; nutrition support for displaced pregnant and lactating women.

Shelter and NFIs: Support to populations in areas destroyed or damaged by conflict; improve shelter solutions for IDPs.

WASH: Restoration of water and sanitation infrastructure, and access to safe drinking water in conflict areas and IDP shelters.

Education: Uninterrupted education for children in safe and functional learning spaces.

Humanitarian constraints

- Insecurity due to violation of ceasefire likely to continue.
- Trapped communities in conflict-affected areas.
- Roads and transportation infrastructure damaged.
- Significant logistical and legal/administrative barriers, hampering the delivery of aid.
- Estimates of IDP numbers still vary widely.

Crisis Impact

Protection

5.05 million people are in need of protection in 2015, compared to 1.25 million at the end of 2014 (HCT 24/02/2015; HCT 08/12/2014).

Civilian casualties: Civilian casualty numbers have risen with the intensification of fighting over past weeks. As of end February, nearly 5,810 people have been killed in eastern Ukraine since April 2014, and 14,740 wounded. Reports of casualties from recent clashes, notably around Donetsk airport and in the Debaltseve area, are still pending (UN 02/03/2015).

Requirement to register as an IDP to be eligible for social payments/pensions: 250,163 of 807,921 pensioners who applied to the Pension Fund to receive their pensions in their temporary place of residence did not register by the deadline of 1 February 2015 and are at risk of financial hardship. Also, the situation for older people in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk continues to worsen, as they struggle to meet basic needs while not having received pensions for many months (OCHA 20/02/2015).

Gender-based violence (GBV): Violence against women is a growing public concern in crisis-affected areas. Lack of documented cases, survivor's reluctance to turn to help, and lack of information on the social services available hampers response (GBV Sub-Cluster 30/01/2015). Main perpetrators are male fighters from both sides (GBV Sub-Cluster 13/02/2015).

Food Security and Livelihoods

1.8 million people are in need of food assistance, and 2.7 million in need of livelihood assistance in 2015, compared to 1.1 million and 1.2 million, respectively, at the end of 2014 (HCT,24/02/2015; HCT 08/12/2014).

Agriculture: Some farming enterprises close to the conflict zone have reportedly lost up to 30% of their winter harvest, as they were unable to plant autumn crops properly due to continued conflict. 13% of wheat, barley, and maize, and up to 30% of sunflower crops were not harvested in 2014 due to displacement, corresponding to losses of 530,000 and 400,000 metric tons. 80,250 people living in small farming households in rural areas need assistance in the next six months, particularly animal feed and spring and vegetable fertilizers, which households are unable to purchase (Government/FAO 31/01/2015).

Rising food prices: Food prices have risen especially in the eastern parts of the country. A survey carried out in January found that prices in the area have gone up 30% in a year for items such as bread and milk, and by 75–80 % for meat and cheese

(WFP 19/02/2015). January saw a seasonal increase in fruit and vegetable prices (by 17.8% month-on-month and 13.5% month-on-month, respectively) (Raiffeisen Aval 19/02/2015).

Health

Access to medicine and healthcare: 4.5 million people are estimated to be in need of healthcare in 2015, compared to 1.4 million at the end of 2014 (HCT, 24/02/2015; HCT, 08/12/2014). Access to health services and medicines is based on out-of-pocket payment, and is hampered by losses in IDP purchasing power (HTC 02/2015). The situation has aggravated following the 3% rise in healthcare prices in January, due to a 3.3% increase in medicine prices (Raiffeisen Aval 19/02/2015). The health budget for 2015 will only cover an estimated 30% of needs, due to the devaluation of the Ukrainian currency. There are no extra-budgetary resources allocated for IDP health services (OCHA 24/02/2015).

Availability of healthcare: Reported inadequate provision of specialist care for the chronically ill (oncological, neurological, etc.) in IDP shelters, leading to overloading of inpatient care units in hospitals (OCHA 06/02/2015). Areas under government control are expected to run out of drug supplies for HIV and tuberculosis (TB) patients by March (OCHA 23/01/2015). Medical facilities in non-government-controlled areas rely entirely on humanitarian aid. They face shortages of medicine, hygiene kits, and crucial drugs for patients in psycho-neurological care (nearly 2,330 in Luhansk region) (OHCHR 15/02/2015). There is also a significant insulin need for diabetes patients in Donetsk (OCHA 13/02/2015).

Disease: Seasonal flu incidence has exceeded the normal threshold in Khmelnytska, Vinnytska, and Volynska regions, while hepatitis A incidence is growing in the Donbas area (OCHA 20/02/2015; OCHA 13/02/2015). New TB cases have increased by 5% in non-government-controlled areas in Donetsk, mainly among older people and combatants (OCHA 06/02/2015).

Nutrition: Nutrition support is urgently needed for IDPs and for populations in non-government-controlled areas (OCHA 13/02/2015).

Psychological trauma: Reports indicate a rising trend in aggressive behaviour, particularly among boys under 12, anxiety, and sleeping trouble (IMC 01/2015). An assessment in government-controlled areas in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk showed that overcrowding is affecting some IDP children's behaviour (PI, 01/2015).

Shelter and NFIs

1.4 million people are in urgent need of shelter and NFIs in 2015, compared to 850,000 at the end of 2014 (HCT, 24/02/2015; HCT, 08/12/2014). Populations in cities where shelling is ongoing are living in underground shelters, in acute need of basic NFIs

(OCHA 30/01/2015). The situation for people living near Donetsk airport is extremely difficult, with no water or electricity supply for the past two months (OCHA 20/02/2015).

Destruction and damage of houses has severely impacted people in non-government-controlled areas. Many IDPs left their homes without basic belongings and warm clothes (UNHCR, 06/02/2015). Almost all buildings in the centre of Debaltseve have been destroyed or severely damaged (UNIAN 26/02/2015).

Stretched accommodation capacity: In January, accommodation capacity in regions neighbouring the conflict area was almost exhausted (OHCHR 15/02/2015). Further displacement due to shelling in several locations in February triggered increased shelter needs in these areas (Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Sviatohirsk), and in transportation hubs (Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Kiev) (OCHA 13/02/2015). IDPs renting accommodation seem to be excluded from any humanitarian assistance, and could be in a worse situation than those in collective centres (UNHCR, 06/02/2015).

WASH

Water supply: At least 700,000 people are without access to drinking water (HCT, 24/02/2015). The most vulnerable people are in the Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions. More than 300,000 people in 20 towns and villages at or near the frontline in Donetsk and Lugansk regions do not have, or have only very limited, access to safe drinking water (WASH Cluster 05/02/2015).

Waterborne diseases: Due to the interrupted or limited supply of safe drinking water, the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks is high (UNICEF, 07/10/2014). In February, numerous cases of intestinal diseases were reported in Horlivka, in Donetsk region (WASH Cluster 05/02/2015, OCHA 13/02/2015).

WASH situation in shelters: People sheltering in bunkers in Donetsk city reportedly do not have access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene supplies (WASH Cluster 05/02/2015).

Education

As of 16 February, the Ministry of Education and Science reported 76,219 IDP children registered in schools and kindergartens in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kiev regions, out of nearly 140,500 IDP children in the country (OCHA 20/02/2015).

Critical Infrastructure

Debaltseve is a key transport hub as its railway connects Luhansk and Donetsk cities, and its roads and railways lead into Russia, is now under separatist control (Reuters 28/02/2015, Guardian 17/02/2015, WSJ 19/02/2015, DW 18/02/2015). Trains from Kiev to Mariupol are no longer running after a bridge in Mariupol was bombed in December 2014, and no trains are going into non-government-controlled areas in Donetsk (IMC 01/2015).

Vulnerable Groups Affected

Older people: The situation of older people in Donetsk and Luhansk regions is worsening, as lack of payment of pensions is preventing them from satisfying basic needs, and particularly alarming in remote rural areas and areas where conflict is active. Access to food and medicine is almost non-existent for many immobile older people; they often depend on others' willingness to seek out medication, groceries, and NFIs for them (OCHA 20/02/2015; IMC 01/2015). As of end January, almost 4,000 older people remained in 20 nursing homes in non-government-controlled areas (Protection Cluster 28/01/2015). Members of armed groups are not allowing their evacuation to government-controlled areas, and in any case many are not consenting to evacuation (HelpAge, 25/02/2015). There are reports that staffing levels are low and care is inadequate due as salaries are not being paid. Needs at nursing homes include food, medical supplies and NFIs (PI, 06/03/2015).

People in state institutions in non-government-controlled areas: Institutions such as hospitals, nurseries, and prisons still operate but are reportedly running out of food, medicine, and funds. 577 children remain in orphanages and 5,000 in family foster care (OHCHR 15/02/2015, Protection Cluster 14/01/2015).

Humanitarian and Operational Constraints

Trapped communities: Some of the 300,000 inhabitants of Debaltseve, Horlivka and Svitlodarsk, in Donetsk region, managed to escape, but many civilians still remain stranded in hard-to-reach areas. Around 5,000 civilians out of 25,000 living in Debaltseve before the crisis, are thought to be trapped in the city (UN 30/01/2015; ICRC 22/02/2015).

Logistical constraints: Getting in and out of the conflict zone is becoming more difficult for humanitarians, mainly due to changing regulatory frameworks (MSF, 23/01/2015). Customs procedures are complicated: while the majority of humanitarian goods are purchased in the country, medical goods and specialist relief kits are imported, and the process is tightly framed and reportedly hampers operations (Logistics Cluster 16/02/2015). Convoys of humanitarian aid organised by local volunteer organisations were denied access in eastern Ukraine in February, due to lack of proper documentation (UNHCR, 06/02/2015). Legal constraints are further blocking the distribution of medicines, including TB and insulin, to non-government-controlled areas (OCHA 27/02/2015).

Road conditions: Humanitarian cargo destined for non-government-controlled areas are entering via Donetsk and include assistance for Luhansk. This is due to more severe access constraints into Luhansk region in terms of deteriorated road conditions as a result of shelling, access risks posed by UXO and IEDs along roads, and damage

to the Stanytsia Luhanska Bridge, which can now only support small vehicles (OCHA 27/02/2015).

Transportation: The majority of Ukrainian commercial entities are not willing to transport goods into non-government-controlled areas, and transport companies are not insured in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic zones (OCHA 27/02/2015; MSF 09/12/2014). Other transport limitations include vehicle permit requirements, and delays and expenses induced by the numerous checkpoints into these areas (Logistics Cluster 02/03/2015). Fuel shortages also hamper movement in non-government-controlled areas (PI, 03/2015).

Communications are reportedly an issue in the non-government-controlled areas, with both internet and cell phone connections subject to lengthy interruptions as a result of shelling (Logistics Cluster 02/03/2015).

Differing IDP numbers: There is concern that the current IDP registration system operated by the Ministry of Social Policy is not capturing population movements in real time. The discrepancy between the real and registered numbers of IDPs is considered a major issue, hampering the delivery of assistance (OCHA 30/01/2015).

Potential Aggravating Factors

Economic Situation

The economic situation has worsened as throughout the conflict. Overall, GDP fell by an estimated 7% in 2014, while inflation reached almost 25%. The value of the local currency (hryvnia) fell by 50%; a temporary ban on foreign currency purchases early February caused the currency to fall to a historic low against the US dollar (Raiffeisen Aval 15/01/2015, Raiffeisen Aval 14/12/2014, Raiffeisen Aval 19/02/2015; WSJ 26/02/2015, Business Insider 05/02/2015). In the beginning of March, Ukraine's central bank announced a sharp rise in interest rates, from 19.5% to 30%, as of 4 March (BBC 03/03/2015).

Gas supply and prices

Russia cut gas flows to Ukraine for six months in June 2014 amid a price and debt dispute. A temporary deal brokered by the EU on 17 October allowed supplies to be restored for the winter (AlJazeera 19/10/2014; WSJ 19/10/2014; Reuters 18/10/2014). Talks on deliveries after 31 March are expected in the coming weeks; a discounted price for gas from Russia may be conditional on Ukraine paying for supplies to eastern Ukrainian regions controlled by pro-Russian groups (Bloomberg 03/03/2015, Bloomberg 24/02/2015, Reuters 03/03/2015). Gas prices for the population are set to rise by an average of 280% from 1 April, consistent with a memorandum agreed with the IMF late

February, which will allow Ukraine to receive new funds from the IMF (MW 03/03/2015, UNIAN 03/03/2014, Raiffeisen Aval 19/02/2015).

Response Capacity

National Response

A planned ceasefire on 6 February allowed for the evacuation of civilians from conflict areas; the Ukrainian Government called for support from the UN and ICRC to assist with evacuating children from these affected areas three days earlier, while volunteers in Debaltseve also supported the Government by notifying and mobilising civilians.

On 5 February, the Government announced the formation of a two-tier coordination (policy and day-to-day operations) between the Government and the humanitarian community; it called for the development of a simplified system for humanitarian agencies and cargo to access non-government-controlled areas, and for the removal of taxation on humanitarian aid. There is, however, still a significant lack of clarity about the implications of such a taxation change on operations (OCHA, 06/02/2015; HRP, 24/02/2015).

International Response Capacity

The UN-coordinated 2015 Strategic Response Plan (SRP), launched on 27 November 2014, was revised on 24 February and released as a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), in response to the intensification of the conflict and deterioration of the humanitarian situation. While the substance of the plan remains largely the same as the SRP's and the scenarios valid, the estimated number of people in need of assistance rose from 1.4 million to 5 million, and the number of people targeted by the plan from 900,000 to 3.2 million. The funding requested rose 170%, from USD 189 million to USD 316 million. As of 9 March, the revised plan was only 4% funded. Eight technical clusters are now active in Ukraine; while most clusters were activated in December 2014, the logistics cluster was only officially activated on 18 February (HRP, 24/02/2015; FTS, 09/03/2015; WFP/Logistics Cluster, 18/02/2015).

Contextual Information

Ceasefire

Ukraine and pro-Russian separatist forces signed a peace roadmap on 12 February. The terms of the agreement included the introduction of a full bilateral ceasefire from

15 February, the establishment of a buffer zone around the frontline by the removal of heavy weapons, the release of hostages and illegally detained prisoners, and the restoration of social and economic links with affected areas (BBC 12/02/2015) The ceasefire has been broken repeatedly, most severely when the city of Debaltseve came under separatist control on 19 February (Aljazeera 19/02/2015).

Fighting has eased after the events in Debaltseve, but incidents of shelling continue to be reported, posing a continuing risk to civilians and humanitarian aid supply (MSF 03/03/2015). Ukraine has stepped up the training of its army, and pro-Russian fighters have continued training (Reuters 02/03/2015). Heavy weaponry and foreign fighters, including from the Russian Federation, have reportedly continued to flow into areas of Donetsk and Luhansk controlled by armed groups since December, and evidence is mounting that Russian soldiers are officially fighting in eastern Ukraine (UN 02/03/2015; DW 04/03/2015).

Conscription: The fourth round of military mobilisation since February 2014 was launched in January. Draftees must notify authorities of any change of residence within seven days, or risk prosecution as draft evaders. Adult male IDPs who have not re-registered with the military authorities are particularly at risk. With the President's request that the Cabinet of Ministers develop a regime to restrict the exiting/leaving of Ukraine for military-draft age men, it is foreseen that they will only be able to leave the country with written permission from local military commissions, de facto restricting population movement (OCHA 06/02/2015, Globalsecurity.org 05/02/2015).

Information Gaps and Needs

Protection

- GBV incidents needs to be registered and monitored.
- The number and situation of pensioners and recipients of social benefits who did not leave the non-government-controlled areas needs to be established.
- The situation and needs of those that remain in institutional care in the non-government-controlled areas, and the staffing of these facilities, needs to be further assessed.

Shelter and NFIs

- The situation with respect to heating needs to be investigated.
- The effects of the interruption of electricity supply need to be monitored.
- The shelter and NFI situation of newly arrived IDPs requires assessment.

Health

- The overall situation and availability of medical services, staff, and medical supplies in non-government-controlled areas need further assessment, especially with respect to specialist care, disease monitoring, and the chronically ill.
- Medical services for and screening of newly displaced people need investigation.
- Access to and continuity of vaccination campaigns to prevent and treat communicable diseases require monitoring.
- The outbreak and occurrence of waterborne diseases needs to be monitored.
- Need to conduct assessments and identify priority areas of intervention.

Food Security and Livelihoods

- The income-generating opportunities, purchasing power, employment situation, access to social benefits and pensions, and financial resources available to IDPs and their host community need investigation.
- The effect of stopping the payment of benefits and pensions to people remaining in the non-government-controlled areas and arising needs must be captured.
- Access to and affordability of food and basic commodities and the effects of rising food prices require assessment.
- The needs of IDPs living in rural host communities need to be evaluated and proper agriculture packages for those willing to practice farming and livestock rearing designed.
- The food supply to people in state care institutions in non-government-controlled areas is not known.

WASH

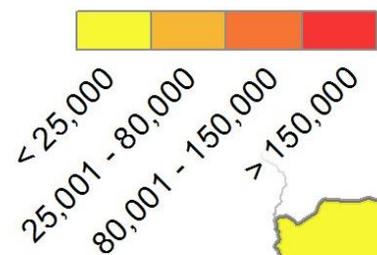
- Updated information on the need for hygiene and sanitation items for IDPs and people in conflict zones is needed.
- The provision of safe water supply and functioning of safe sewage disposal needs to be monitored and repair needs identified.

Education

- Safeguarding uninterrupted access to education for IDP children and children who have remained in the areas of conflict, including kindergarten, and primary and secondary school, needs to be monitored.
- The inclusion of IDP children, children from minority groups, and children with special needs need to be monitored.

Map

Internally Displaced People by Region, 2 March 2015



Data Sources
 Admin: GADM, Natural Earth
 Displacement: OCHA
 Conflict: Media sources

Total IDPs by week
Jan - Mar 2015

