

This report is produced by OCHA Ukraine in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

### BACKGROUND

#### Nationwide COVID-19 cases\*

<b>26,616</b>	<b>9,410</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>239</b>
suspected	confirmed	recovered	deaths

#### Eastern Ukraine COVID-19 confirmed cases

<b>52</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>119</b>
Donetska oblast (GCA)	Luhanska oblast (GCA)	Donetska oblast (NGCA)	Luhanska oblast (NGCA)

\*This figure doesn't include the number of confirmed cases in NGCA.  
Data source: The Ministry of Health in Ukraine and NGCA health administrations.



Map of eastern Ukraine  
The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

#### Key updates:

- While the overall number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the non-Government controlled area (NGCA) of eastern Ukraine remains relatively low at 208, this figure has more than doubled over the last week.
- Access to personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks and antiseptics, remains limited on both sides of the 'contact line.'
- The COVID-19 crisis has further disrupted limited economic activity in eastern Ukraine, which has already been devastated by over six years of armed conflict. Many businesses have been forced to close or partially shutdown, and the production of coal in NGCA decreased by a third since the start of 2020. The prices of food and other goods reported to have increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Humanitarian organizations' ability to organize humanitarian aid convoys through the 'contact line' to NGCA remains limited, with only two UN-organized convoys reaching Donetsk (NGCA) since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis in March. Due to restrictive measures imposed to control the spread of COVID-19, humanitarian convoys are not permitted to transit through Donetska oblast (NGCA) to Luhanska oblast (NGCA). No UN-organized convoy has been able to reach Luhanska oblast (NGCA) since before the COVID-19 crisis. UN agencies and humanitarian partners continue to advocate for unimpeded access to conflict-affected populations on both sides of the 'contact line.'

### SITUATION OVERVIEW

#### Public health situation:

- The majority of people residing close to the 'contact line' have limited access to personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks and antiseptics. According to a rapid assessment conducted by the UN Migration Agency (IOM)<sup>1</sup>, over half of respondents reported challenges getting PPE, with some 60 per cent indicating that neither antiseptic nor face masks were available in their local

pharmacy. An additional 21 per cent had no local pharmacy and lived an average of seven kilometres from the nearest.

- **Most people living close to the ‘contact line’ understand how to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19 risks.** According to the IOM assessment<sup>ii</sup>, 99 per cent of respondents said they understood what precautionary measures to take against COVID-19, and 80 per cent believed that people in their settlement were adhering to COVID-19 preventive measures.
- **The population residing close to the ‘contact line’ is concerned with the health systems’ capacity to respond to COVID-19.** Almost half of respondents stated that they had no local hospital with in-patient care, and lived an average of 18km from the nearest in-patient hospital.<sup>iii</sup> Some 38 per cent did not think their local clinic had capacity to host an increased number of patients, and another 30 per cent were not aware of the local clinic’s capacity. Most cited the low number of medical professionals, insufficient beds, and poor medical equipment as the main reasons for their concerns of health facilities’ capacity.<sup>iv</sup>

### Socio-economic situation:

- **COVID-19-related restrictions impact the food security of people close to the ‘contact line.’** Most respondents (87 per cent) noted an increase in food prices by the second week of quarantine measures. Some 40 per cent reported using savings to purchase food or reducing other essential expenses to afford food and over half reported switching to cheaper foods. Around 15 per cent of people were forced to reduce their food consumption and borrow money to purchase food. At the same time, most people residing close to the ‘contact line’ continue to be able to access shops either themselves or with the help of family members, friends or social workers.<sup>v</sup>
- **Most people residing in Government-controlled areas (GCA) have reported a noticeable increase in prices for basic goods.** According to the preliminary findings of an ongoing rapid market assessment<sup>vi</sup> in GCA, over 80 per cent of respondents reported a noticeable price increase for basic goods since the deterioration of the epidemiological situation in the country and region. The assessment is still ongoing and final analysis will be available in due course.
- **The economy in NGCA of eastern Ukraine continues to decline.** In the first quarter of 2020, the production of coal in NGCA decreased by 33 per cent, and the production of iron/steel by 60 per cent. At the same time, salary arrears increased by 40 per cent (up to US\$36.2 million). Three coal mines have closed, and five more are expected to close this year. The economic decline coupled with quarantine restrictions have impacted the railway industry, with railway workers being shifted to a 3-4-day workweek, while salary arrears are increasing.<sup>vii</sup>
- **Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across Ukraine, including in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts, have been impacted by COVID-19-related restrictions.** According to the IOM survey<sup>viii</sup>, 81 per cent of SMEs reported experiencing a negative impact on their business operations, with 47 per cent reporting a full shutdown, and 34 per cent partial shutdown. In the meantime, over three-quarters of businesses that continue to operate are experiencing decreased demand for their products. Forty-three per cent of SMEs had to dismiss some staff or offer them leave without pay. Most businesses anticipate going bankrupt should the quarantine restrictions be extended beyond June.
- **People in eastern Ukraine feel increasing stress, fear and anxiety in connection with COVID-19-related restrictive measures.** According to IOM’s assessment, most people reported significant stress, fear and anxiety in connection to quarantine measures and the anticipated economic downturn.<sup>ix</sup>
- **More than 300,000 pensioners residing in NGCA are no longer able to access their pensions in Government-Controlled Area (GCA), while another 163,000 people face difficulties in withdrawing cash in GCA due to restrictions on the crossing the ‘contact line.’**
- **Conflict-affected children living along the ‘contact line’ have limited access to distance learning and, most likely, won’t be able to return to studying until next school year.** As announced by the Minister of Education, the 2020 school year will be completed remotely, which leaves 60 per cent of children living near the ‘contact line’ in GCA with no real educational opportunity due to the lack of access

to the Internet or necessary equipment.<sup>x</sup> The final national examination, which usually takes place in May, is expected to be impacted, along with University admissions.

- **Children in conflict-affected communities are at high risk of becoming victims of neglect and abuse.** While schools and social institutions are closed and families struggle with high levels of stress and anxiety, children in conflict-affected communities are facing increased levels of neglect and abuse. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis in Ukraine in early March, La Strada-Ukraine received over 2,000 appeals from children and adolescents, of which over 40 per cent were associated with child violence and abuse.<sup>xi</sup> Some 42,000 children, including children with disabilities, reportedly were sent home from boarding schools and other institutions as a result of the COVID-19 restrictive measures. This action was taken without prior assessment of the family situation, to which these children returned. As most of these families are economically disadvantaged and at risk of drug and alcohol abuse, the lack of support or supervision by social workers could significantly increase the risk of child violence and abuse.<sup>xii</sup>
- **Quarantine measures have exacerbated domestic and gender-based violence in eastern Ukraine.** In GCA, the number of calls for help due to domestic violence has recently increased sharply – by 40 and 60 per cent in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts respectively, as reported by the local authorities.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19:

- **The Government of Ukraine has introduced a number of temporary restrictive measures nationwide to contain the spread of COVID-19,** including the closure of national borders, the suspension of all intra-city and inter-city public transportation, and a ban of all gatherings in groups of more than two people (with some exceptions). All people arriving in Ukraine are required to self-quarantine for 14-days. To encourage compliance with the measures, the Government has also introduced administrative and criminal liability for violation of sanitary rules and norms intended to prevent the spread of the virus. So far, restrictions have been put in place until 11 May.
- **The Government of Ukraine announced a quarantine phase-out plan with five stages<sup>xiv</sup>:**
  - The number of new COVID-19 cases doesn't increase or increases no more than 5 per cent from the overall number of confirmed cases for ten days.** If these conditions are fulfilled, a number of restrictions are expected to be lifted, including walking in parks, forest and beach areas, work of selected shops selling non-food items, group sports training, operations of car wash facilities, among a few others.
  - The number of new COVID-19 cases decreases for ten days in a row, and the number of people recovered is stabilizing or growing daily.** If these conditions are fulfilled, a number of restrictions are expected to be lifted, including the return of students graduating this year to educational establishments, the opening of cafes and restaurants (to-go services only), hotels, among a few others.
  - The number of recovered patients is at least two times higher than the number of new COVID-19 cases for ten consecutive days,** while only 10 per cent of health facilities are treating COVID-19 patients. If these conditions are fulfilled, a number of restrictions are expected to be lifted, including the opening of selected educational establishments, shopping malls, movie theatres, etc. as well as the resumption of work of inter-city public transportation.
  - The number of new COVID-19 cases is no more than five a day in every oblast of Ukraine.** If these conditions are fulfilled, a number of restrictions are expected to be lifted, including the resumption of work of intra-city public transportation as well as the opening of remaining public places.
  - New COVID-19 cases are exclusively connected to the 'import' of the virus.** At this stage, the Government of Ukraine plans to lift all other remaining restrictions.
- **In Donetska oblast (NGCA),** a 'high alert' regime since 21 March has prohibited entry of all people from GCA into Donetska oblast (NGCA), including those with registration or residency permits in Donetska oblast (NGCA). There have been no reports of exceptions being granted for humanitarian reasons. Movement of people across the 'internal border' between Donetska oblast (NGCA) and Luhanska oblast (NGCA) is also restricted. These measures also limit the operations of businesses such as restaurants, stores, sports centres, and suspend all mass gatherings, entertainment and sports events until further notice. Schools have also been closed and replaced with distance learning.

- **Luhanska oblast (NGCA)** has also prohibited the movement of civilians across the ‘contact line,’ but allows for exceptional movement through the ‘contact line’ for humanitarian reasons. The Luhanska oblast (NGCA) ‘high alert’ measures have closed retail shops except for pharmacies, groceries; banned gathering in groups and closed public places; and suspended mail service with Donetska oblast (NGCA) and the Russian Federation. The so-called ‘Luhansk Railway’ connection with Donetska oblast (NGCA) remains suspended. In addition, visits to cemeteries, which are traditionally made during the second week after Easter, were banned from 22 April until further notice.

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

### COVID-related response:

- **Laboratory support:** The World Health Organization (WHO) is supporting the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in scaling up testing capacity of laboratories nationwide, including in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, WHO has initiated capacity assessments of private laboratories to determine their ability to provide support to state-owned ones. Additionally, health partners are working on the provision of capacity-building support to state-owned laboratories.
- **Production and distribution of face masks:** UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Proliska provided more than 10,200 medical masks to home-based health care providers. As of mid-April, conflict-affected communities in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts produced 50,000 masks for 14 communities along the ‘contact line’ with support of sewing machines and fabric from UNHCR. Additionally, 12 IDP-led communities across Ukraine self-mobilized to produce masks to ensure that those most in need, such as elderly and people with disabilities, are well protected against the COVID-19.<sup>xv</sup> In cooperation with local authorities in eastern Ukraine, ACTED also initiated the production of 32,200 cloth masks for use by local government employees who maintain public service provision to the general public.
- **COVID-19 online training sessions:** According to a preliminary analysis of COVID-19 response monitoring, nearly 2,000 people, mainly healthcare personnel, have received online training on COVID-19 provided by five organizations, namely ‘Slavic Heart,’ Save the Children, International Medical Corps, UNICEF and IOM.
- **Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS):** With increasing needs for psychosocial support among the conflict-affected population due to the COVID-19 crisis, multiple organizations have prioritized the continuation of their MHPSS programming and adopted remote modality in delivering their services, limiting face-to-face consultations only for critical cases. Starting from March, nearly 2,500 people have received individual psychosocial support provided by at least five organizations, including Proliska, Child Smile, MdM, PIN and UNICEF. German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), together with Vostok SOS, began providing psychological counselling for medical and social workers in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts to prevent them from burning out.
- **Hygiene response:** Agencies are reprioritizing their current programming to focus on infection prevention and control (IPC) as well as hygiene promotion campaigns. Médecins Sans Frontières Switzerland has provided a series of IPC training for the health staff of Krasnohorivka hospital (Donetska oblast). Additionally, at least 16 organizations have distributed hygiene items (e.g., soap and hand sanitizers) to over 3,200 people and over 200,000 more will be receiving this assistance in the coming days. UNHCR, together with NGO partners, delivered some 230 litres of sanitizing products to 16 settlements close to the ‘contact line’ (GCA) for further distribution to first aid points, pharmacies and local community centres.<sup>xvi</sup> In NGCA, IOM is delivering hygiene and disinfection items to social institutions, while UNHCR plans to support 16 social institutions with water tanks.
- **Home-delivery of assistance:** At least 11 organizations have provided home-based assistance to over 12,000 people in eastern Ukraine, while an additional 18,000 people will be receiving such assistance from HelpAge International in the coming days, including elderly and people with disabilities living in settlements located close to the ‘contact line.’ Home visits include the provision of psychosocial support, delivery of non-food items, assistive devices and adult diapers. A number of organizations (Proliska,

Caritas and Polish Humanitarian Action) are expected to launch similar projects in isolated settlements along the 'contact line' shortly.

- **Support to local authorities:** ACTED is supporting local authorities in Donetska oblast (GCA) with the development and establishment of non-medical standard operating procedures to organize COVID-19 response in the areas of contact tracing and mass testing among others.
- **Risk communication campaigns:** Preliminary analysis indicates that COVID-19 risk communication campaigns and the distribution of COVID-19 information, education and communication (IEC) materials implemented by at least 12 organizations have already reached nearly one million people in eastern Ukraine. Additionally, ACTED supported the establishment of the COVID-19 hotline for the Donetsk Oblast Civil-Military Administration, which is operational from 3 April 2020. In the first ten days of operation, 191 calls were received and processed for further action. The possibility of establishing a similar hotline in Luhanska oblast is currently underway.
- **Individual protection counselling:** Organizations including Proliska, MdM, Right to Protection, Triangle, Danish Refugee Council and Stabilization Support Services continue to provide online consultations to over 3,600 people on access to social and administrative services, as well as to clarify restrictions of movement across the 'contact line' that has remained closed for all civilian crossings since the third week of March.
- **Supporting people unable to cross the 'contact line':** Several organizations continue providing temporary support, such as provision of food, essential items and temporary accommodation to people who are not able to cross the 'contact line.'
- **Transportation services:** Triangle and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society started providing transportation services to people in eastern Ukraine, particularly to those residing in isolated settlements, where the already-limited public transport services have been disrupted due to the COVID-19 restrictive measures.

### Impact on humanitarian operations:

- **Humanitarian organizations continue operations, employing risk mitigation strategies to minimize exposure to COVID-19.** Most organizations have activated their business continuity plans, work remotely and are prioritizing safety issues for their own personnel. Humanitarian actors have put duty of care measures in place for all staff to protect staff from exposure to COVID-19.
- **Most humanitarian organizations are continuing the provision of life-saving assistance and protection to the most vulnerable while using existing resources to also respond to the COVID-19-related needs.** While some activities, including shelter repair in GCA, or in-person psychosocial counselling, have been suspended or postponed, most humanitarian activities continue. Humanitarian actors have adapted their operations to rely more on communication technologies to deliver remote counselling services. The reach of such 'virtual' assistance may be uneven depending on geographical areas and population groups. Some humanitarian organizations have adopted an 'individual service delivery' or 'door-to-door delivery' approach to minimize beneficiaries' exposure to COVID-19. While this approach helps ensure the continuation of critical support, it leads to increased operational and logistical costs.
- **Services provided at the entry/exit crossing points (EECPs) have been suspended** as the EECPs are closed for civilian crossings (although an extremely limited number of crossings are allowed on humanitarian grounds and a case-by-case basis). Partners continue to monitor the situation and are on standby to provide the necessary support to avoid people getting stuck at the EECPs.

## FUNDING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

### \$158 M

Initial HRP requirement for eastern Ukraine

### \$34 M

Additional requirement for COVID-19 in eastern Ukraine

### \$13 M

HRP funding received in 2020 (FTS)

### \$2 M

UHF allocation for COVID-19

### \$0.9 M

CERF allocation for COVID-19

- In March, **\$165 million was estimated as the requirement for the COVID-19 emergency response in Ukraine** (throughout the country) in 2020 – this includes the amount required under the WHO-supported and nationally-owned strategic COVID-19 response and preparedness plan<sup>xvii</sup>.
- **\$34 million of the \$165 million was estimated in March as the requirement for the COVID-19 response in eastern Ukraine**, including both the public health and socio-economic impact of the crisis.
- **The 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is in the process of being revised to incorporate the new COVID-19 response activities and financial requirements** into the original document. While this process is ongoing, it is expected that the estimated financial requirements will be more than the initial estimate of \$34 million from March. When finalized, the financial requirements of the revised HRP will be reflected in the Financial Tracking System (FTS).
- The **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated some \$925,000** for the COVID-19 response in eastern Ukraine, to be implemented by WHO and UNICEF.
- The **Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) has allocated some \$2 million** for COVID-19 response in government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, to be implemented by six NGOs. An additional envelope is being considered for NGCA.

## ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Restrictions have been established limiting access of people, humanitarian actors and the movement of humanitarian aid.

- **Crossing of the ‘contact line’ is currently prohibited for all civilians.** These travel restrictions have a significant impact on the conflict-affected population and, especially, the elderly who are no longer able to access services, pensions and social benefits or family in GCA.
- **Movement of humanitarian aid from GCA to NGCA is restricted by provisions introduced** in Donetska oblast (NGCA), which only allow the movement of humanitarian convoys across the ‘contact line’ carrying medical, hygiene, food or COVID-related items. The movement of humanitarian cargo between Donetska and Luhanska oblasts (NGCA) is not currently permitted since restrictions on movement across the ‘internal border’ have been put in place. Procedures on the movement of humanitarian cargo that transits through Donetska oblast (NGCA) to Luhanska oblast (NGCA) have not been elaborated by Donetska oblast (NGCA). UN agencies are exploring options with the Government of Ukraine and Luhanska oblast (NGCA) for delivering assistance through EECs in Luhanska oblast.
- **While movement of humanitarian aid is permitted for all humanitarian convoys from the territory of the Russian Federation** to both Donetska and Luhanska oblasts (NGCA), no such convoys have been recorded during 2020.
- **Movement of humanitarian actors from GCA to NGCA is not currently possible.** While an order has been issued permitting staff members of the UN and ICRC to cross the ‘contact line’ to Donetska oblast (NGCA), this order has not yet been approved in practice. Permissions for movement of UN staff from GCA to Luhanska oblast (NGCA) have not been clarified yet.

## RESPONSE COORDINATION

### Government of Ukraine coordination mechanism:

- **The Government of Ukraine has established a robust coordination mechanism to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.** This mechanism includes a National Coordination Council under the President of Ukraine created to oversee and coordinate the response at a strategic level. Also established is a Coordination Mechanism for Provision of International Aid to Ukraine to fight the COVID-19 pandemic under the Office of the Vice Prime Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. The Government has also created a Council on Economic Development that is tasked to develop a strategy on economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. Earlier, the Government of Ukraine adopted a set of measures simplifying the clearance and registration of humanitarian cargo. Additionally, the Parliament of Ukraine established a US\$2.4 billion fund to counter COVID-19 and its impact on the socio-economic situation.

### Humanitarian coordination:

- **Under the leadership the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has overall responsibility for overseeing the humanitarian response** to address the impact of COVID-19 in eastern Ukraine. The Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) is tasked with supporting the HCT and monitoring/responding to the impact of the humanitarian situation.
- **Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator (RC), the UN Country Team (UNCT) will oversee the UN's nationwide response.**

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<sup>i</sup> IOM Ukraine Express Surveys Report (April 2020)

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>vi</sup> Conducted by ACCESS Consortium, Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children

<sup>vii</sup> <http://tiny.cc/n23onz>

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>x</sup> Protection and COVID-19 Key Messages, Protection Cluster Ukraine (April 2020)

<sup>xi</sup> Update from the representative of La-Strada Ukraine NGO at the Joint Protection and Health Cluster meeting on 1 April.

<sup>xii</sup> 'UNICEF Ukraine and Ukrainian Child Rights NGO Network are concerned about the protection of children returned back to their families from boarding schools and other childcare institutions.' Last modified April 16, 2020: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/unicef-ukraine-and-ukrainian-child-rights-ngo-network-are-concerned-about-protection>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Updates provided by representatives of LOMCA and DOMCA Social Protection Departments at the meeting of GBV Sub-Cluster on 10 April.

<sup>xiv</sup> <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/04/24/7249296/>

<sup>xv</sup> UNHCR's COVID-19 Flash Update #6, 17 April

<sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xvii</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health of Ukraine with the development of a COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) that spells out necessary steps and actions to curb the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its potential impact on the populations. The SPRP covers the whole of Ukraine, including the conflict-affected areas (on both sides of the 'contact line').