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HIGHLIGHTS

- Heavy snowfall and hostilities stop operations of critical infrastructure
- Landmines, UXOs and ERW – second biggest cause of casualties in 2017
- Europe focuses on the plight of 4.4 million people affected in eastern Ukraine
- 2017 HRP: 1.1 million vulnerable men, women and children reached with vital assistance and protection
- Funding for the 2018 HRP is urgently required to sustain life-saving operations for 2.3 million Ukrainians



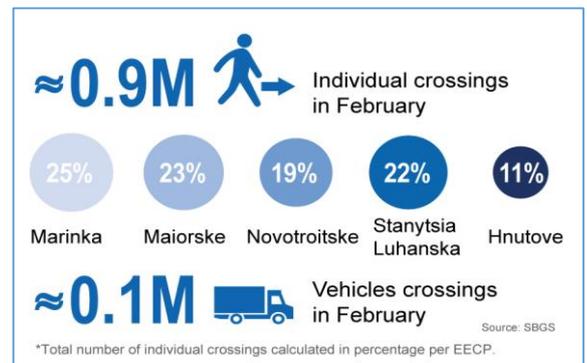
Civilians cross Stanytsia Luhanska EECP through the rickety bridge. Photo: OCHA Ukraine/O.Gaskevych

Ukraine's harsh winter: thousands of civilians bear the brunt of the armed conflict

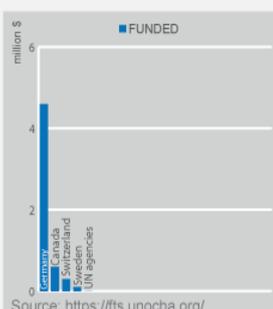
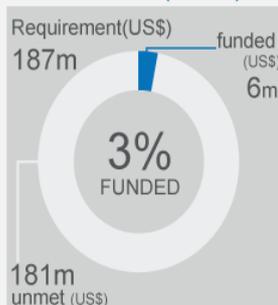
With temperatures plummeting to -19 Celsius in February, suffering of thousands of Ukrainians living in more than 90 settlements on both sides of the 'contact line' intensified due to the extreme cold. Many saw their electricity and water supplies disrupted, and heating systems deactivated.

The situation was extreme during the last two weeks of February, particularly due to heavy snowfall. Some 100,000 people on both sides of the 'contact line' saw water supply interrupted for more than 24 hours, as on 1 March, the 1st Lift Pumping Station of the South Donbas Water Pipeline was de-energized. Vulnerable men, women and children also struggled to access markets, services and critical facilities, as big piles of snow blocked many roads. People living along the 'contact line' also struggled to collect wood for heating, as it was too dangerous for them to enter the forests contaminated by landmines.

Harsh weather conditions also meant that civilians having to cross the 'contact line' often waited for long periods in the freezing cold. On several occasions in February, more than 500 people were unable to cross the 'contact line' and **forced to stay overnight in highly insecure areas near the checkpoints**. In addition, thousands of civilians, including children, elderly and people with disabilities, had to walk up to five kilometres of icy dangerous roads after private buses were unable to provide the required documentation to local authorities to be able to arrive near the Maiorske (Donetska oblast) and Stanytsia Luhanska (Luhanska oblast) checkpoints.



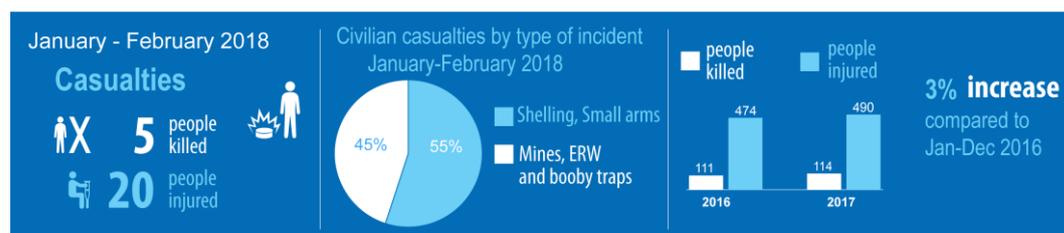
FUNDING (2018)



Source: <https://fts.unocha.org/>

Lowest civilian casualties recorded since the start of the conflict

Ordinary men, women and children are paying the highest price for the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. During the first two months of 2018, five civilians were killed and 20 injured according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The number of civilian casualties recorded in February, however, was the lowest since the beginning of the conflict.



Whilst in 2017, OHCHR recorded more conflict-related civilian casualties in eastern Ukraine, with 604 casualties (114 killed; 490 injured), compared to 585 casualties (111 killed; 474 injured) in 2016 - a 3 per cent increase.

Daunting consequence of mine-contamination in eastern Ukraine

Last year, at least 238 men, women and children were either killed or injured by mines, explosive remnants of war (ERW), booby traps or unexploded ordnance (UXOs). After shelling, they are the second biggest cause of casualties among the civilians due to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Protection Cluster reports that 1.9 million people are affected by mines, ERWs and UXOs across conflict-affected areas.



Humanitarian actors and national authorities are regularly undertaking mine clearance, mine-risk education and other mine-awareness activities on both sides of the 'contact line'. But these tasks remain challenging, as mines are frequently used as part of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, whilst there is lack of

legislative framework and national policy.

Donetsk Filter Station water treatment staff comes under fire

Brave technicians of the Donetsk Filter Station (DFS) in eastern Ukraine continuously risk their lives every day to ensure that the filter station provides water to over 345,000 people on both sides of the 'contact line'. In four separate incidents, 40 technicians and drivers were attacked during the first two weeks of March. Luckily, no one was hurt, but the vehicle carrying chemicals for the filter station and the buses transporting the staff were hit several times. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) strongly **condemned** the incidents, calling for the safety of the staff through the continuation of a so-called 'window of silence' agreed by the parties to the conflict on 14 March. In eastern Ukraine, when water supplies are interrupted, heating systems often cease to function, impacting thousands and sometimes millions of vulnerable men, women and children. The HC reminded the parties to the conflict to respect civilian infrastructure and protect civilians according to the



Donetsk Filter Station vehicle comes under fire. Photo: Voda Donbasa

International Humanitarian Law. Since the statement by the HC, there have been no further shooting incidents. However DFS staff now travel to and from the filter station accompanied by OSCE at all times.

'I was in the field pasturing the goats when the explosion happened ... I still have to go to that field – how else can I feed the animals?' - Valeriy, 53, from Bakhmutka village (Donetska oblast, GCA)

Europe focuses on the plight of 4.4 million conflict-affected Ukrainians

Whilst the hostilities continue unabated in eastern Ukraine, the daily plight of 4.4 million people is hardly making international headlines. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)



ECHO-UN Conference in Brussels, Belgium. Photo: OCHA Ukraine/V.Ranoev

is endeavouring to raise the world's attention to the dire humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine by sharing the voices of people affected and advocating for their rights, protection and dignity.

On 28 February, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) held a high-level conference in

Brussels, Belgium. The panel members included the Minister for the Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs, the [UN Assistant-Secretary General and the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator](#), the [European Union Commissioner](#), and the [Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine](#). Over 120 participants, including the EU Member States, Members of the EU Parliament, UN agencies and international organizations, think tanks and media representatives participated in the event. Panel members briefed on humanitarian needs, challenges faced by millions of people affected, and urged the world to better communicate the human face of the armed conflict. The conference also called for urgent support to fund the US\$187 million 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which is critical for humanitarians to reach over 2.3 million most vulnerable Ukrainians with urgent assistance and protection, especially during the harsh Ukrainian winter.

At the event, the EU Commission [announced](#) EU's €24 million contribution for the humanitarian response in Ukraine in 2018.

Representatives from the Governments of Germany and

Norway announced €12 million and US\$3 million contributions, respectively.



Serhii and his wife Valentyna live in Svitlodarsk hospital after their house was damaged by shelling. Photo: OCHA/A.Dragaj

A communication and social media campaign gave visibility to the conference, with [#UkraineNotForgotten](#) and [#ImpossibleChoices](#) hashtags reaching over 5 million accounts worldwide. Overall, the conference generated significant international attention on the humanitarian consequences and the human cost of the conflict.

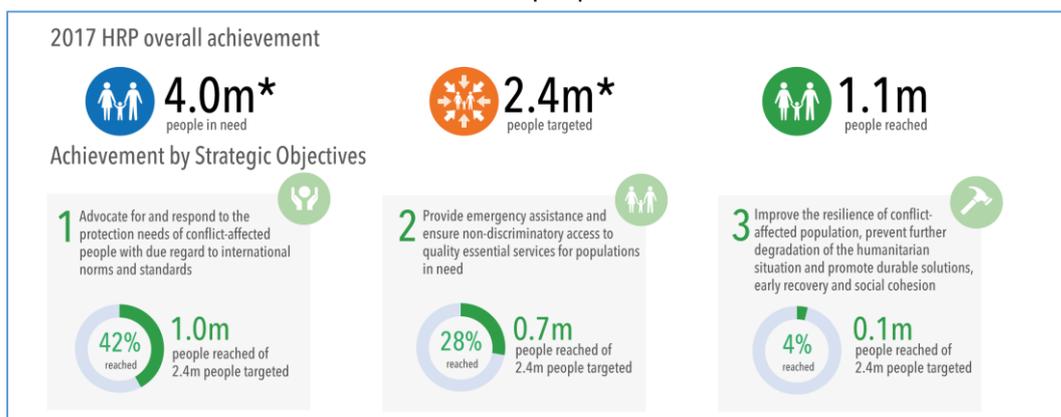
Over 1.1 million Ukrainians received assistance and protection services in 2017

In 2017, over 1.1 million most vulnerable men, women and children in eastern Ukraine received assistance and protection across all sectors. The humanitarian community issued the [2017 HRP End of Year Report](#), an analysis of the worsening human toll of the conflict, collective achievements and the critical challenges they faced in 2017. Despite receiving only 35 per cent of the US\$204 million requested as part of the HRP, humanitarians managed to reach some 47 per cent of the 2.4 million people targeted to provide some form of assistance and protection services throughout 2017. Overall,

'It is very cold in the house, but I can't go and collect woods – there are mines everywhere. We need coal to survive' -- Klavdii, 74, from Avdiivka (Donetska oblast, GCA)

humanitarians within and beyond the scope of the 2017 HRP provided assistance and protection services to over 1.7 million Ukrainians in need.

But much more could be done with sustained and increased levels of funding, and with safe and unfettered humanitarian access to people in need.

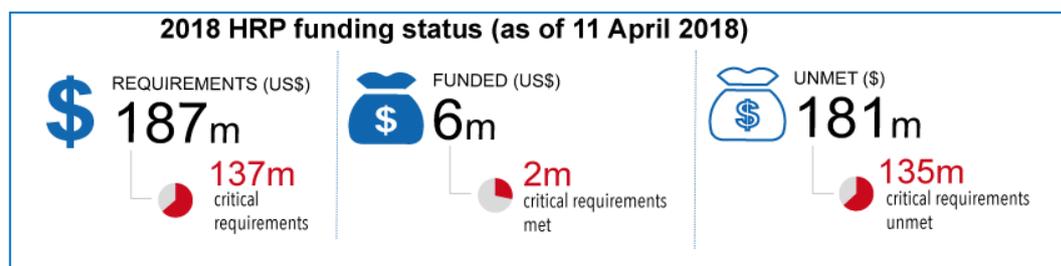


'I live here, at the 'contact line' with two children. We don't have centralised water supply, we don't have electricity. We would not survive without humanitarian assistance', - Olena, 34 from Bakhmutka village (Doneska oblast, GCA)

In the first two months of 2018, the Russian Federation reportedly dispatched two convoys to Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (NGCA), with some 800 tonnes of humanitarian assistance, namely, baby food and medicines.

Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 remains critically underfunded

In December 2017, humanitarians in Ukraine launched the 2018 HRP, calling for donors to urgently fund the US\$187 million to reach with critical assistance and protection 2.3 million most vulnerable Ukrainians. Despite relentlessly advocating for more resources, humanitarian organizations have so far only received 3 per cent of the funds. Today, millions of vulnerable Ukrainians require support, as they face on a daily basis the dire humanitarian consequences of this crisis. They are often forced to make impossible choices between food, medicine, shelter, heating or their children's education.



To ensure effective use of available resources, and to record and recognize the contributions, donors and partners should reflect their contributions pledged, disbursed and received at <https://fts.unocha.org>.

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