

Russia's aggression against Ukraine

21 February 2023



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Direktion für Entwicklung
und Zusammenarbeit DEZA

Facts and figures

17.7 million

People in need

5.4 million

Internally displaced persons

8 million

Refugees

SDC activities

A few days after the start of the Russian aggression, Switzerland began implementing an emergency aid programme for Ukraine. In an initial phase, more than 70 specialists from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) were deployed in rapid response teams. Initially, they operated from Poland and Moldova, but as soon as the security situation allowed, a humanitarian office was opened in Lviv in western Ukraine in April. The humanitarian team is implementing a medium-term programme mainly with existing SDC project partners.

The SDC currently has 2 SHA specialists seconded to UN organisations (OCHA and UNICEF).

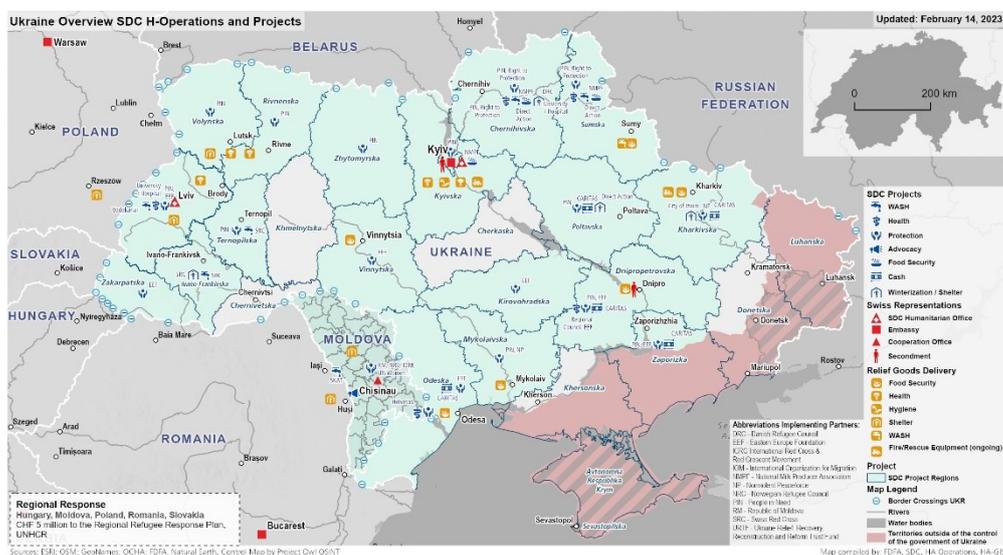
Relief supplies

So far, over 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies in total have been delivered from Switzerland to Ukraine and distributed by local partner organisations.

In addition, 4,765 tonnes of food have been provided to local partners in Sumy, Odesa, Vinnytsia, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Dnipro.

Financial contributions

Switzerland implemented CHF 225 million on the ground in 2022.



Current situation

For the past year, millions of Ukrainians have been subjected to intense violence, with thousands of civilians killed or injured in Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes and have seen their jobs and livelihoods destroyed, and many are struggling to access food, water, medical care, education, a safe place to live and other essential services. For the people in the east of the country, in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, this has further depleted their capacities, already stretched by years of fighting.

Overall, the number of civilian casualties is devastating: by the end of January 2023, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had verified 18,817 victims killed, including 429 children, and 11,662 injured. These figures represent only a fraction of the actual number of victims, as the verification process faces immense challenges, including a lack of access to areas under Russian military control. By mid-January 2023, almost 14 million people had been registered as displaced – a quarter of the entire population. Of these, 5.4 million are internally displaced, while 8 million people (90% women and children) have found refuge in third countries.

After the Russians retreated from the area around Kyiv in March and from the north-eastern Kharkiv region in September, their third decisive retreat was from Kherson in November 2022. Military attacks have repeatedly damaged civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, houses and water-supply facilities along the line of contact and in many towns further away. The threat of mines and other ordnance has increased sharply. The humanitarian situation of people affected by the war in Ukraine has worsened in recent weeks due to targeted attacks on energy infrastructure and basic supply systems. The war has also caused immense psychological trauma, especially among children. The authorities have stated that an estimated 15 million Ukrainians are in need of psychosocial support due to the war. The number of people in need of food and livelihood assistance in 2022 increased from 1.1 million in the previous year to 9.3 million.

Lack of security and access are still severely hampering the rapid delivery of aid to the worst-affected war zones in Ukraine. Due to the precarious security situation, UN agencies and many international humanitarian partners are forced to limit their activities to other parts of the country. The civilian population is in urgent need of additional safe shelter, medical care, daily necessities and psychological support. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP UN-OCHA) for 2023 appeals to the international community for USD 3.9 billion.

What Switzerland is doing

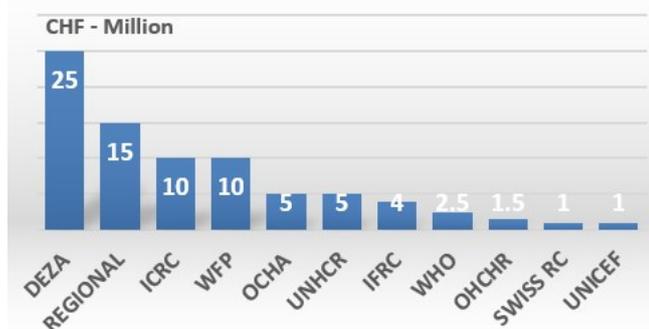
In response to the crisis in Ukraine, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided rapid humanitarian assistance with a three-pronged approach: 1) as a donor through financial contributions to partner organisations; 2) operationally as an actor implementing its own projects through the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA); 3) as an advocate for compliance with international humanitarian law. In addition, the organisation of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano (July 2022) promoted an inclusive political approach with shared responsibility.

Switzerland's humanitarian programme in Ukraine is based on the enormous needs in food security, protection of victims and their rights, and comprehensive health, water and sanitation services. At the same time, the action plan is based on, complementary to and coherent with Switzerland's ongoing cooperation programme in Ukraine. The programmes of the international organisations that receive financial support from Switzerland also focus on the same thematic priorities. Wherever possible, the SDC also works with the FDFA's Peace and Human Rights Division towards joint results (triple nexus), as well as with the EAER's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs.

The geographical focus of the programme is partly in the west of Ukraine, in areas with high numbers of displaced persons, but also in what are referred to as newly accessible areas, in the north and north-east of the country.

Donor: financial contributions

The Federal Council decided in March 2022 to increase humanitarian aid in Ukraine and the region to CHF 80 million. Three quarters of the new funds were reserved for supporting those in need in Ukraine. The remaining quarter benefited refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Moldova.



The State Secretariat for Migration supported the first supplementary credit with CHF 6 million for the International Organization for Migration. Of this, CHF 5 million came from the Rapid Response fund of the second Swiss contribution, and CHF 1 million went to supporting refugees in the voluntary return to their home countries by third-country nationals.

In addition, on 2 November 2022, the Federal Council approved a winter aid action plan for CHF 100 million, to facilitate the urgent repair of energy infrastructure and alleviate the precarious humanitarian situation of the population. For example, Switzerland supported Ukrainian energy companies in the purchase of energy sources and spare parts, and in the repair of rail fastening systems (for the transport of heavy goods such as grain). It also increased humanitarian support for those in need, for example replacement windows, insulation, heating and food.

Humanitarian actor: relief supplies

So far, over 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies have been delivered from Switzerland to Ukraine and distributed by local partner organisations. These supplies included multi-purpose and winter-proof family tents with household accessories, as well as medical material from the stocks of the Armed Forces Pharmacy, the Coordinated Medical Services of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, and the Confederation's resource management service. A delivery of hygiene products was provided by the private sector (Migros and Coop), while SBB Cargo contributed to the rail transport costs. In April, in the first phase of the emergency response, Swiss Humanitarian Aid organised convoys of essential foodstuffs amounting to 4,765 tonnes and worth a total of CHF 5.7 million to Odesa, Vinnytsa, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy. The food was sourced locally for cost efficiency and to help strengthen the local economy.

In the autumn, Switzerland delivered fire-fighting equipment with a value of CHF 5.2 million, and in December delivered generators, portable heaters and fire-fighting water pumps to the local state rescue service. This direct action continues to complement Switzerland's financial contribution.

Humanitarian actor: direct action and personnel

In April, Switzerland opened a humanitarian office in Lviv, in the west of Ukraine, comprising SHA specialists and local staff. After the reopening of the Swiss embassy in Kyiv in mid-May, the humanitarian office was integrated into the embassy's cooperation team. At the same time, the working model changed from short-term emergency aid to a medium-term planned programme. Two SHA specialists are currently deployed with OCHA and UNICEF (one with each) for programmes in the areas of coordination, water/sanitation and CASH, which are managed by the UN agencies. An SHA specialist is also supporting the Swiss cooperation office in Chisinau, Moldova.

Switzerland works closely with national and local authorities, NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, multilateral organisations and the private sector.

Advocacy

As signatory and depositary state of the Geneva Conventions, Switzerland calls on all parties at every opportunity to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure unimpeded access by independent and impartial humanitarian organisations to the country's civilian population.

Further information

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