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.

Further information

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