

Responding to the Ukraine crisis

9-month Impact Report



Nine months from the escalation of the international armed conflict in Ukraine, the situation is more dire than ever.

We take the opportunity on this milestone to report back to donors and supporters on our humanitarian response.* It has been a large and complex response bringing together many elements within our own organisation and across the global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) to help the millions of people impacted.

We are very grateful for your support and urge you to stay the course. The world cannot afford to lose interest. As winter bites in the north, the humanitarian crisis caused by this conflict is set to only deepen. It will have a direct impact on those caught up by the conflict, and an indirect impact on many millions more reliant on grain from this part of the world. We echo calls from those people impacted for continued support from good people such as yourself. Together we can most effectively respond to those in need.

Alex Mathieson

Director, International Programs and Movement Relations
Australian Red Cross

24 November 2022

* While this is an account of nine months of our response to the Ukraine crisis, it's incomplete without reference to other crises of similar and even larger magnitude. The conditions in Ukraine are grim but they should not mean we look away from the global hunger and other crises.

The situation on the ground

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On 24 February 2022, the armed conflict in Ukraine intensified, and hostilities have spread to affect most parts of the country. It's estimated up to 18 million people have been affected, many of them living in active conflict zones facing loss of power, heating, water and health care. Almost a third of the population has had to flee their home, with over 7 million people internally displaced and more than 7.8 million who have fled the country and are now considered to be refugees.¹ The number of civilian casualties has surpassed 14,248, including 5,827 killed and 8,421 injured.²

Local Red Cross response

Since the conflict escalated the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) has been at the forefront of the response, helping more than six million people with relief supplies, helping with evacuations and rescue services, cash and voucher assistance, first aid and psychosocial support.³ Together with Movement partners, URCS also provides emergency health services to internally displaced people (IDPs) and public health authorities.

The Movement responds

Since February 2022, tens of thousands of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff have rapidly mobilised in Ukraine, in 17 neighbouring countries and beyond, including in Australia. Using their local presence, knowledge and experience, personnel from the Red Cross National Societies in these countries were some of the first to respond. Whether it has been helping families evacuate and providing medical assistance or giving a warm meal and mental health support for people experiencing trauma, Red Cross is there to support the people who need us.



The Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) has delivered thousands of food and hygiene kits to the border regions of Chernihiv Oblast.

Photo: Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS)

1. [UNHCR - Ukraine refugees](#)

2. [Ukraine | Situation Reports \(unocha.org\)](#)

3. [IFRC - Operation Update Report](#)



Yana was a bank manager and confectioner before the shelling started in her region of central Ukraine. “I woke up on 24 February not knowing what was going on. We heard very loud sirens. There immediately was no internet so it was terrifying. I have two children who were then aged two and six months. I heard bombings so my husband said we must go. My husband had to stay. I had a very stressful time leaving and I lost my breastmilk.” After many days Yana and her children arrived in northern Poland where they received help from the local Red Cross. “Red Cross gave us diapers, baby food, new clothes. It’s super important for the children to have more clothes. I left with only two sets of clothing for each of us.”

Photo: Brynja Dögg Friðriksdóttir / IFRC

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) works to coordinate and support the work of National Societies, acting before, during and after emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of people in vulnerable situations. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) is an independent, neutral and impartial organisation ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for those impacted by armed conflict and other situations of violence. It promotes the laws of war, International Humanitarian Law, a set of rules protecting people who are not or no longer participating in hostilities and restricting the means and methods of warfare.

We are part of one Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and Australian Red Cross contributes to both the IFRC and ICRC responses and to responses of National Societies.

In the last nine months, the Movement has reached more than 10 million people impacted by the conflict in Ukraine, providing essential humanitarian aid, healthcare including mental health support, cash and voucher assistance, water and sanitation services, and supporting voluntary evacuations from armed conflict-affected areas. The IFRC has launched one of its largest responses in recent memory, coordinating aid from National Societies all over the world, both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The ICRC has massively scaled up its response, with some 700 staff working in 10 locations within Ukraine in response to the humanitarian crisis brought on by the armed conflict.

Australian Red Cross – more than playing our part

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Australian Red Cross supports the Movement's response in Ukraine through both the IFRC and ICRC and in our work domestically.

Our Ukraine Crisis Appeal has received strong support from the Australian public since it launched on 27 February 2022. As of 16 November 2022, the Appeal has raised \$15.5 million. The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs provided an additional \$2 million to support the response in Ukraine and surrounding countries, in addition to the significant funds provided directly to the ICRC.

The appeal funds have helped provide emergency relief and longer-term humanitarian support to people and communities affected by the crisis. The support incorporates humanitarian activities that enable Red Cross and Red Crescent partners to address immediate and longer term needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, including to people who are displaced. This includes emergency relief assistance such as shelter, health, water and sanitation. Funding from the Appeal has also helped people restore contact with family members separated by the crisis by offering services to maintain family links and locate missing family members, as well as monitoring and evaluation activities.

We've also supported people impacted by the conflict to settle in Australia through the delivery of the Humanitarian Settlement Program in WA, ACT and parts of regional NSW - Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Albury and surrounding areas. As in every crisis, we stand ready to address tracing needs as they arise. Our Restoring Family Links (RFL) team can register queries if people have lost contact with loved ones. Our migration teams are supporting communities in Australia, raising awareness about RFL services available and providing support materials in language. We're also supporting people impacted by the crisis on temporary visas in Australia who have no access to other mainstream social supports, providing them with emergency relief.



Funding from the appeal has also allowed us to deploy specialist aid workers to help local teams to respond to the crisis.

We have a roster of highly skilled health, water and sanitation, logistics, shelter and communications specialists who are ready to be deployed into international response work when extra support is requested from our colleagues on the ground. In response, we've deployed 17 delegates; four through the ICRC and 13 through the IFRC.

Meet our aid workers

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Our delegates were deployed in waves as the crisis unfolded and entered new phases. Meet just three of them.

Jess Letch, Deputy Head of Operations IFRC in Ukraine

Jess says being part of the response from the earliest days brought home to her the distinct strength of the Movement.

“National Societies are present in nearly every country in the world and region. That structure meant we were ready to mobilise in what was the largest movement of people since World War II. Local volunteers and donated goods were initially activated then we worked to rapidly scale up to provide cash, sustainable shelter, protection and gender and inclusion, food assistance and more.

“This was a crisis of movement of women and children, and we were soon able to welcome children into child-friendly spaces. We needed to be flexible and adapt quickly to ensure children had safe spaces and women had mental health support at a time when they did not know the fate of partners, fathers and brothers.

“It was exciting to be part of the early stages of such a vast emergency operation. As an Australian, a woman, someone who’s worked for a long time in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement I’m proud to have been part of that team to come in the first days of that crisis response; interpreting where this conflict is going, understanding the landscape, capacities, gaps, driving a strategy to assist the huge numbers of affected people. Guiding the operation as it grew day by day really it was amazing to harness the outpouring of goodwill and international support. I wish we could see that level of support for all people displaced by conflict.”



Jess helps distribute hygiene kits to an internally displaced person in a Ukraine Red Cross branch at Uzhhorod, a branch where 90% of the volunteers are themselves displaced by the conflict.

Photo: Australian Red Cross



Australian aid worker Don Johnston on an earlier mission in Bangladesh.

Photo: IFRC

Don Johnston, Operations Manager in Ukraine

“It was humbling,” he says. “I also feel deep and abiding sadness for this amazing country and people under existential threat. It was just an honour to be able to stand alongside and assist people trying to help the most vulnerable people in their communities, many of my local colleagues being internally displaced people themselves.”

He says his role saw the response rapidly expand from a budget of 10 to 255 million Swiss Francs. The Movement responded by partnering with the local Ukrainian Red Cross branches to add value. Ukrainian Red Cross Society was incredibly active with branches in all provinces responding in conflict areas and supporting the massive influx of

displaced people. “We helped set up services from mobile clinics, health services, provision of goods and food, group shelters, child protection services, cash assistance at large scale, logistics support, warehouse support, then planning for winterisation.

“Due to the structure of the Movement, we were able to mobilise hundreds of people with the resources to back it up. We went from hiring four people to 75, bringing in all the expertise and solidarity of the world.”



Sean worked closely with local utilities and Movement partners to help restore water and heating in Ukraine.

Photo: Kunlawat Note Chittarat, ICRC

Sean Moran, Engineer, Ukraine

Sean worked to restore centralised heating and safe drinking water to major population centres including Bucher, Irpin Borodyanka, Dyer and Hostomel.

“The most satisfying part of the work was the infrastructure achievements we made, restoring water, fixing burst sewer mains, and re-establishing communal heating capacity. You can’t just plug an electric heater into the wall like we do here as the wiring isn’t built to cope with that demand. Individuals can’t make their own plans in an apartment building. Even with skyrocketing energy prices the ones who can heat their homes are going to have trouble. A lot of homes are damaged and there’s no point heating them and there’s too many broken windows, holes and so on.

“We were working to support the local utilities – water and public heating companies and councils. It was all led by them as they have the requisite skills, staff and know what they’re dealing with.

“The strength of the ICRC was that we were able to step in and fund repairs as the utility companies had limited ability to do this due to so many of their customers having fled.

“The other great thing about the Movement’s work was the access we could achieve. The ICRC was the only international organisation operating in the area for quite some time and we were able to act within days of having access. As well, the ICRC logistics team has materials stored in country and were able to source excavators, water pumps, pipes and so on to really help us respond quickly.”



Katia and her daughter Lilia came from Kharkiv to Uzhhorod in late March. Katia has received a Red Cross family hygiene kit for the first time. "The most important items for me are shampoo and washing powder. We have so many clothes to wash," she says. "I wish that in the future my family will be healthy and happy. And I wish happiness for our country and for the whole world, too."

Photo: Ville Palonen/Finnish Red Cross

Focus on Protection, Gender and Inclusion

More than 90% of the people fleeing Ukraine are women, children, older people, persons with disabilities, and other groups facing different vulnerabilities and risks. In times of conflict, there are increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse. Recognising these significant needs, Australian Red Cross has dedicated a portion of the Ukraine Crisis Appeal funds to scale up the IFRC's Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) work.

Through its PGI work, the Movement aims to ensure that all people can access the support they need in a dignified way which protects their safety. This includes assessing the needs and risks of those affected, particularly the specific needs of certain groups who may have trouble accessing support or who may face exclusion or discrimination such

as women, children, persons with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

The work has included, for example:

- Providing child friendly spaces
- Providing support catered to the needs of persons with disabilities, such as kits and support accessing information and services
- Reconnecting families who have been separated as a result of the conflict
- Providing referrals to specialist services for those who need it
- Providing training for Red Cross Red Crescent personnel on protection, gender and inclusion principles, child protection and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
- Raising awareness of how to get help and how to provide feedback among those impacted

Support in Australia



Olena, who fled the conflict in Ukraine, now enjoys activities including cooking together with other migrant women in Darwin.

Photo: Amelia Wong / Australian Red Cross

While most appeal funds have gone overseas, Australian Red Cross is also responding back home through a number of our Migration Support Programs.

As well as the programs mentioned above, another unique lifeline is our Connected Women program, which also runs in New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Olena, who was forced to flee a good life when shelling began in her home city of Zaporizhzhia, says she's been helped to re-establish herself in her new home in Darwin, Australia, with the help of the local Connected Women program.

Her daughter Yuliia, who lives in Darwin says that when Olena left behind her life and everything she knew she lost her identity, self-confidence, and independence.

"She lost the rhythm of her life," says Yuliia. "That's how we found Red Cross. They've given mum friendship, support and understanding. They've helped her find herself again as she starts over."

Olena enjoys taking part in the local Connected Women group, which supports over 500 migrant women from 45 countries in Darwin. It's a warm, welcoming space for women to learn new skills, practice English, connect with new friends and build networks, often leading to training and employment.

The unique position of Red Cross Red Crescent during conflict

National Societies and the ICRC have distinct mandates to carry out humanitarian activities in international armed conflicts, provided under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (the Geneva Conventions and subsequent Protocols), as well as national laws and resolutions of International Red Cross Red Crescent Conferences.

Under IHL, parties to an armed conflict are legally required to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need during an armed conflict.

Adhering to the Principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence in its humanitarian work is the most important tool we have to preserve dignity and save lives. Although often misunderstood, this way of working remains at the core of the ability to reach people in the most vulnerable situations during times of conflict.

Always operating according to these principles and engaging with all relevant stakeholders in these environments, helps build trust and ensure safer access to deliver humanitarian services, including:

- Delivering impartial humanitarian assistance and other humanitarian services to civilians in need, the wounded and sick, and other victims of armed conflict
- The ICRC visiting prisoners of war and civilian internees, wherever they are held, to assess their treatment and conditions of detention, and to reassure their families
- Reuniting families who have been separated, or providing information about missing loved ones
- Clearing mines and unexploded ordnances in Ukraine to make areas safer, and sharing information about mine safety and awareness
- Supporting with voluntary safe passage out of areas with active conflict, as a neutral and impartial intermediary, in agreement with the parties to the conflict and with terms that are strictly humanitarian

Looking ahead – Winter in focus

Much about the future of the Ukraine humanitarian crisis remains unknown. We don't know how long the armed conflict will last or what needs will arise in the future. What we do know is that this is a protracted crisis which has dramatically escalated and now entered its ninth year. Even if the conflict were to cease, the physical, social and psychological impacts will be felt for years to come.

Australian Red Cross aid worker Nina Bullock has recently returned from working as Acting Operations Manager in Romania, where she helped local planning for the deepening humanitarian crisis anticipated over winter.

Nina says her work contributed to a plan to distribute \$11 million in aid in advance of what was expected to be a challenging winter, 90 % to Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

"The winter plan aims to help more than 10,000 people with complex needs. It builds on our work disseminating 20 million Euros to more than 62,000 people from Ukraine in a multi-purpose cash program to December 2022. For the winter program we will seek to support people with high or complex needs, including persons with disabilities, single parents with children, unaccompanied children, older people, people with severe medical conditions, and people with very limited income.



Romanian Red Cross Branch volunteer interpreter, Emre and Australian IFRC delegate Nina Bullock at Constanta train station, Romania, to understand the flow of migration and available services for people fleeing Ukraine.

Photo: IFRC

“The plan itself is to distribute cash as a one-off payment for warm clothing, and then 4,000 households will receive a recurring cash payment for the cost of utilities for another five months. There’s also assistance for kettles and heaters, and we’ll distribute 30,000 kits which contain hygiene, food, dignity and baby supplies.”

The IFRC’s Ukraine appeal is funding the plan, which Australian Red Cross contributes to.

“Cash is so important to refugees because it means they can access the goods they need as individuals. It allows people the dignity of being able to take some control of their lives. A lot of the ability to choose flies out the window when people are under the duress of conflict. It also means we minimise waste and can meet prioritised needs. It just makes sense ethically and financially.”

A final message to supporters

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Anna had to leave Ukraine with her young daughter and has become a volunteer with Romanian Red Cross. Previously working as a psychologist, she now focusses on Red Cross' work with traumatised refugee mothers and children. "They need to find a place to stay, look for work, take care of their children, find schools etc but I also help the women not to forget to take care of themselves. If they don't help themselves, they will never be able to help others."

Photo: IFRC

Australian aid worker Jess Letch:

"By providing financial support to an appeal, you've enabled us to give the right assistance at the right time to people affected by this crisis. In some cases, it means providing the support local responders need to do their jobs well. It also means people get cash grants so they can spend it in the way they need; pay rent, buy schoolbooks, a new pair of shoes for their child, food to keep to themselves going for another month, the types of things this flexible assistance enables."

For more information about the Ukraine Crisis Appeal,
or to make a donation, visit redcross.org.au/ukraine

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