

UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

Progress Report



DISASTERS
EMERGENCY
COMMITTEE

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Your donations are helping

Larisa and her daughter, 3, refugees from Odesa, Ukraine, receive food parcels at a distribution run by a local partner of World Vision in Moldova in March 2023.

Published March 2024



OVERVIEW

After eight years of confrontation in the east of the country, the conflict in Ukraine escalated dramatically in the early hours of 24 February 2022 as Russian forces crossed the border from Russia and Belarus. Intense clashes and aerial attacks damaged water supplies, hospitals and schools, leaving hundreds of thousands of people, including children, with no choice but to flee their homes.

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal in March 2022 to support people affected by the conflict. This includes people who stayed in the areas where they live, those displaced elsewhere in Ukraine and refugees who travelled to neighbouring countries. There are 13 DEC member charities involved in this response. They are working with local partners on 37 projects in five countries: Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary.

Two years on, and the situation in Ukraine remains volatile. The capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, continues to come under aerial threat and the number of civilian deaths continues to rise. The continued movement of displaced people within Ukraine and refugees moving to neighbouring countries and back to Ukraine can make it difficult to target support to those in need. People are still struggling to access shelter, food, essential healthcare and financial support.

This report looks at the 12-month period from September 2022 to August 2023 and gives examples of how member charities and local partners used DEC funding to respond to the conflict during this time. This phase of the Ukraine response has focused on getting immediate support to communities affected by the conflict, such as food and essential healthcare items, while also helping people to rebuild their lives. For example, helping refugees to settle into their new communities and supporting people to deal with the trauma they've faced.

*Throughout this report names marked with * have been changed to protect identities.*

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Ivanna, 59, receives an aid package at a humanitarian centre for displaced people in Odesa run by a local partner of CAFOD in February 2023. The centre supports displaced families and homeless people affected by the conflict.



© Macek Musalek/DEC

Lidiya* next to her bed in a public bomb shelter located in Kharkiv, Ukraine in November 2022. The shelter is supported by CAFOD and Plan International, working with local partner Depaul Ukraine.

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

A year and a half since the conflict escalated, almost half of the population (17.6 million people) were still in need of support. There were 3.6 million internally displaced people in Ukraine (as of September 2023), and 5.8 million Ukrainian refugees living in other countries (as of October 2023).

Affected communities continue to live in unpredictable and fragile living conditions, still needing support to meet their basic needs for food, water and shelter. Health facilities and key infrastructure, like roads, power and water supplies, have been devastated. Livelihoods have been lost and without reliable income, many people have spent all their savings and been plunged into debt.

Families and communities have been torn apart, with huge numbers of people forced to move, either to other parts of the country or to other countries around Europe. The ongoing conflict has affected millions of people's psychological and emotional wellbeing. People are exhausted, having panic attacks and falling ill.

Millions of people who remained in the affected areas of Ukraine were in immediate need of essentials like hot food, medical supplies and cash.

In October 2022, aerial attacks on energy infrastructure throughout the country escalated substantially, leaving many people without heating over the freezing winter. Heavy fighting has continued throughout the 12-month period in the east of the country, destroying homes and causing people to flee.

In June 2023, the Kakhovka Dam in southern Ukraine was breached, leading to extensive flooding, including large parts of Kherson city. Thousands of people were evacuated from populated areas downstream from the dam on the Ukraine-controlled western bank, leaving them in need of shelter. More than 700,000 people lost access to a vital source of clean drinking water.

After disagreement over extending the Black Sea Grain Initiative (a deal to allow safe passage for boats to carry grain from Ukraine), grain facilities in the south were attacked. This made it hard for Ukraine to export grain. There was also an increase in the number of attacks on warehouses containing vital humanitarian supplies.

At the escalation of the conflict in February 2022, a large movement of displaced people went from the east of Ukraine to the west away from the frontline. However, the pattern has shifted. Despite the volatile situation, some people returned home, or wanted to be closer to home, for many reasons. This included financial constraints, the presence of humanitarian organisations or missing family. Some people have returned to areas that have come back under Ukrainian control in Kharkiv and Kherson. Others have remained in the west far from the frontline.

With no end to the conflict in sight, DEC member charities and their partners continued to provide a lifeline for millions of people across Ukraine and in neighbouring countries during this year-long phase of the response.



© Diana Zeyneb Alhindawi/The International Rescue Committee

Oliga registers for a cash transfer programme run by International Rescue Committee near Mykolaiv in October 2022.



£421.9 million raised

31/08/2023

Yanina and her four-year-old son at a shelter in Bucharest, Romania in February 2023. The shelter, run by a local partner of Oxfam, helps 40 refugees, providing basic assistance and supporting specific needs including referrals to specialised services.

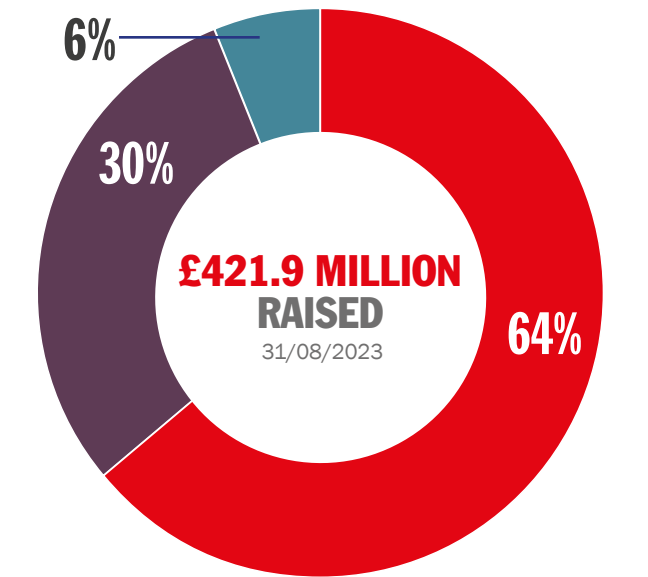
HOW THE DEC IS HELPING

Thanks to the generosity of the UK public, the DEC had raised £421.9 million for the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal by the end of August 2023. This money is being used to fund the work of 13 member charities and their local partners on the ground. Together, they are helping affected people in Ukraine and refugees and host communities in Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary. This includes providing food to families and helping refugee children overcome traumatic experiences.

Inside Ukraine, the conflict has caused widespread damage to housing and hospitals and ongoing disruption to electricity and water services. DEC member charities and local partners are providing food, water and shelter to vulnerable groups of people, including women and children, older people, people with disabilities, Roma and LGBTQIA+ communities, and sex workers. They are also providing long-term support by helping people to rebuild their livelihoods and access mental health services.

Refugees in neighbouring countries have been able to apply for temporary protection status from host governments to access welfare benefits, help with accommodation, healthcare and schools for children. Recent changes to these programmes, as well as delays in provision and shortfalls in the support provided, have made it difficult for people to access this help. This means many refugees continue to rely on humanitarian assistance. DEC member charities and their partner organisations are working with governments and local communities to make sure refugees are receiving the support they need and that they can settle into communities.

INCOME BREAKDOWN



■ £271.2m DEC direct donors
 ■ £125.7m Member charities' retained income
 ■ £25m UK Aid Match funding

From September 2022 to August 2023, member charities and local partners used DEC funding to provide:



A note on figures: Each sector of activity presented in this report includes net figures for the number of people reached with DEC funds. We've made sure that the net number of people reached in each sector hasn't been double-counted. However, some double counting may persist across sectors when two or more member charities reach the same people with different types of assistance. All figures reported have been rounded down.



Members of the Rapid Response Team of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) train in Odesa, Ukraine in January 2023.

There are 13 member charities working on the DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal response.



How the money is being spent

From the launch of the appeal in March 2022 to August 2023, £421.9 million had been raised. Of this, 64% was donated directly to the DEC and 30% to DEC member charities who used DEC co-branding. The appeal total includes £25 million which was matched through the UK Government's Aid Match scheme.

The DEC reports on funds that come directly to the DEC (£296.1 million as of August 2023, including £25 million UK Aid Match). Member charities report on income donated to them directly as part of the joint appeal.

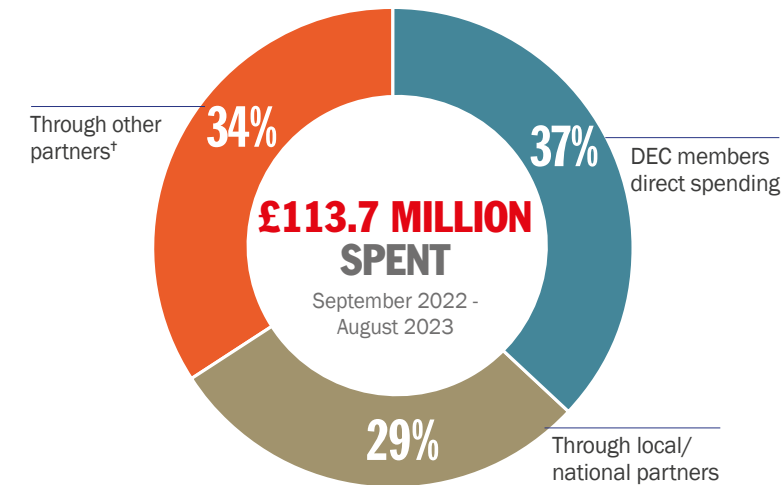
From September 2022 to August 2023, 13 DEC charities spent £113.7 million of the DEC funding to get essential aid to people in five countries. More than half (57%) of the funds were spent in Ukraine and the rest in Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary.

An additional £85.7 million was spent in the first phase of the response between March and August 2022.

As people's needs have been changing since the start of the conflict, DEC member charities have been adapting the support they provide to help communities. They will continue to maintain this flexible approach in the months ahead.

EXPENDITURE: DEC MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

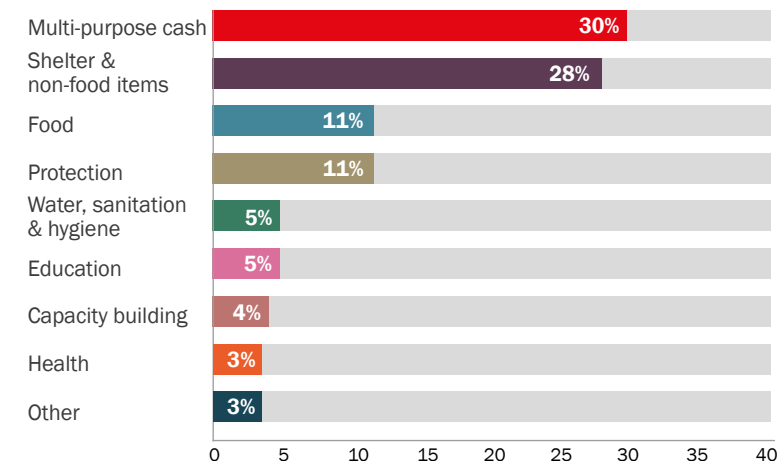
Funds raised by the DEC are allocated to our 15 member charities. They work both directly and through local, national and other partners.



†Such as international partners. For example, Plan International channelling funds through Jesuit Refugee Services Europe.

EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR

September 2022 - August 2023



Mila*, a displaced person from Kherson, sits on her bed at a shelter in Odesa, Ukraine, being supported by a local partner of Christian Aid, in January 2023.



Keeping people safe and warm

Ludovic, an aid worker with a local partner of CAFOD and Plan International unloads a truck full of blankets, firewood and generators, ready for distribution to residents of a village outside Kharkiv, Ukraine, 2022.

HOW WE'RE HELPING: UKRAINE

CONTEXT

The scale of need inside Ukraine remains vast and the conflict continues to have a devastating impact on people's lives. As of September 2023, at least 3.6 million people were displaced within Ukraine, leaving behind loved ones, jobs, homes and their belongings.

The ongoing attacks have continued to damage homes, schools and hospitals. Attacks on energy infrastructure in the autumn and winter 2022 marked a new phase in the humanitarian crisis with regular power outages and blackouts. This left thousands of homes without heating, light and water. For people living in towns and villages, local economies have ground to a halt, making it difficult to get food, medicine and other essential items.



HOW DEC CHARITIES ARE RESPONDING IN UKRAINE

Despite challenging conditions amid ongoing hostilities and attacks, DEC member charities and local partners have continued to provide essential assistance to people who need support. During the period covered in this report, 12 DEC member charities have been working in partnership with 35 local organisations on the ground in Ukraine.

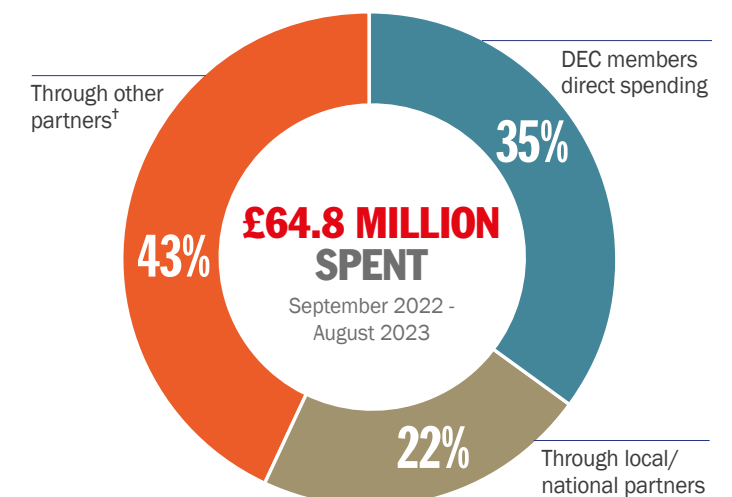
Funds have been used to deliver essential aid to the most vulnerable people. This includes food, clothes, access to clean water and sanitation, and somewhere to live. Flexible cash payments have allowed people to choose what they need to buy.

As shelling and rocket attacks persisted, casualties have continued to fill hospitals already under pressure. DEC funds have paid for trauma kits for people to treat injuries, incubators for neonatal units, and mobile units to visit communities to diagnose and treat health conditions. DEC member charities and their partners also helped to register people arriving in new areas, referring them for further support, and provided protection services, such as counselling and legal support. This helped to prevent large-scale exploitation of vulnerable groups such as women and girls, people with disabilities and people from LGBTQIA+ communities.

The conflict has had an enormous impact on people's mental health. DEC member charities and partners helped people to access psychologists and take part in support group sessions where they could talk about their experiences.

EXPENDITURE: DEC MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

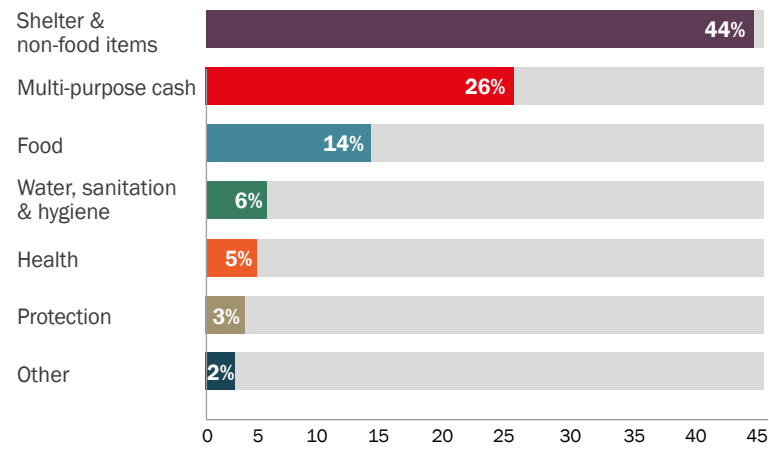
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UKRAINE: EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR

September 2022 - August 2023



Projects such as art therapy and community centres have provided safe spaces where people can talk, socialise and access support from others.

“Safe spaces are critical for internally displaced people like me. It’s where people can shower, see a psychologist and where lives are saved,” said Vira, who was displaced from Bakhmut and now lives in Lviv.


Local partners liaised with local authorities and social workers to identify vulnerable people who needed extra support, like people living in remote locations and people with disabilities. Where local authorities didn’t have the expertise to support certain groups of people, like children without parental care, they were able to get in touch with humanitarian organisations for support. DEC funding continues to boost the efforts of local organisations and allows them to reach many more people.


HOW WE'RE HELPING: FOOD





Taras* and DEC Chief Executive Saleh Saeed prepare donations for displaced families, at a warehouse run by Depaul, a local partner of CAFOD and Plan International, in Odesa in January 2023.


Key achievements in Ukraine from September 2022 to August 2023:


- 


510,000
people had improved access to water and sanitation services as a result of activities including water and sewage system repairs
- 


260,000
hosts received cash assistance to help provide accommodation to 722,000 internally displaced people
- 


118,000
people benefited from the support of community groups and local initiatives that were given cash assistance to carry out their work
- 

81,700
people provided with hygiene kits containing items including toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap bars, shampoo and toilet paper
- 

59,100
people supported through multi-purpose cash assistance
- 

58,600
people received food assistance, including hot meals and food baskets
- 

38,500
people were helped to prepare for winter, including with cash and winter kits containing items such as warm clothing, blankets and heating equipment
- 

28,000
people accessed mental health and psychosocial support services
- 

15,000
people accessed healthcare and essential health supplies

For many people in Ukraine, getting the food they need is still a daily challenge. Parents have been coping by cutting portion sizes to make sure they can feed their children or missing some meals altogether. With food scarce and prices high, many people struggle to afford the food they need for themselves and their families.

Member charities and their local partners have been using DEC funds to provide hot meals, run soup kitchens and distribute weekly food baskets to vulnerable families in affected communities.

For example, during this phase of the response, Action Against Hunger has continued to reach people across Ukraine to make sure they get the food items they need. The member charity provided hot meals to people across different oblasts (regions) in the east of Ukraine. This included taking mobile kitchens to communities affected by the breach of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023.

Action Against Hunger also distributed food kits to vulnerable groups, such as older people in care homes, children in institutional care and patients in mental health hospitals. Food pallets – containing items such as canned food, rice, pasta, sugar, oats and tomato concentrate – were also distributed to centres that were providing support to people displaced from their homes.

Plan International and its local partners distributed food to people affected by the conflict. This included delivering food baskets to 4,389 people each month to give them ongoing support and daily hot meals to 438 people living in collective centres.

“If you send us packages, it means you consider us human beings – and in the midst of this madness - it means that there is still some hope for us. Your help made me stand on my feet, eat with dignity, feel peace and gratitude,” said a person who received a humanitarian package from World Jewish Relief, a partner of Christian Aid.

Throughout the response, member charities and their local partners have been flexible in responding to people’s needs. For example, some stopped providing a standard food basket of preselected items and began tailoring food items based on what someone needs. Action Against Hunger listened to feedback from different communities and started providing fresh fruit to increase the nutritional value of food kits.

During this phase of the response, DEC member charities and partners provided vouchers to people so they could buy the food items they needed in local shops. For example, CAFOD reduced the distribution of in-kind food items to people in Ukraine and began prioritising cash assistance to communities so they could choose their own food.


VIKTORIA*

Viktoria, a cycle volunteer, delivers food and medicines to vulnerable residents of Kharkiv in November 2022 in work funded by CAFOD.

Viktoria's* story

Viktoria has been volunteering for a DEC local partner which is leading a group of volunteers cycling around the city of Kharkiv to deliver food baskets, medicine and other supplies to vulnerable people.

Because the project doesn't rely on motor transport, the activities can continue even when there is a shortage of fuel. DEC member CAFOD has been working in partnership with Depaul Ukraine to support this initiative.

"I began volunteering when pretty much every shop and pharmacy was closed. I was sitting at home checking Facebook groups and realised there were people out there who really needed help.

I now cycle around the city with other volunteers delivering aid to those that need help. At the beginning, we were more focused on food, but now we're focusing more on delivering medicines. If a person needs special things, crutches or a walker, or strips for a glucometer (a blood glucose monitor used by people with diabetes), we try to source it and deliver it as soon as possible.

With the onset of winter, if we see an old lady's window is broken, we will organise for a guy in our team to come out and do a repair. Now with the electricity problems, the elevators have stopped running. If an elderly woman lives on the twelfth floor, they can always call us, and we'll respond immediately.

“When someone is in need of something, they can make a post about it and aid will be delivered. It is a miracle. The entire world is helping, and everyone is connected. We give each other this kindness. We do it in different ways, it could be financial support, food or something else – even just to come and say a kind word to someone, it's a lot.”

HOW WE'RE HELPING: WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

During a humanitarian crisis, water, sanitation and hygiene are often severely impacted. In some areas of Ukraine, water and sanitation infrastructure has been destroyed, pipelines have been damaged and access to safe water has been compromised. Without access to clean water, people can fall ill, hospitals can't operate and there is a risk of deadly diseases.

DEC member charities and their local partners provided water, sanitation and hygiene support in locations across Ukraine during this phase of the response. This included providing people with clean drinking water; hygiene kits, including toiletries and sanitary items; and building showers and clothes washing facilities.

For instance, Save the Children provided clean drinking water and sanitation services to people affected by the conflict. Where water supply systems could not be repaired quickly, the member charity and its partners distributed bottled water to make sure people had access to safe drinking water. For example, 10,000 six-litre water bottles were distributed to 2,569 people in southeastern Ukraine.

Save the Children also provided equipment and materials to communities in northeastern Ukraine to help repair water systems. This provided 132,600 people with access to clean drinking water. The charity also helped to repair toilets and showers in a collective centre in southeast Ukraine, where people who were displaced lived on a temporary basis. It also provided a sewage truck to a village in northeast Ukraine to remove waste.

When attacks damaged water systems, the public companies responsible were overwhelmed. Oxfam supported them

by providing water pumps, water tanks, sewage cleaning machines, and hand and power tools. These were used to improve access to safe drinking water and provide sanitation services for communities.

Veronika's* family were one of the many who benefited from the supply of clean water from this Oxfam project. A foster mother caring for 10 children with her husband, she'd been forced to flee her home to seek safety. She said: "We heard that a lot of work was done on the water utilities here. They provided the town with generators to make sure there was an uninterrupted supply of water. Now water is available around the clock."

"Water is a basic need. People need to have access to good quality water. To all the funders and people who helped us, thank you so much. Without your support in this difficult time, we would have really struggled."

DEC member charities and their local partners responded to the changing needs of communities. For example, when the Kakhovka Dam was breached in June 2023, it unleashed a torrent of water and caused flooding in the region. DEC member charities and partners responded by pumping out water in houses and providing safe drinking water to affected communities. Oxfam, for example, set up mobile water treatment stations to treat the water and make sure it was safe to drink.

With girls and women being forced to flee and unable to access the menstrual products they needed, the support of DEC member charities and their partners was vital. Plan International and its local partners supported girls and women by providing them with essential menstrual and hygiene items.

Veronika in her home in Odesa region, Ukraine, with one of her 10 foster children in November 2022. Veronika and her family are one of thousands of households that benefited from the supply of clean water, thanks to local infrastructure upgrades supported by Oxfam.



Fyodor's story

After damage from a missile, the water pumps serving Artsyz in southern Ukraine broke down and part of the city was left without water.

Oxfam was quick to respond, using DEC funds to work with the local water company to upgrade the infrastructure. This included new pipes and cables to repair the system, as well as new pumps, generators and specialist control stations to make sure the water supply wouldn't be disrupted in the event of a power cut.

Here, Fyodor, the Director of Vodokanal water company in Artsyz, talks about how crucial Oxfam's support has been. "It's very hard without water. You can live without, I don't know, clothes, but you can't survive without water. After a missile strike, a lot of electronic equipment burned down, and it affected our water supply. The pumps here broke down and part of Artsyz was left without water. It was very hot at that time and the lack of water can bring diseases and other things. The mayor was contacting every possible organisation he could, but it got increasingly tense because we couldn't find the financial support.

Then Oxfam responded and I don't know what we would have done without their help. Oxfam sent an engineer. We discussed what we needed, and she recommended some relevant equipment. Oxfam reacted immediately, contacted the contractors and found the money – this was a massive help for us at that crucial time. And they agreed to keep helping us.

The water well broke down. The pipes were so old and rusty, the pumps couldn't stand it and they burned out. Oxfam helped us with new pipes and new cables so we could repair the system. Sewage is just as important as water. We needed a lot of power to keep the sewage pumps running, pumping sewage to the treatment plant. Thanks to Oxfam we got control stations for these pumps. Without this equipment our people would be drowning in sewage.

“I'm very happy to say that Oxfam, you're doing very important work. Everyone in our town felt it alot.”

Fyodor, director of the local water company, checks one of the pumps at a water facility that was damaged in Odesa region, Ukraine in November 2022. DEC funds have been used to upgrade the system to provide clean water for displaced people.



FYODOR

HOW WE'RE HELPING: WINTERISATION AND SHELTER



Veronika*, a displaced nurse and social worker for a local organisation being supported by Christian Aid at a shelter for displaced people in Odesa, Ukraine, in January 2023.

In October 2022, a change in military strategy saw energy infrastructure hit by sustained missile and drone strikes across the whole of Ukraine. The attacks knocked out electricity and heating supplies, dramatically worsening the humanitarian situation across the country. The DEC's flexible funding meant that member charities and their partners could quickly adapt their programmes to meet changing needs on the ground.

The cold winter months in Ukraine can reach as low as -20°C and DEC funds have been vital to meet people's needs, like access to warm clothes and blankets, money and fuel for heating, and in some cases, generators to provide electricity.

Many people fled to underground shelters in the early days of the conflict, and some were still there in December 2022. DEC funds kept bomb shelters warm and dry. CAFOD and Plan International worked with local partner Depaul Ukraine to carry out winter repairs and provide generators and warm blankets to families living in shelters in Kharkiv.

Reliable electricity in the shelters means families have access to water and can keep warm and have showers.

Alongside a local partner, Christian Aid provided new windows and doors to three shelters in one city to help the buildings stay warm. They also provided mattresses, blankets, pillows, heaters and generators.

DEC funds have also been directed to support older people and people with disabilities. Age International worked with a local partner to identify those most in need and provide cash assistance and winterisation kits containing winter clothes

and shoes, blankets and heating appliances. This helped over 22,300 vulnerable people in six regions stay warm over winter.

Oxfam, working with local partners, provided winterisation cash support to 588 households, supporting over 1,400 people in the south of Ukraine. This helped to cover their winter clothing needs including warm clothes for over 500 children. Concern Worldwide gave cash support to over 3,600 households in eastern and western Ukraine to help people with heating costs. This support reached over 12,700 people.

With electricity being cut off in regular blackouts, Christian Aid worked with local partners to deliver over 1,800 winterisation kits that contained items suitable for households without electricity, like portable gas stoves, power banks, torches and batteries. Households were also provided with firewood for cooking and heating, generators and fuel.

Over the course of the conflict, there has been significant damage to peoples' homes. Member charities have used DEC funds to carry out repairs so that people can move back in. For example, CARE International worked with a local partner to repair the homes of 300 families and seven collective centres to make sure people had safe living conditions during the colder winter months.

ActionAid provided accommodation in central and western Ukraine by repairing four buildings, including a damaged nursing home and a mental health hospital. This project helped provide 154 beds for vulnerable people including older people and those needing mental health and psychosocial support.



© Macek Musialek/DEC

MAVKA* AND OLESIA*

Mavka* helps her daughter, Olesia*, with her homework in a public bomb shelter in Kharkiv in November 2022. DEC funds helped Depaul, a local partner of CAFOD and Plan International, provide generators, carry out winter repairs, and provide warm blankets for the shelter.

Mavka's* story

The targeting of civilian infrastructure meant many families were left without heating and electricity. DEC charities CAFOD and Plan International worked with local partner Depaul Ukraine to keep people safe and warm.

DEC funds helped Depaul provide generators, carry out winter repairs, and provide warm blankets to a public bomb shelter in the city of Kharkiv. Depaul's nearby day centre provided the shelter and surrounding community with access to showers and clothes washing facilities, as well as specialist psychological support and legal advice teams.

Mavka has an eight-year-old daughter, Olesia*. Before the conflict, Mavka owned her own business with a shop, but it was bombed, and it burned down with everything inside. They had to seek safety in a shelter with other families deep underground. "On the third day here, someone brought mattresses and we shared three between eight of us. It was still winter, so it was cold, and we were all sleeping in our clothes and hats. Iris* (my friend) started making calls to volunteer organisations but they kept saying 'yes, we'll help you, but not now whilst it's too dangerous'. But when would it not be dangerous? In a week? A year? We couldn't live with the uncertainty of that.

Finally, Iris got hold of the Depaul number. They simply asked, 'Where are you? How many people are there? What do you need?'. We couldn't believe someone was actually going to come, but they did. They came and assessed how much help we needed, to check our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our kids.

They brought hot meals and our kids were eating. They brought us warm blankets. We realised someone was helping us, we're not abandoned."

Depaul provided an industrial generator, so the shelter would have power and the children living there could take part in online school lessons.

“ This place is salvation for me. We have electricity here so there's an opportunity for our children to have an education. Olesia is now in the third grade. There is hope for our kids' future here now – they can continue learning so that they can have a better life. ”

HOW WE'RE HELPING: CASH ASSISTANCE

Cash assistance provides people with cash payments through bank transfers, vouchers or e-cards so that they can choose how to meet their own needs. It's a quick and efficient way to support people and allows them to take a more active role in their own recovery. As well as helping to give people choice about what to spend the money on, it stimulates local demand and boosts the local economy.

Cash assistance can also be given to address certain needs. For example, support can be given to help someone buy medicines, repair their house or pay for winter clothes. Payments are also sometimes given to community groups and organisations which are helping to respond to issues on the ground.

"I'm very grateful for this financial support. Thanks to it, I was able to buy baby food for my youngest son and diapers," said a person in Ukraine receiving cash support through a local partner of Christian Aid. "We also get advice from social workers, necessary medicines and vitaminised food for teenagers. Your help and support are valuable and important to us."

Oxfam provided cash support through several local partners to over 27,000 people in the southern and eastern areas of Ukraine, with people using the money to pay for clothing, food and medicines.

Community groups, places of worship and grassroots organisations in badly affected areas received cash grants so they could lead community responses. Christian Aid and partners supported 247 organisations across 22 oblasts, reaching over 170,000 people. Local communities decided where the grants should be spent depending on their needs and priorities. This helped to improve community spirit and empowered local decision making. Grants were spent on making shelters safe for winter, psychosocial support, generators for fire stations and repairing hospitals.

Cash assistance is helpful for the most vulnerable, such as people with disabilities, older people and those at risk of exploitation. It gives them the flexibility to pay for the specific items that they need quickly, such as medicines, or specific support in areas like health.

Sasha*, a social worker with a local organisation being supported by Christian Aid, holds up cash assistance vouchers in Odesa, Ukraine, in January 2023. 'Alternative' supports people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, in particular people with medical conditions including HIV.



© Macek Musialek/DEC



Cash assistance has supported people like Badri, who previously had a stroke and had shrapnel lodged in his leg when a rocket exploded near his home. Badri and his family moved to a house in the country and received support from the International Rescue Committee. Badri said: “Many people don’t even have savings now. Imagine how exhausted people are. They were saving up for funeral, for something else...and prices have gone up. It is such a help [this IRC programme].”

The IRC supported 16,932 people with multi-purpose cash assistance during this phase of the response. This targeted vulnerable households, including those with children, people with disabilities, older people, and female-headed households. Of these households, the IRC also supported 700 people with critical cash assistance after they lost their homes and livelihoods when the Kakhovka dam was destroyed, flooding parts of Kherson in June 2023.

Age International supported older people and people with disabilities by providing cash assistance to 2,166 people who used it to buy items like medicines, food and clothing. The charity also provided community response grants to 10 local organisations, so they could visit older people in their homes and take people who were immobile to hospital appointments.

Over 4,800 people from southeastern Ukraine were given cash assistance through Oxfam’s local partners. This covered travel costs so they could access safe routes away from the fighting. For vulnerable people at risk of exploitation or abuse, the charity provided cash assistance to help them access immediate support such as food, alongside information and legal advice, and referrals to counselling and medical services.

Working with a local partner offering crisis support to women and people from the LGBTQIA+ community in eastern Ukraine, ActionAid gave out a variety of grants to those in need. A total of 318 people received cash assistance to cover medicine and healthcare items, transport expenses when evacuating from conflict affected areas, and accommodation costs.

Cash for shelter project

With no end in sight to the conflict, the British Red Cross used DEC funds to support a large-scale ‘cash for shelter’ project in coordination with the Government of Ukraine. The scheme, which mirrored the UK Government’s ‘Homes for Ukraine’ initiative, provided hosts with a monthly payment for each person staying with them to help cover expenses. This helped to incentivise hosts to continue providing accommodation to displaced people across Ukraine as the conflict continued.

DEC funds were used over the reporting period to support 260,000 hosts to provide safe and secure accommodation to 722,000 people. The scheme represents the majority of the DEC’s expenditure on shelter support inside Ukraine for this reporting period.

Badri registers for a cash transfer programme near Mykolaiv, Ukraine, in October 2022.



LARYSA*

Larysa registers for a cash transfer programme near Mykolaiv, Ukraine, in October 2022.

Larysa’s story

Before the conflict in Ukraine escalated, Larysa lived in an apartment by herself. In October 2022 she was living with her elderly parents in their home to help look after them during the conflict. It has been a difficult period for Larysa and her family as her mother has cancer and is bedridden. At a time when her mother needs special care, shelling has destroyed parts of their home, leaving them vulnerable in the cold winter months.

“The blast wave knocked out all the windows in our house,” said Larysa. “Now living there, let’s say it’s uncomfortable. We boarded up the windows with plywood. The thing is that my mother is sick. She’s a bed patient, cancer patient.”

“Everything [has] changed dramatically. Everything’s turned upside down. Scared all the time, scared. You go to bed, and you don’t know if you’re going to wake up in the morning. It’s psychologically hard.”

“We expect and hope, although we doubt very much that the heating will be turned on. We covered the window with duct

tape to make it a little warmer. The water in the city is bad. Tap water is salty [and] yellow. You can’t drink [it]. And you can’t cook with it.”

The International Rescue Committee’s cash assistance programme has provided some welcome relief for Larysa and her family. Larysa found out about the programme through her job at a service centre. She plans to use the money to buy food and medicines. Despite the unimaginable hardship Larysa and her family are facing, she is not letting go of hope.

“We hope that all this will be over soon, that there will be peace,” said Larysa. “So that we can live our lives as we used to. Go to work, get paid, go to the store or pharmacy and buy medicine. That peace [will] come.”



Continued, flexible support

Natasza stand in her family's room at a shelter for refugees in Warsaw, Poland, run by a local partner of Oxfam in July 2023.

HOW WE'RE HELPING: REFUGEES

CONTEXT

Poland

Out of the countries bordering Ukraine which DEC is funding work in, Poland continues to have the largest number of refugees from Ukraine, with around 1.6 million people receiving temporary protection. This is because of Poland's proximity to Ukraine and people already having family and friends there. Some Ukrainians also know the Polish language. The number of refugees started to decline over summer 2023, likely due to the school summer holidays. In August 2023, around 970,000 refugees remained in Poland.

Many people of working age have started to settle more permanently, securing jobs and settling children into schools. However, many refugees are women, children, older people and people with disabilities who need ongoing and specialist support. Vulnerable communities face challenges getting jobs and remain dependent on social protection and humanitarian assistance.

A temporary "Special Act" was put in place in March 2022 by the Polish government to give refugees from Ukraine access to social welfare benefits, employment, healthcare and education. In early 2023, several amendments were made to this protection. These changes included requirements for people living in collective accommodation, where refugees from Ukraine live temporarily, to make financial contributions to stay. Refugees often have complex protection needs and may choose to return to unsafe living conditions in Ukraine or move onto another country with better financial support from the host government.

Despite the Polish government's social protection scheme, the most vulnerable refugee communities are still unable to meet all their basic needs. This means that humanitarian organisations still have a major role to play.



Child refugees from Ukraine living in Warsaw participate in mental health activities at a day centre run by the Polish Migration Forum, a local partner of Plan International in July 2023.



Anastasia and Aleksandr*, refugees from Ukraine. Oxfam partner Carusel is using DEC funds to manage a shelter for 40 vulnerable individuals. As well as providing basic assistance - housing, hot meals, blankets, clothing and hygiene items in Bucharest, Romania.

Romania

With the continuing insecurity in Ukraine, the number of refugees in Romania has fluctuated. In total, 140,000 refugees were granted temporary protection. In August 2023, only 90,000 refugees remained in Romania. With the changing number of refugees, humanitarian organisations have had to rapidly adjust the support they provide to refugee communities.

In May 2023, the government of Romania ended the 50/20 housing programme, where hosts were financially supported to cover the cost of rent and expenses to accommodate refugees. This led to many refugees being evicted. With high demand for housing even prior to May 2023, many property owners pushed up rents out of reach of most refugees. Unable to pay an advance in rent, refugees couldn't access housing with contracts and legal agreements in place, putting them at risk of being exploited. Some had to make agonising decisions on whether to spend their remaining money on rent or feed their families. The number of refugees in Romania has noticeably decreased during this period, with people either relocating to another country or returning to Ukraine. However, the number of refugees in Romania

continued to fluctuate moderately, influenced by events in Ukraine and situations in host countries.

The new programme introduced by the government has stricter criteria to encourage refugees to integrate into society, including getting jobs and enrolling children in schools. While it's important for refugee and host communities to co-exist, the new scheme is challenging for vulnerable groups. For older people, people with disabilities and single parents, it's much harder to access employment opportunities due to their age, inability to work and caring responsibilities. These groups need additional protection and support.

Many international donors and humanitarian organisations have been focusing on Ukraine due to its high levels of need, rather than neighbouring countries. This means that the few humanitarian organisations working in Romania are having to strengthen their effort to support the most vulnerable people. But they have limited resources available to do this, including supporting people with their basic needs and helping them to integrate into communities.

Moldova

As one of the poorest countries in Europe, before February 2022 Moldova faced huge challenges in finding the money to cover social welfare protection for vulnerable Moldovan people. The Ukraine conflict has put even more strain and pressure on Moldova as it struggles to support refugees. During this phase of the response, Moldova had the biggest number of refugees arrive from Ukraine per capita.

At the beginning of the second phase of the response in September 2022, 103,000 refugees from Ukraine remained in Moldova. During the next 12 months, the number of refugees from Ukraine, entering and leaving Moldova, remained fluid and fluctuated from month to month, due to the country's proximity to Ukraine.

As Moldova is not part of the European Union, the government began supporting refugee communities under 'emergency measures'. This means refugee communities were able to stay in Moldova without a formal legal status. This was then discontinued in mid-August 2023. The Moldovan government, which is supportive of joining the European Union, stopped

the emergency measures to align with the European Union's temporary protection directive. This would provide a wider range of support to refugees, including access to education, employment and social welfare. This is in place until early March 2024 with the potential for it to be extended for one year.

Unfortunately, during the transition to the new scheme, many refugee communities faced challenges in accessing reliable information and legal support to apply for the new scheme. When the emergency measures ended in mid-August 2023, only 8,000 refugees had applied for the temporary protection directive, out of almost 117,000 refugees remaining in Moldova. This left many refugees without the support they needed.

In August 2023, many refugees still urgently needed access to food, hygiene items and help with finding jobs. Even prior to the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, Moldova faced a high unemployment rate, making it even harder for refugees from Ukraine to find work. They continue to live with anxiety, fear for children's futures, financial difficulties and guilt for leaving their homes, and have difficulties integrating into a new country.

Tatiana, a refugee from Odesa, Ukraine, stands in a warehouse in Chisinău, Moldova, distributing food and hygiene kits, run by Plan International's local partner, Moldova for Peace, in February 2024. Tatiana has been volunteering to help other refugees since arriving in Moldova.





© DEC/Andreea Campeanu

Mothers from Ukraine take part in a group support session run by social workers in August 2022. DEC-funded mobile teams supported by Plan International continued visiting refugee accommodation centres across Moldova to deliver psychological support during the reporting period.

HOW DEC CHARITIES ARE RESPONDING IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

DEC member charities and local partners have provided vital support to refugee communities in Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary. Despite government efforts in each country, state support hasn't fully covered the long-term needs of refugees. For example, helping refugees to look for childcare opportunities so caregivers can find work. People still continue to experience a high level of unmet need. Funds from the Ukraine appeal have been used to support refugees with the basics, such as food, and to settle into new countries.

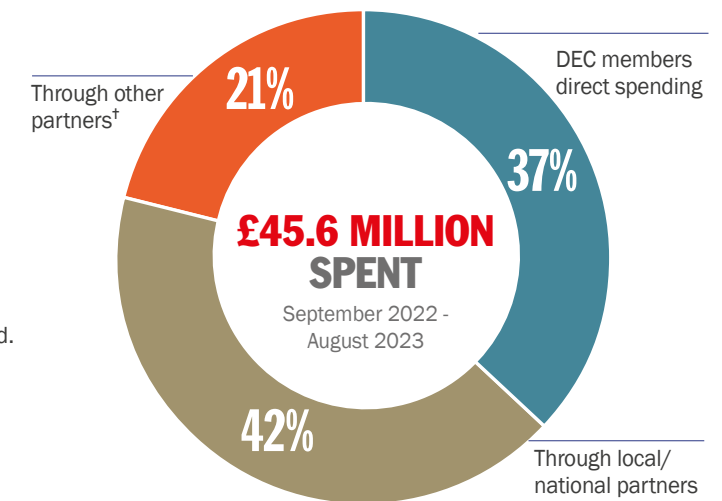
Many refugees arriving in neighbouring countries had lost everything, so assistance was initially focused on meeting the immediate needs of refugees. Assistance like cash payments and vouchers have been crucial in giving people the freedom and ability to prioritise their needs. Cash and voucher assistance accounted for 40% of DEC aid expenditure outside of Ukraine in the 12 months of the reporting period.

Alongside cash assistance, DEC member charities and local partners helped to meet refugees' basic needs by providing them with food, hygiene items, clothing and medical support. Refugees have also been helped to access longer-term accommodation, legal advice and language classes.

DEC member charities and partners have also helped refugees to integrate and be included in local communities and society. This has involved helping refugees to find work and supporting children to enrol in local schools. They have also organised events to bring refugees and host communities together, so that refugees get to know the cultures of their host countries and refugee and host children can play together.

EXPENDITURE: DEC MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

Funds raised by the DEC are allocated to our 15 member charities. They work both directly and through local, national and other partners.



†Such as international partners. For example, Plan International channelling funds through Jesuit Refugee Services Europe.



© Polish Red Cross

The Hungarian Red Cross prepares parcels containing bedding and hygiene items for distribution in 2022.

Hungary

At the beginning of this phase in August 2022, over 1.2 million refugees from Ukraine had arrived in Hungary, although most were passing through Hungary to go to other countries. There were over 28,500 applications made for temporary protection in the country at the time. This number changed during the reporting period and by the end of this phase, in August 2023, over 52,000 refugees remained in Hungary.

Similar to the rest of the world, Hungary has been affected by increasing inflation. This has meant many refugee communities from Ukraine are still in need of cash assistance, accommodation and medical support, especially older people and those who are chronically ill.

The country has also been experiencing a housing crisis, which made it even harder for refugee communities to find and secure affordable housing.

Refugees have also experienced hostilities from some host communities. Humanitarian organisations have been supporting refugee communities to integrate to help reduce tension between the different communities. This includes providing safe spaces and facilities.

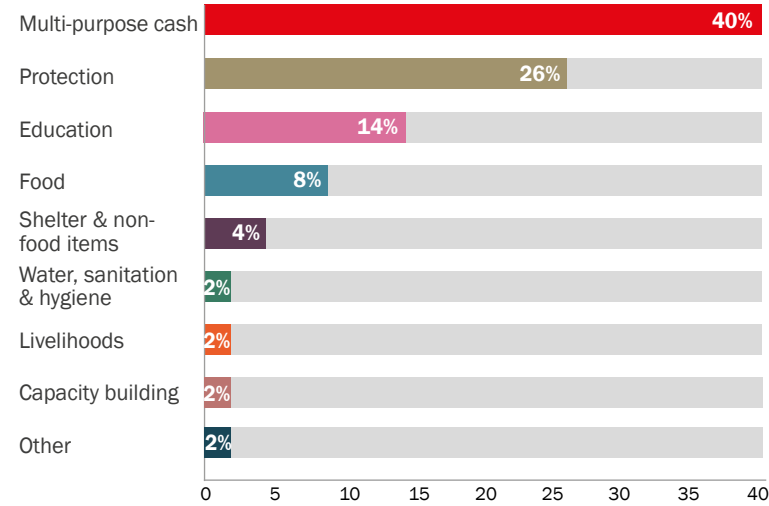


© Eugene Comby/Christopher Late

World Vision and their local partners Food Bank and Communitas provide displaced families with food, hygiene kits and other essential items in Moldova in March 2022.

REGIONAL RESPONSE: EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR

September 2022 - August 2023



Many people are carrying mental and emotional scars from the conflict. Refugees have continued to live with anxiety, fear for the future, financial difficulties and issues settling into new countries. DEC member charities and local partners have provided social workers, psychologists and interpreters to support refugees across the four countries and refer people to psychosocial support when necessary. This helps to improve people's wellbeing and supports the mental health of both adults and children.

Government support, local families and businesses across neighbouring countries have played an important role in supporting refugees. But as time has gone on, host countries have felt the impact of the conflict. Government schemes initially put in place to support refugees in Poland, Romania and Moldova have become stricter, making it more difficult for vulnerable people to access the support they need.

A challenging feature of the response has been the fluidity of movement of people across borders. Refugees have been crossing back into Ukraine to see loved ones or check on their houses, and then leaving again. This constant flux has meant DEC member charities and local partners have had to quickly scale up their work and adapt to meet the complex and changing needs of refugees.



A Ukrainian refugee receives cash assistance at the Jesuit Refugee Service centre, a local partner of CAFOD, in Bucharest, Romania in February 2023.

Key achievements in neighbouring countries from September 2022 to August 2023:

- 175,000**
people received food assistance, including food baskets and food vouchers
- 145,000**
people at risk of human trafficking in Romania were provided with support
- 71,400**
children in Poland were supported with their education, along with a further 10,300 children in Romania
- 21,400**
people in Moldova received hygiene kits
- 5,000**
people in Poland received legal assistance, information and advice

HOW WE'RE HELPING: CASH ASSISTANCE

Many refugees arriving in other countries had lost everything and were unable to support themselves and their families. Unconditional cash payments have given people the freedom and versatility to prioritise their needs.

Cash assistance accounted for 40% of DEC aid expenditure outside of Ukraine during the reporting period. Several DEC member charities and their local partners provided cash assistance to refugees from Ukraine. This included unconditional cash assistance and top up cash support to provide additional payments to the most vulnerable people. Payments were also made to local community groups and organisations who were helping to improve the living conditions and wellbeing of communities affected by the conflict.

For example, Oxfam in Poland provided cash transfers totalling EUR 10,000 (~£8,600) to 12 initiative groups which were supporting refugees who were moving between countries, as

well as those remaining in the country. The community groups supported 19,046 people, including women, Roma and LGBTQIA+ communities, by providing legal assistance, help with learning Polish and English, psychosocial support, and safe spaces and activities for children.

The British Red Cross in Poland continued to prioritise cash and voucher assistance for refugees during this phase of the response. In the 12-month period, the DEC member charity gave out four instalments of cash to 22,271 households and a one-off instalment to 2,347 households to support them through the winter months.

The International Rescue Committee also provided cash assistance between December 2022 and January 2023 to help refugees in Poland prepare for the winter months. This reached 2,072 people.

In Romania, Christian Aid provided cash assistance to 380 Ukrainians to help them prepare for the winter months. People could prioritise their personal needs, for example, winter clothes and boots or pay for utilities like heating. The DEC member charity also provided flexible small grants to local NGOs to support people on the ground. A total of EUR 20,000 (~£17,000) was given to six local organisations to support refugees with the cost of rent and food. They gave them vouchers to use in supermarkets and clothing shops. They also provided rooms for children to take part in educational and recreational activities. In total, more than 5,000 people were reached through these activities.

CAFOD's local partner, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), has provided vital support to refugees with the cost of medicines and health tests. Bianca Albu, project manager for JRS, said: "We've been covering the reimbursement of the costs of tests and investigations for refugees with medical issues. This has had a huge impact because people are having health problems and they could not cover those costs."

Bianca's story

CAFOD partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has been supporting refugees from Ukraine to integrate into Romanian society. This includes language classes for adults and children, psychosocial support, trauma counselling, and information and legal advice.

JRS helps refugees to leave emergency shelter and find more permanent accommodation. Refugees receive cash to pay for their rent, a grant to cover the basic needs of moving into an apartment, and cash for costs like food, clothing and hygiene items.

Bianca Albu is the project manager for JRS in Romania. She shares how the work of JRS is helping refugees to feel a sense of belonging:

"Initially, refugees were talking about staying here in Romania temporarily for a few weeks or months, and then going to be Ukraine. But all their hopes and dreams have changed little by little.

People started asking more and more for education for their children and Romanian language classes and helping them find a job. No matter how hard it is here, it is going to be easier than Ukraine. People want to be as independent as they can be on their own and so they are not a burden to others.

The philosophy of the project is that we empower people to become independent. We help them to move very quickly into

Meanwhile, in Moldova, Action Against Hunger prioritised multi-purpose cash assistance during this phase of the response for both refugees and vulnerable Moldovan households, giving them the freedom of choice to buy what they needed. For example, in March 2023, the DEC member charity gave a one-off cash transfer to 707 refugee households and 801 Moldovan host community households. It also distributed e-vouchers for a distribution point for food and other items in the capital, Chisinau. From October 2022 to the end of August 2023, a total of 29,844 Ukrainian and 6,375 vulnerable Moldovans benefited from the e-vouchers.

In Hungary, Christian Aid supported 33 initiatives that were improving cohesion between refugee communities and host communities. Micro-grants of £4,485 were given to community organisations to run the initiatives. These include organising daytrips for refugees to get to know their local area and supporting children with psychosocial and physical health problems and people with disabilities.

private apartments instead of living in shelters where they can feel powerless. We know that this is an important step in integration because we have been doing this previously for many years with other refugees.

It's important to receive our support because refugees don't know the language or the neighbourhoods. They need support from our colleagues to find the right place for them, according to the size of the family and the school where they managed to register the children.

We support people by covering expenses. Families receive cash allowances each month to cover their basic needs until they can find a job. We've also offered tablets to children so they can take part in [Ukrainian] online education. The schools in Ukraine offer Zoom classes, just like in the pandemic. The children just needed devices to do it. We personalise and shape our support to each family.

“We've managed to create a community around us with people who support each other and know when to ask for our help. They are independent, but at the same time, they have a feeling of belonging.”



Anastasia, a volunteer art teacher supported by World Vision helps children with art therapy in Chisinau, Moldova, in February 2023.

HOW WE'RE HELPING: PROTECTION

The conflict has affected the whole of Ukrainian society, causing huge disruption to every section of the population. However, vulnerable groups have been hit the hardest. From children and pregnant women and older people with chronic illnesses, to ethnic minorities and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, a variety of groups have needed extra help including after they've fled as refugees. This is because they have found it harder to access services, faced discrimination or had specific needs, such as covering the cost of medicine.

DEC member charities and their local partners have been running several protection services for refugees from Ukraine to help them settle into their host communities and keep them safe. This included legal advice, support with understanding the local language, counselling and child protection.

During this phase of the response, ActionAid and its local partners in Poland supported 17,862 refugees through protection services. This includes translation support, legal advice, temporary accommodation and support to integrate into local communities. Meanwhile, Oxfam and its local partners in Moldova provided psychosocial and legal counselling through a telephone helpline. From September 2022 to August 2023, 990 refugees received support through the service on issues such as human trafficking and gender-based violence.

Women and girls are especially vulnerable during conflict. ActionAid and its partners in Poland are working with women-led organisations and providing protection services to safeguard women's rights. This includes giving information to women on gender-based violence and raising awareness with local authorities and border forces on what to look out for to stop the trafficking of women and children. World Vision in Moldova also provided mental health and psychosocial support in group sessions to 7,698 women and 4,947 children during the 12-month period. CARE International worked with a local partner called SERA in Romania, which focuses on child protection, child rights and the protection of vulnerable people. Together, they provided mobile teams to register child refugees transiting or staying in Romania to help them access state services.

Art teacher Anastasia volunteers at the Communitas Centre, World Vision's local partner in Moldova. Ukrainian children receive daily psychosocial support as part of a project funded by the DEC and use art therapy to express themselves. Anastasia said: "I could see a clear difference in how child refugees acted before and after joining the classes. I noticed their transformation. Drawing helps children's brains focus and reduces tension. They become calmer. Through art therapy, I wish every person who has experienced a traumatic event could heal."

To support refugees to settle into their new communities in Poland, Oxfam and its local partners arranged Polish language lessons for members of the Ukrainian Roma community who had fled the conflict. This helped them to enrol on courses and find jobs.

Plan International and its local partners in Poland are continuously monitoring the needs of refugees in the country and the risks they face. They are doing this through interviews, surveys and group discussions with the people using their services. This is helping them to connect with vulnerable groups of people who are at risk, such as LGBTQIA+ communities and survivors of gender-based violence.

Oxfam's approach in Romania was to partner with local organisations that work with specific groups of people. For example, women's rights and women-led organisations, LGBTQIA+ advocates and Roma-led organisations. This helped the member charity and local partners to monitor the needs of each specific at-risk group.

Oxfam and local partners in Poland provided safe spaces and inclusive protection services for women, children and marginalised groups. Thirteen safe spaces in different cities in Poland supported 9,435 vulnerable refugees by giving them shelter, access to protection services and social interaction with others in similar situations.

For Yuliia, the bombings her family experienced affected her son, Marat's, mental health. They fled from Odesa in Ukraine to Romania. There were nights when Marat would wake up crying and screaming because he kept dreaming of the bombings. Yuliia found one of World Vision's child-friendly spaces for Marat to play, learn and interact with other children. She said: "I was also allowed to do my work in the place, so I get to follow his activities and support him. He is beginning to adapt and speaks a few words in English. He always wants to come every day and play. He has new friends."



Yuliia and her son Marat at a child-friendly space run by World Vision in Romania.



MARIA*

Maria*, 8, from Odesa, Ukraine holds up artwork created as part of psychosocial activities at the Caritas centre for refugees in Romania in January 2023.

Tatiana's story

Clinical psychologist Tatiana Orekhov has witnessed the impact conflict has on children from Ukraine. Here, she shares what she has seen running art therapy sessions at a psychosocial centre run by one of World Vision's local partners in Moldova.

"I noticed that Ukrainian children who came here were severely disturbed by their experience. They did not communicate with anyone other than their parents, spent a lot of time on the phone, cried excessively, refused to eat, or participate in any activities we organised. Their faces were filled with fear and tightness.

They don't behave like a normal child who wants to play with his friends, enjoy life and eat sweets. It is likely that they will not have the same interests as other children their age, especially those who lived in underground bunkers before and were exposed to shelling, shooting, and dreaded threats. Their main concern will be to feel safe, close to their parents or caregivers.

To heal the impact of war on these children, we first needed to make them feel safe on their own, even when their parents were not around. The purpose of what we're

“I've painted my house [in Ukraine] because whenever I think of my house, I think of happiness, laughter, and kindness. Since this was my childhood home, I have the most wonderful memories there. I have also painted my family. My family is my happiness.”

Maria* (above), 8, from Odesa, Ukraine

doing here is to create an environment of love and care, a solid feeling of community that they can rely on, preventing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). From my field of expertise, I can confirm it works.

Children who frequently visit the centre regularly differ significantly from those who visit just once or twice a month. When kids come here often and learn how to recognise their feelings, talk, and how to cope with stress, they change their overall mental wellbeing.”

HOW WE'RE HELPING: EDUCATION

With no end to the conflict in sight, many Ukrainians who moved to neighbouring countries enrolled their children in local schools. The sudden spike in demand for school places for refugee children, who didn't know the local language, put pressure on education services. These children had experienced the trauma of fighting and leaving their homes, so many had significant mental health and psychosocial support needs.

Education has formed a large part of the work funded by the DEC as part of the refugee response. In Poland, Plan International used appeal funds to provide training and support to over 7,000 teachers. This included training on how to run a multicultural classroom, teaching Polish as a second language, and helping teachers to recognise mental health and learning support challenges that children might have.

Schools have been supported with vital equipment and educational tools. Another Plan International project provided 2,400 books for children at 200 schools and public libraries in Poland, as well as educational materials on social-emotional learning for teachers. The charity also provided over 2,300 education kits to school-aged children in Moldova, which contained essential supplies like pens, notebooks, and hygiene items like toothpaste and tissues.

To help children's mental health and psychosocial support needs, Plan International provided helpline counselling to over 4,200 children in Poland. In Moldova, three mobile teams visited refugee accommodation centres in local host communities to offer mental health and psychosocial support to over 2,500 children and their caregivers. This includes activities like art therapy and games, which give children the chance to express themselves and process what they've experienced.

While some DEC charities helped children integrate into local education systems, some parents preferred to have their children study the Ukrainian curriculum remotely. Save the Children set

up after-school education spaces where over 300 children in Romania could receive help with their homework and access mental health and psychosocial support.

Young people like Yevheniia* have benefited from schools being set up that teach the Ukrainian curriculum and are staffed by refugee teachers. Save the Children worked in Poland with a local partner, Unbreakable Ukraine Foundation, to allow children to continue their studies while also learning Polish and settling into their host country.

Yevheniia, who is 16, is one of over 1,500 children attending these new schools in Poland supported with DEC funds. She said: "This school is very important to me because I've learned so much here. I've found new friends, I've found support, and I've found confidence and self-realisation. I'm focused on studying history, mathematics and the Ukrainian language as these are the main subjects for our end of year exams and university applications. My Polish language is getting better. It's been such an incredible opportunity for me and my classmates. We are all very passionate about it and we've been able to create our own mini family here."

In Moldova, a local partner of World Vision used DEC funds for a summer camp for refugee children from Ukraine. With games, themed days and educational events, the camp gave children the chance to enjoy a variety of activities during the summer holidays.

One of Plan International's partners organised a photographic workshop for 18 refugee children. The workshop empowered children to use cameras on their own, take photos and add a story to it, giving their families a better insight into their children's world. It led to a photo exhibition, called Children Telling Stories, where children presented their work and explained their experiences to the community. A translator was provided. The children felt understood and listened to, and it created stronger bonds between refugee and host communities.

Vladislav* and his younger brother attend a Digital Learning Centre supported by Save the Children at a library in Poland in October 2022.



© Paul Wu/DEC



© Paul Wu/DEC

YULIIA*

Yuliia teaches a class at the Unbreakable Ukraine school in Warsaw, Poland, in October 2022.

Yuliia's* story

In Poland, Save the Children and local partner Information Society Development Foundation (FRSI) helped children from Ukraine to continue with their education. The project provided a safe space in local libraries where children, and their caregivers, could learn, develop their skills and improve their wellbeing.

Yuliia is originally from Ukraine and now works as a primary school teacher in one of the schools funded by the project. "Ukrainian children need the school because they miss the school community, the social element, where they can talk, learn and get to know the wider world. So, everyone is very happy for the chance to study at this school."

We learn the Polish language and culture, but we do not forget our own culture because many of the children will eventually return to Ukraine. It's very important not to forget where we come from, and who we are.

We have 29 children in my class. There are lots of them who love to read, and lots who attend different clubs, football clubs, gymnastics and needlework. There are kids who sing, play the bandura, and play the piano. Each child is an individual, each child is interesting and wonderful.

“The sponsors are making a huge contribution to our school. There are the textbooks, furniture, whiteboards and desks for the children, but children get meals too and it's all free. This is an incredible help.”

HOW WE'RE HELPING: LIVELIHOODS

People who were forced to flee Ukraine left behind their jobs and ability to earn a living. Many refugees living in neighbouring countries have been using their savings to survive and are reliant on humanitarian assistance. This means it is critical to help refugees find work.

Restarting people's livelihoods makes up a small but important component of the DEC-funded refugee response to the conflict in Ukraine. One of the most effective ways to support people to rebuild their lives is giving them the opportunity to work. When refugees have work, they can provide for their families' needs, use their skills and help contribute to host countries.

A key focus for DEC member charities and their local partners has been supporting refugees with training and to find job opportunities and childcare, so parents and other caregivers can search for jobs and attend interviews.

For example, ActionAid provided employment support to 732 people in Poland, double the original target. This included supporting refugees with CV writing, identifying suitable roles for them to apply for and informing them of their employment rights. To support women, the charity worked with a local partner to offer four workshops in culinary skills and six workshops on art skills. These activities were arranged based on their suggestions and interests.

Polina crossed the border into Moldova with her daughter and grandchildren but was struggling to find a job. In December 2022, Polina joined World Vision's cash-for-work programme, funded by the DEC. She works at the refugee accommodation centre in Chisinău, the country's capital, supporting other refugees from Ukraine to find the help they need. From answering phone calls and guiding refugees through the registration process to explaining how to reach distribution points, the work

has enabled Polina to earn an income to support her family. Polina said: "Everyone at the centre became my family – workers, volunteers, Ukrainian mothers and their children. When they first arrived, the Ukrainian women were emotionally distant. After spending some months at the centre, I could see a growing flicker of hope on their faces."

Working with a local partner in Poland, the International Rescue Committee supported over 430 refugees from Ukraine to build business, social and employability skills. This included Polish language classes, intercultural workshops to support refugees to understand the local culture and customs, and financial literacy to help people manage household finances. Refugees were also offered the chance to attend psychosocial workshops to reduce stress, promote healing in a safe environment and build resilience.

The charity also launched a social campaign called "Know Your Rights" to build an understanding of labour rights among refugees from Ukraine in Poland. The campaign aimed to empower refugees to find employment opportunities. A number of social media platforms, media outlets and influential figures within the community were used to support the campaign. It got considerable traction, successfully spreading its message to an audience of over 670,000.

In Romania, ActionAid and local partners worked with governmental agencies to provide employment opportunities for refugees. Working with a Romanian regional employment agency, refugees from Ukraine have been informed about their rights and how to find jobs. The charity has also been using DEC funds to work with a youth-led organisation to provide information, counselling and guidance to young women and men under the age of 35. The aim is to help them access education and employment opportunities.

In February 2023, the International Rescue Committee set up two integration centres in Poland called "One Step to Employment" to support refugees to pursue safe and decent job opportunities. By visiting the centres, jobseekers could access skills profiling, job matching and referrals, business and life skills training, legal counselling and translation, all in one place. Aspiring business owners and entrepreneurs were able to access mentoring and business start-up support and grants to help them to set up businesses.

The centres held employment events for both refugees and host communities. During the reporting period, 18 events took place on topics such as how to validate Ukrainian diplomas in Poland, setting up a business and how to report taxes as an entrepreneur. More than 200 people have benefited from these events, with 99% of those who completed a survey afterwards, saying they would recommend the events to their peers.

A job fair was also held for employers to meet with jobseekers. Employers included fast-food chain KFC, retail supermarket chain Zabka and employment agency, Manpower. In total, 89 people took part, with a larger event planned for the next phase of the Ukraine response.



Along with other volunteers, Polina organises food and hygiene items at a warehouse in Chisinău, Moldova.



ANASTASIA*

Anastasia*, a refugee from Mykolaiv, Ukraine, who has received support from World Vision to train as a professional manicurist in Chisinău, Moldova, in March 2023.

Anastasia's story

Anastasia fled to Moldova after leaving her life behind in southern Ukraine. Since arriving in Moldova, she's had difficulties finding a job because of the language barrier.

World Vision's local partner, Communitas provides professional courses to women to retrain in a career that doesn't require them to speak the local language. It means women can easily integrate into society and earn a living.

The courses include theory and practice and at the end, women are given a certificate as well as all the necessary equipment to set up their business. Anastasia trained in professional manicure services. Since gaining her qualification, she's already had her first customers.

“Following this training, I gained new skills,” said Anastasia. “I am now my own manager. I can make as many appointments as I like during the day. This job provides me with the freedom, excitement and dignity I need to earn my own money.”

HOW WE'RE HELPING: FOOD

Neighbouring host countries, like the rest of Europe, have seen a sharp rise in the costs of essentials, like food. This means many refugees struggle to afford even the most essential food items. DEC member charities and their local partners have provided vital food packages, vouchers and hot meals at a time of stress and disruption for refugees trying to settle somewhere new.

During this phase of the response, Oxfam worked with three local organisations in Poland to provide food assistance to vulnerable people, reaching around 20,300 people in 7,400 households. Food kits included rice, cooking oil and other essentials and were given to families every month to make sure they had ongoing support. In one city, Oxfam gave out packages to mostly older people who needed more support.

In Romania, World Vision funded one of the largest food banks to provide support for refugees from Ukraine and vulnerable Romanian families. There's been a huge need for food basics and the charity reached over 80,400 people with life-saving food packages. Another DEC member charity, Oxfam, worked with a partner in Romania to cook meals for 420 Ukrainian people in shelters. Chefs consulted with the community to make sure that they cooked culturally appropriate meals. Residents also had

access to a fully stocked pantry where they could access food around the clock.

As time has gone on, host communities have also felt the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine with electricity and gas bills rising across Europe. To provide support wherever it's needed, DEC charities and local partners have been supporting local host communities alongside refugees. In Moldova, World Vision has provided food support to both refugees and vulnerable Moldovan families. Food boxes containing rice, beans, oil, and canned fish, peas and meat reached over 2,800 refugee families and a similar number of vulnerable Moldovan families.

The project has helped people like Anexia, a Moldovan woman in her 70s who lives alone and must survive on a small pension that barely covers her monthly needs. The food box distributed by the Food Bank, World Vision's local partner, supplied her with the necessities she can no longer buy on her own. Anexia said: "I am not sure how I survived for years. I lost my family and my child. The meagre pension in Moldova makes it difficult for me to survive. I would only say thank you from the bottom of my heart to the good people who help us."

Anexia, a Moldovan citizen receiving support as part of a food programme helping both refugees from Ukraine and vulnerable Moldovans, speaks with World Vision staff in March 2023.



© Eugene Combo/Christopher Lete



© Laurentia Jose/World Vision

HANNAH*

Hannah signs to confirm her receipt of food and hygiene items from World Vision's social store in Romania in May 2023.

Hannah's story

Hannah and her two children fled to Romania from Mykolaiv, a city in southern Ukraine, when it became unsafe to stay. She was a successful accountant, but it's been hard for Hannah to find a job since arriving in Romania.

"We were very happy," said Hannah. "Then everything collapsed in an instant. When the rocket goes over your head, you are not processing anything; you are in survival mode."

On the first day of the war, two missiles exploded near Hannah's apartment, destroying three nearby buildings. She stood in the living room of her flat, trembling as artillery blasts rattled the floor beneath her.

The next three months were filled with restless hours spent in the cold corridors of her apartment complex. Hannah would arrange mattresses, pillows and

comforters to protect her children as they tried to settle in the hallway every time an alarm went off.

"You are quite vulnerable psychologically," said Hannah. "It takes time to comprehend everything since we endured a tremendous amount of stress."

Since fleeing to Romania, Hannah has been relying on monthly food packages and hygiene kits from one of World Vision's distribution hubs.

“Food prices are quite high compared to our income,” said Hannah. “We have received high-quality food items. There is a large choice of products, and they make sure to expand our options every month. We are so grateful for World Vision’s assistance.”

CHALLENGES ACROSS THE RESPONSE

There have been a number of challenges for communities affected by the conflict, as well as for DEC member charities and their local partners as they respond on the ground.

Active conflict

With the constant threat of missile and drone attacks and ongoing fighting, DEC member charities and local partners have faced huge challenges to provide aid where it's most needed. The hostilities have made the situation difficult and unpredictable. The risks have been monitored and evaluated daily to minimise the risk to staff, volunteers and the people who are being supported.

As the conflict continues, the need for humanitarian assistance remains vast. Despite the generosity of people who've donated to the appeal and the efforts of governments, local authorities and humanitarian organisations, the funding isn't enough to reach everyone in need. For example, when one local partner in Poland began registering refugees for cash assistance, they received over 24,000 applications within days. This showed that extra support from humanitarian organisations was needed above the assistance provided by the government.

The conflict has led to a large movement of people leaving their homes to seek safety either elsewhere in Ukraine or in neighbouring countries. This flux of people is constantly changing, with people moving to seek security and safety; visiting Ukraine to check on family, friends or property; or

going to other countries when they experience difficulties. Humanitarian organisations are finding it challenging to plan ahead, identify the people most in need and register them for assistance. DEC member charities and local partners have adopted a flexible approach to their work so they can rapidly adapt to changing circumstances.

Targeting of power infrastructure

Ukraine's energy infrastructure was repeatedly attacked in winter 2022/23. This knocked out electricity and heating over the freezing winter months, which threw up new challenges for DEC member charities and their local partners. The power outages compromised food safety as freezers stopped working, which was concerning for member charities that provide food assistance. The blackouts also affected the work of DEC charities and their partners too, as they didn't have electricity or light in their offices which prevented them from working.

Yuliya Sporysh, from NGO Girls, an ActionAid partner says: "Our finance team can be without light and internet for 12 hours, so it's of course impacting all our projects and activities. But we try to adapt. It also creates additional pressure on our mental health because every moment you are waiting for an air siren or for cold days without electricity and heating or for lack of internet." Using the DEC's flexible funding, members and local partners quickly adapted their plans to distribute and install generators to provide electricity to keep people warm and connected. They also bought battery-operated medical equipment that can operate without power.

Changes to refugee protection

Hosting countries have given sanctuary to millions of people from Ukraine since the escalation of the conflict. However, this temporary protection in some neighbouring countries has begun to change. In January 2023, several amendments were made to Poland's "Special Act" which entitles refugee communities from Ukraine to access social welfare benefits, employment, healthcare and education. The changes included requirements for refugees to make financial contributions to stay in Poland. Refugees are in a vulnerable situation as it is difficult for them to secure jobs. For example, a large proportion of refugees are women with children, so they have caring responsibilities.

In May 2023, the government of Romania closed a housing programme which supported people who were hosting refugees to cover the cost of rent and expenses. As a result, many refugees were evicted and unable to afford other housing, forcing them to either relocate to another country or return to Ukraine. A new programme has been set up in Romania with strict criteria to encourage communities to integrate and refugees to find jobs. But the programme isn't accessible for some vulnerable groups, like people with disabilities, older people and single parents with children. These groups of people are being pushed further into need.

While host countries have been changing their policies, many international donors and humanitarian organisations have turned their attention back to displaced communities in Ukraine. For organisations remaining in neighbouring countries to support refugees, they've had to respond with less resources to support higher levels of need as well as supporting vulnerable host communities and vulnerable third country nationals.

Coordination

Another challenge for some DEC member charities and their partners has been coordinating with other agencies and local authorities due to the nature of the vulnerable communities they support. For example, one partner faced hostility from other agencies outside of the DEC membership because of their focus on supporting sex workers.

Another partner struggled to coordinate with local authorities because they work with LGBTQIA+ communities, who face discrimination in Ukraine and elsewhere. Despite this, the partner was able to work with other LGBTQIA+ focused organisations by setting up an online event. This brought together 30 NGOs to share their experiences and talk about the work they had done, including opening shelters, providing psychosocial support and advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people.

IMPROVING HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The DEC is committed to using learning from past and current emergency responses to make sure funds are used appropriately and that humanitarian programmes meet the highest standards. This helps to make sure that people who are affected have their needs met and their dignity is respected.

Here is some of the best practice used by DEC member charities in Ukraine and neighbouring countries to meet this commitment:

Supporting a locally led response

DEC member charities are working closely with local partners and communities to make sure that DEC funds are used to support a locally led response. Local partners have knowledge of the area, good relationships with local authorities and other organisations, and are accepted by the communities they work with. By working with local partners, member charities can better identify those in most need of urgent support. A locally led response also has positive environmental benefits, as local partners have less distance to travel. It also supports local purchases and creates less waste.

A total of 35 local partners were involved in the response in Ukraine, with a further 63 partners working across Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary. All DEC-funded humanitarian responses support local partner organisations to strengthen capacity for the long term and provide continuous mentoring support. In turn, local partners offer their own expertise and support to strengthen DEC members and other local

organisations. For example, increasing their knowledge of how best to work with local communities.

Together with local partners, ActionAid explored initiatives that supported collaboration across borders to address regional challenges and opportunities between Ukraine, Poland and Romania. This avoided duplication and helped assistance to be more coordinated. In Poland, ActionAid delivered a three-day workshop with local partners to increase their knowledge and awareness of the international humanitarian system and quality standards.

Other DEC members including Plan International have organised regular meetings and engaged in events so that organisations and local partners can share challenges, successes and learning. By providing opportunities to network, different organisations can work closely together. For example, ActionAid supported a local organisation to bring youth groups from Poland and Romania together with similar organisations in Ukraine to connect and share learning and resources.

To support women-led organisations, Oxfam organised a webinar called "We Are Not Alone" to connect national and local women's groups. People were able to share knowledge and good practice from their work in Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the conflict there. This encouraged people from local humanitarian organisations to take on leading roles in the response to the conflict. It also empowered local women's voices in decision-making processes and supported local organisations which are working on the frontline.



DEC Chief Executive Saleh Saeed and Depaul Ukraine CEO Father Vitaliy Novak speak with Vira, Maryna and Nina at a children's centre run by Depaul in Odesa, Ukraine, in February 2023.

Protecting the environment

DEC member charities are committed to reducing the environmental impact of their humanitarian response work. To minimise the environmental impact of the response in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, DEC member charities used:

- local produce, suppliers and distributors where possible to reduce the distance that goods and items travelled
- recycled paper, cardboard and biodegradable bags
- cash, vouchers or electronic certificates so people can choose what they need, and items aren't wasted
- cycle couriers for some distributions, and trains instead of flights where possible.

During renovations of houses and buildings in Ukraine, DEC-funded repair works used sustainable solutions wherever possible, like installing insulation and energy-efficient heating. For example, CAFOD used insulation and windows and doors with improved energy efficiency to rebuild homes. One of Christian Aid's local partners repaired 187 houses, including fixing leaking roofs, broken windows, cracked or collapsed perimeter walls, and other damage which jeopardised thermal insulation. These approaches are good for the environment as they are reducing emissions and residents benefit from reduced heating and energy bills. This is helping to build a sustainable green future in Ukraine, which is on the agenda of the government of Ukraine.

Community centres provide a safe place for people to come together and receive support. In Poland, Plan International and partners used LED lighting and renewable energy sources, like solar power, in community centres to make them more energy efficient.

In Ukraine, Oxfam provided solar panels for a community centre to cope with regular cuts in the electricity supply. The centre provides hot drinks, a place for people to charge their mobile phones, and register for aid and support. Children also use the centre for recreational activities. Since the solar panels were installed in January 2023, around 250 people have visited the centre and benefited from this safe space. This not only helped the environment but became essential when attacks damaged energy infrastructure and power was lost. For children and families who've experienced the distress of blackouts and darkness, warm and bright community centres provide a safe haven.

As well as looking for ways to reduce the environmental impact of their work, DEC member charities are working to educate the next generation. One of Plan International's partners in Romania ran environmental events for children, like a tree planting initiative in the parks and a sanitation campaign in playgrounds. The partner also taught children about the importance of recycling and how to put items in the right bins to get recycled.



Solar panels to power a well constructed by Oxfam in Yuzhne, Ukraine.

Adaptive programming and learning

The DEC puts flexibility at the heart of its approach to funding, giving member charities the chance to adjust planned activities quickly when circumstances or people's needs change. This helps to make sure that DEC funds are used appropriately, efficiently and effectively, and aid gets to where it's most needed. It also means that support can be tailored to individuals with specific needs. For local partners, this flexibility means they can introduce new activities, be responsive to the needs of different communities and start working in different locations. It also opens opportunities for other funding.

The constant movement of people, the changes in the presence of humanitarian organisations, funding availability and the insecurity in Ukraine have all meant that it's been important for member charities and local partners to adapt their work. For example, with the attacks on energy infrastructure, DEC's flexible funding allowed member charities and local partners to adapt their plans. Organisations could direct funds where it was needed most, supplying and installing generators for people without electricity and means to keep warm and dry.

When the frontline of the conflict has moved, DEC member charities have also adapted their activities in response. For example, when areas of Kharkiv oblast (region) were retaken by Ukrainian forces, charities provided aid to people in villages in that area and began repairs to homes in Kharkiv city. They also began to work in Kherson city after it was retaken by Ukraine, going on to help people there affected by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and subsequent flooding.

Another example of members adapting saw Christian Aid scaling up its planned healthcare support with new mobile treatment points and blood analyser equipment in the East of Ukraine. The conflict has left many people unable to see a doctor, get treatment or medication, especially older people and people with disabilities living rurally. Two vehicles were used as mobile clinics, with doctors and nurses onboard, and the third was used to transport medication and humanitarian supplies. The mobile clinics were able to provide consultations with doctors, basic diagnostics and medication. The mobile clinics completed 114 trips, reaching over 14,500 people and distributing vital first aid kits to over 14,000 households. As well as medical support, these mobile units provided a safe space for people to talk about their experiences, and they could be given referrals to other organisations to access specific support.

Kakhovka Dam

The breach of the Kakhovka Dam in southern Ukraine in June 2023 caused widespread flooding in populated areas, including in both government-controlled areas and non-government-controlled areas. Thousands of people living in populated areas downstream from the dam in the Ukraine-controlled western bank were evacuated from their homes, with some deciding not to return. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without drinking water.

DEC member charities and their partners already in the area were able to quickly reallocate funds to respond to the disaster.

For example, Action Against Hunger reallocated funds to provide emergency shelter, water and sanitation to the people affected. Together with several local partners, they set up a mobile kitchen to provide hot meals to people affected by the flooding. Over 72,800 meals were provided to more than 9,400 people in 15 days.

ActionAid gave funding to local partners to provide pumps and hoses to pump out water and cover the cost of repair work to restore electricity. Safe drinking water, disinfectants and vital medicines were all delivered to affected communities.

The flexibility of DEC funding means member charities are able to reallocate funds and adapt plans quickly to meet changing needs in a complex context such as Ukraine.



Ukrainian refugees, Victoria*, 86 and Valiery*, 72 receive DEC-funded cash vouchers delivered by Age International through its local partner HelpAge International in Moldova in August 2022.

Learning and improving

The DEC, member charities and local partners are striving to learn from the response in Ukraine and the region to make improvements now and in the future.

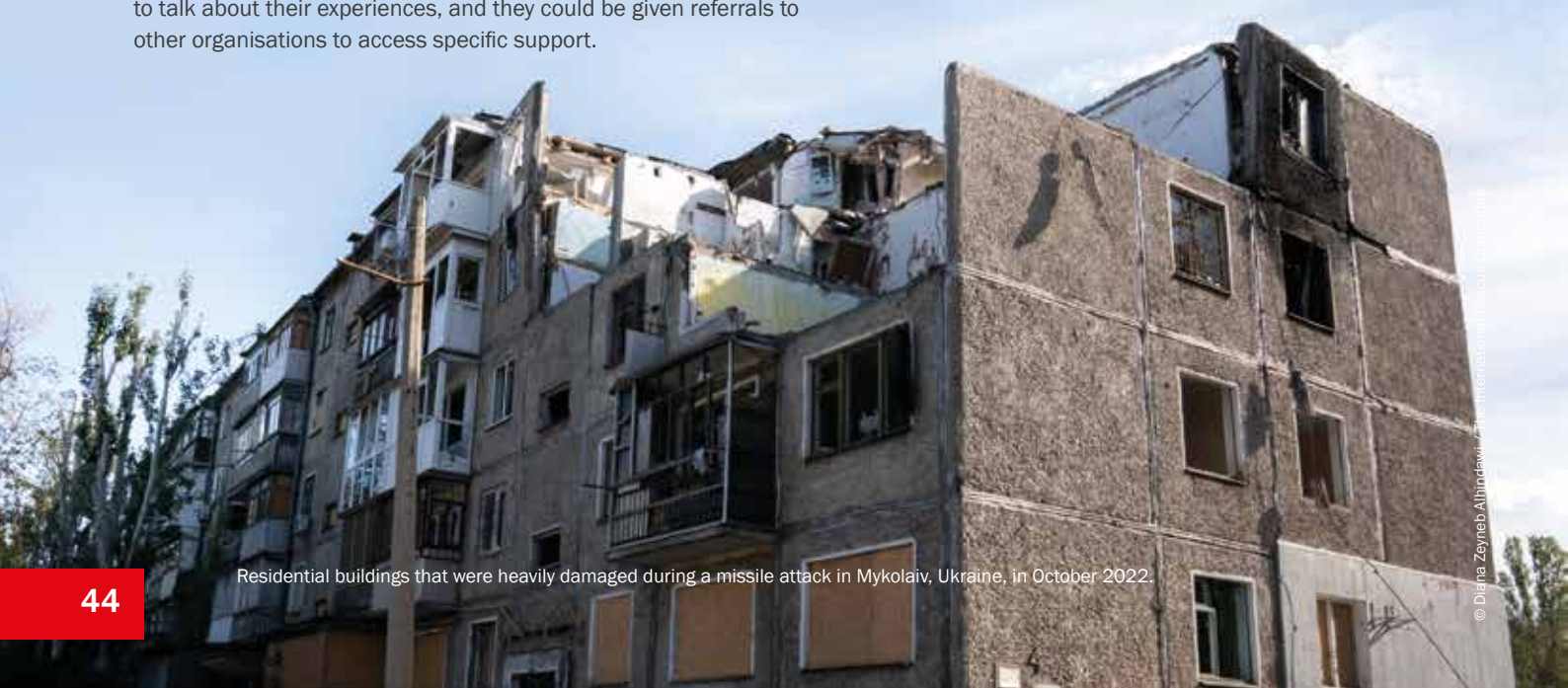
For example, cash assistance has played a huge part in the response to the conflict, but partners were finding it challenging to transfer money to people over the age of 60. This is because many didn't have bank cards or internationally recognised identification, so they couldn't provide the necessary details to register for cash assistance. For future projects, Save the Children will work with the Ukrainian post office and find alternative money transfer options to diversify the way people can receive cash support. This is particularly important for older people who don't have a smartphone, or don't know how to receive money electronically. For people in non-government-controlled areas, some had their smartphones taken at checkpoints and banks in rural communities don't have a lot of cash.

DEC member charities encourage local partners to 'learn by doing', which involves developing skills and introducing new processes through experience. For example, Christian Aid's approach with local partners involved capturing real-time learning, rather than waiting until the end of the project. This meant they could make quick adjustments to their

work and design their own activities. By regularly monitoring and evaluating what they learn, partners have a good understanding of community needs at any given time and make sure these are reflected in their work.

With a complex response involving organisations of all sizes, ActionAid recognised it needed to strike the right balance with its funding process. Having robust due diligence processes and reporting is important, but the charity understood that small grassroots organisations were already over-stretched by the scale and urgency of the response. An overly complex funding process would delay support getting to where it's needed, so ActionAid worked with local partners to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Through this, the charity could adapt procedures to suit the capabilities of local partners where necessary.

Christian Aid also recognised that some community groups lacked experience of completing application documents which led to delays or discouraged groups from applying. To address this, one of the charity's partners held a feedback workshop with local groups to address key challenges and support them with the application document. In future, Christian Aid plans to create a video guide for applicants to explain the process in detail and in an easy-to-understand way.



Residential buildings that were heavily damaged during a missile attack in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, in October 2022.



Ukrainian refugees attend an English class at the Jesuit Refugee Service centre in Bucharest. The centre is being supported with DEC funds through CAFOD.

Being accountable to communities

By putting processes in place for people to share their views and give feedback, member charities and partners can be held accountable for their work. It also means that activities meet the needs of the communities. All DEC member charities and partners offer a number of ways for people to share their feedback. This includes paper forms, emails, QR codes for online feedback, WhatsApp and Telegram, telephone hotlines and in-person.

At the beginning of projects, Christian Aid conduct Community Accountability Assessments with communities and local partners to talk about how they would like to share feedback. Based on this, the organisation can design the best feedback mechanism. For example, one of Christian Aid's partners in Hungary, the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid, has set up a number of channels for people in local communities to share their feedback. These include sending out surveys, having face-to-face conversations and WhatsApp. This is helping the organisation to develop strong links with the communities where they are working and involve people in their work.

When members and partners receive feedback, they use this information to make improvements to their services. For example, after talking directly to communities in Ukraine, Oxfam adjusted the contents of its kits to include menstrual products, so they were more suitable for women. Another organisation made sure that in child friendly spaces, there were also opportunities for caregivers to receive legal support and socialise with other parents.

As well as improving the process of collecting community feedback, DEC member charities and local partners are investing time and effort in getting to know their communities. This is encouraging people affected by the conflict to be honest about the services they are receiving and making them feel more confident about sharing their feedback. For example, some DEC member charities and partners began doing more work to support older people with specific issues that they

raised, such as providing walking frames, hearing aids and smartphones.

Including people with specific needs

DEC member charities work in partnership with local organisations which have strong connections with the communities they serve and are known and trusted by them. Local partners are supporting organisations that are women-led, those supporting older people or people with disabilities, and those working with LGBTQIA+ communities and Roma communities. This means the DEC-funded humanitarian response can reach these often marginalised and overlooked groups, including gathering regular input about their particular needs.

For example, Age International in Ukraine with its local partner, Right to Protection, gave 22,244 older people winterisation kits containing warm clothes and blankets, and cash assistance to meet their specific needs. Meanwhile, Plan International in Ukraine helped to improve social service provision for vulnerable families and children, including people who have been displaced and people with disabilities. This includes psychosocial support.

Christian Aid in Ukraine supported people with disabilities who were displaced to make their new living spaces accessible. This included making ground floor bathrooms safe for them. They also adapted community vehicles so that wheelchair users could go shopping, and provided safe spaces for children and young people to spend time in local communities. Sensory support, adaptive education and professional behavioural support were also provided for children with autism and those experiencing trauma.

The British Red Cross in Poland supported marginalised groups such as the Roma and LGBTQIA+ communities through cash assistance. The International Rescue Committee in Poland gave financial support to refugees from Ukraine and provided training, business skills workshops and

language classes to boost job opportunities. Meanwhile, Save the Children in Romania provided additional information to teachers on how to include children with special needs so that children with autism and other conditions could be supported and included.

Duty of care

DEC member charities have a responsibility to look after the wellbeing of their staff and partner staff and volunteers. Supporting people who have gone through a traumatic experience can add psychosocial pressure, emotional stress and burnout for those responding to the conflict. Staff working on the ground in Ukraine or in neighbouring countries have also been affected by the conflict themselves. For example, they may be internally displaced or know somebody who has been killed.

As the conflict is ongoing, staff and volunteers are having to constantly adapt and make sure they are providing people with what they need at any given time. This is exhausting for field staff. It is important that member charities support staff and volunteers to look after themselves and access support when they need it.

Many member charities have recruited psychologists to support staff and volunteers, and organised training on how to manage stress. For example, Christian Aid in Ukraine has given funds to its local partners to provide psychological counselling to their staff. This is for call centre staff and cash for protection assistants who hear traumatic stories on a daily basis from people who are displaced and those who live close to where attacks are happening.

Christian Aid also encouraged local partners in Ukraine to allocate budget for staff to take part in activities that support their wellbeing and self-care. For example, spending time with family and friends and staying active.

ActionAid in Romania has also been sensitive to the fatigue, burnout and mental health pressure that staff working for partner organisations are under and are funding the cost of mental health and psychosocial support. Meanwhile, Plan International in Poland is working with its partners to provide supervision and debriefing sessions for staff and volunteers so they can talk about their experiences of responding to the conflict. This is helping to reduce the risk of burnout and stress.

Safeguarding

All DEC member charities and partner organisations prioritise the safety and security of vulnerable people.

For example, Action Against Hunger in Moldova set up safeguarding training sessions for 32 staff members working for the organisation and its partners. This helped to increase their knowledge of safeguarding issues and made them aware that some groups of people, including women and girls, are more vulnerable. As a result, staff were better able to support the safety of affected people in Moldova.

Meanwhile, Action Against Hunger in Romania has provided safeguarding training to firefighters and border forces who are working to support refugees from Ukraine. ActionAid in Romania is also providing training to frontline workers.

It's important that communities know how to raise safety concerns. Christian Aid in Romania created a set of materials, including posters, leaflets and business cards, with information on safeguarding and how to raise concerns with the charity. For example, encouraging them to get in touch through email, phone, WhatsApp, online form or in-person. This helped to build trust in the community and provided a safe space for people to raise concerns without any judgement or consequences.

Liuba (R), a Ukrainian Roma refugee now living in Warsaw, Poland receives help from Foundation Towards Dialogue, a local partner of Oxfam in July 2023.



REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The DEC has funded a number of projects to support and strengthen the wider humanitarian response in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. From reducing the risk of harassment at border crossings to increasing leadership skills in civil society organisations, these projects aim to help people affected by the Ukraine conflict and support future humanitarian work. Below are some of the examples of the regional initiatives

Strengthening the skills of staff responding to the crisis

The Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA), part of Save the Children, is running a programme called Engine 2 to strengthen leadership in civil society organisations and increase the technical expertise of staff and volunteers. Between September 2022 and August 2023, 83 training sessions for 1,120 staff were carried out through the Engine 2 programme. They covered topics such as leadership and safeguarding.

In the first six months of the Ukraine response, the HLA developed an online learning platform. It contains resources and courses to support organisations to respond to the crisis. During this phase of the response, new courses were added to the platform with a 552% increase in the number of people completing courses.

The HLA also supported a research institute to carry out two research projects. These looking at the root causes of the conflict and reflecting on the response to date to help inform the future. It also worked with ACAPS's Ukraine Analysis Hub to carry out analysis of the humanitarian crisis and response in Ukraine.

Making sure communities benefit from cash assistance

The DEC is working with the Collaborative Cash Delivery Network (CCD) to support local humanitarian organisations to effectively run cash assistance programmes in Ukraine, Poland and Romania. The aim is to increase cash assistance to support people and improving collaboration and coordination between organisations. The network also aims to improve links with existing social protection systems in countries where Ukrainian refugees are staying.

The CCD is a global network of international non-governmental organisations. Together they carried out a range of activities between September 2022 and August 2023.

For example, the CCD created a set of resources about data collection to show people who receive cash assistance how they can control their personal information and make informed decisions about how, when and who they share data with.

World Vision offered data protection training to local organisations working in Ukraine. In this phase of the response, 187 staff from 17 organisations took part in seven training sessions.

In August 2023, the CCD published a discussion paper on Ukraine's social protection system (policies and programmes that aim to reduce poverty and vulnerability). It presents humanitarian organisations with different options for running cash assistance programmes that better align with the existing cash benefits offered

by Ukraine's social protection system. The CCD also published papers about social protection programmes in Poland and developed a new tool to help humanitarian organisations to analyse these programmes.

Making sure communities get the support they need

Three months after the conflict began, DEC funds were used by Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) to carry out a survey to better understand the needs and priorities of affected people in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. The survey also looked at how people perceived the response from humanitarian organisations.

Between September 2022 and July 2023, GTS carried out regular telephone surveys and interviews with people affected by the crisis and representatives of local organisations.

These views were shared with humanitarian organisations, including DEC members, to inform their work. For example, in 2022, many humanitarian organisations provided food assistance to people affected by the conflict, but findings from GTS showed people would have preferred cash assistance. In 2023, DEC members put this learning into practice by prioritising cash assistance.

Most of those consulted did not know about the services available to them. Many also found it difficult to access aid because information was only available online and they didn't have internet access. There were also a lot of stakeholders providing information which caused confusion for people. Following the findings, DEC members have adapted the way they share information so that it is accessible through different channels, like community centres and through platforms like WhatsApp. This has led to more widespread knowledge about what support is available.

Safeguarding people affected by the conflict

Refugees and people who are displaced face sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment at border crossings, and when accessing services or finding accommodation. The risks are particularly high for women, children, older people and people with disabilities.

To reduce this risk, the Safeguarding Resource Hub for Eastern Europe (the hub) funded by the DEC, has been supporting organisations responding to the conflict to strengthen their safeguarding policies and practices.

Between September 2022 and August 2023, the hub:

- provided online information in Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian, Romani, Russian and English to raise awareness of risks. This information has been accessed by over 21,500 people working for humanitarian organisations.
- launched an online course with five modules to help staff working with humanitarian organisations to support people affected by the conflict
- added 109 resources to the library, with over 8,200 downloads
- developed a webinar to raise awareness of safeguarding risks for refugees with disabilities. In total, the organisation ran eight webinars with over 900 people attending.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

The Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal had already raised over £380 million by September 2022, six months after its launch, making it the second largest appeal in the DEC's history. Of this total, £271 million came directly to the DEC, including £25 million matched by the UK Government, and £108 million was raised by DEC member charities.

Due to the ongoing nature of the crisis and continued interest in the appeal, the DEC decided to keep donation channels open for the whole of the reporting period.

In February 2023, the DEC ran a campaign to mark one year since the escalation of the conflict and report back to people who gave to the appeal on how their donations had helped. The campaign included adverts in national newspapers, outdoor billboards, a range of online advertising and a TV advert filmed in Ukraine called 'Never Alone'. The DEC also facilitated trips to Poland and Romania for singer Paloma Faith and actor Simon Pegg, who made high-profile media appearances to talk about what they had seen.

Despite the campaign not asking for further donations, the appeal raised £5.4 million between 1 February and 6 March.

By the end of the reporting period in August 2023, the appeal had raised a total of £422 million, of which £296 million had come directly to the DEC and £125 million had been raised by DEC member charities.

This meant that over the course of the year the appeal raised an additional £42 million, of which £25 million was raised directly by the DEC and £17 million was raised by the DEC's member charities.



Actor Simon Pegg takes part in activities during a visit to the Jesuit Refugee Service centre in Bucharest in February 2023. The centre is part-funded by CAFOD using appeal funds.



Singer Paloma Faith plays with a girl from the Ukrainian Roma community at a centre in Warsaw, Poland run by Foundation Towards Dialogue, a local partner of Oxfam, in February 2023.

NEXT STEPS

The ongoing situation in Ukraine remains unpredictable and volatile. The ever-changing nature of the conflict makes it difficult to predict what will happen in the future and what challenges the people of Ukraine will face. Despite the commitment and dedication of DEC member charities and local partners, there is still a huge amount of work to do. The conflict will continue to take its toll on people who remain in Ukraine, and on those who have fled.

Over the next 18 months (September 2023 to February 2025), DEC charities and local partners will continue to use appeal funds to quickly respond to people's changing needs up until February 2025 when the funding is due to be spent. It's expected that the focus will start to shift from meeting the immediate needs of people to helping them to recover and rebuild their lives. For example, in Ukraine, member charities will continue to support the repair of people's homes and community facilities. In other countries, the focus will be on helping refugees from Ukraine to find work, supporting children to get an education and providing financial assistance to those who are unable to work.

DEC member charities and local partners have learned a lot during this phase of the response which they can use to inform the next phase, as well as future humanitarian programmes. For example:

- adapting the response to the changing vulnerabilities, like new arrivals in Poland having higher financial and psychological needs in comparison to those who are already settled in Poland
- diversifying the way the response is delivered. For example, providing different communication channels so everyone has the opportunity to feedback (such as Whatsapp, in person and hotlines) and delivering different ways for people to access cash support (such as cash in hand, vouchers and bank transfers).
- supporting and reinforcing the role of national and local partners that DEC members work with. For example, strengthening technical and institutional capacities of partners so that they can better sustain knowledge and learnings; and ability to access future funding opportunities.

What the next phase involves

In the next 18 months of the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, DEC member charities have different strategies for moving forward. These either involve focusing on Ukraine and less on neighbouring countries or vice versa, or strengthening the skills of local partners so they can continue the response as member charities withdraw.

Due to a reduction of funding available from the appeal and other sources such as government support, some DEC members will:

- focus their work on supporting vulnerable communities with specific needs, for example people who are unable to work and communities that face discrimination, such as LGBTQIA+ groups. This will be done in partnership with local organisations on the ground which have existing connections with local communities.
- scale down their work, work with fewer local partners, work in fewer geographical areas and carry out fewer activities. For example, in Romania, some DEC members are ending their partnerships with their local partners and introducing them to other DEC members. As part of this process, these DEC members are adapting due diligence so that local partners don't have to go through another round of time-consuming processes.

Working through local partners

By working through local partners on the ground, DEC member charities can leave a lasting impact on communities. DEC members have supported local partners to learn new skills and develop their work, so when they withdraw from Ukraine and the neighbouring countries, local partners have the capacity to continue delivering this work. In turn, DEC members who have provided support in these countries for the first time have learned from local and national partners. This includes the best channels of communication to reach the most vulnerable people, how best to integrate their projects with existing protection schemes, and the overall social and cultural context they are operating in.

A flexible approach

DEC members will need to continue adjusting their support in the final phase of the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. This is because there is uncertainty around how host governments will continue supporting refugees in neighbouring countries, and about the evolution of the conflict itself. As a result, member charities may have to alter their planned activities. Also, further attacks on critical energy infrastructure were expected over winter 2023/24. Every attack leaves communities in need of life-saving assistance, shelter and psychosocial support. DEC charities and partners will seek to respond to any new needs quickly and modify plans.



DEC Chief Executive Saleh Saeed and Depaul Ukraine CEO Father Vitaliy Novak prepare food packages at the Depaul warehouse in Odesa, Ukraine in February 2023.

DEC MEMBER CHARITIES



actionaid

ageInternational



CAFOD
Catholic Agency for
Overseas Development



CONCERN
worldwide



OXFAM



Save the
Children

tearfund

World Vision

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