



URCS is rolling out housing projects across Ukraine, providing vital shelter for displaced people.
Image credit: Italian Red Cross.

A Global Movement Responds. Two Years of Conflict in Ukraine.

Australian Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal
2 year Impact Report

A word from our Director of International Programs and Movement relations

It has been two years since conflict escalated in Ukraine, and a decade since the annexation of Crimea.

Right now, in Ukraine, it is winter; thick snow blankets streets and fields and people are doing what they can to keep warm. In some parts of the country there is no electricity, and in those places, families are warmed only by fire and blankets; melting ice for water and eating from stores of food they have saved.

The past twelve months of the conflict have been marked by escalating tensions, displacement, and immeasurable human suffering. Families have been torn apart, homes destroyed, and livelihoods shattered. Since the conflict began, a staggering 27.2 million people have been impacted.

Teams from the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) are working tirelessly in conflict zones throughout the country to ensure people are provided with food, shelter, medical care, and psychosocial support.

The ongoing violence has resulted in an immense need for humanitarian assistance around the world too, as Ukrainians continue to flee their homes in search of safety. UNHCR reports that over 8.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced. Across the world, from Poland to Georgia to Türkiye, local Red Cross and Red Crescent teams have been helping hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have been displaced and are now living in new countries.

Amidst the devastation, your generosity powers our ongoing efforts; in the past 24 months Australians have donated an incredible \$17.6 million to our Ukraine Crisis

Appeal. Australian Red Cross also received a \$2 million grant from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is thanks to donors all around the world that the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement¹ (the Movement) has been able to reach more than 17.9 million people in the past two years.

Red Cross National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have distinct mandates to carry out humanitarian activities in international armed conflicts. These mandates are provided under international humanitarian law as well as national laws and resolutions of International Red Cross Red Crescent Conferences. Under these laws, parties to an armed conflict are legally required to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

This report outlines the challenges posed by the second year of a gruelling conflict, and the lifesaving aid powered by over 40 of our National Societies to millions of impacted people.

Thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with us in our mission to alleviate suffering and restore dignity to people whose lives have been forever changed by this conflict.



Alex Mathieson
Director, International Programs
and Movement Relations



People collect wood in preparation for freezing winter weather.
Image credit: Alyona Synenko/ ICRC.

¹ The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and 191 National Societies.

A humanitarian crisis

A frontline response⁴

- Relief provided to 17.9 million people.
- Cash assistance and grants worth CHF 310 million provided to 1.9 million people affected by the conflict
- Access to clean water for 15.3 million people.
- Health assistance provided to 1.3 million people.
- Accommodation and shelter services for 2.2 million people.

Teams work tirelessly as conflict continues

As Ukraine enters its third year of conflict, people from across the Movement continue to provide people with the help they need.

The URCS Rapid Response team is active in conflict zones, offering immediate lifesaving aid- ranging from first aid to debris clearing, shelter, and food. Meanwhile, Red Cross teams worldwide welcome displaced people from Ukraine with safe housing, grants, and invaluable psychosocial support.

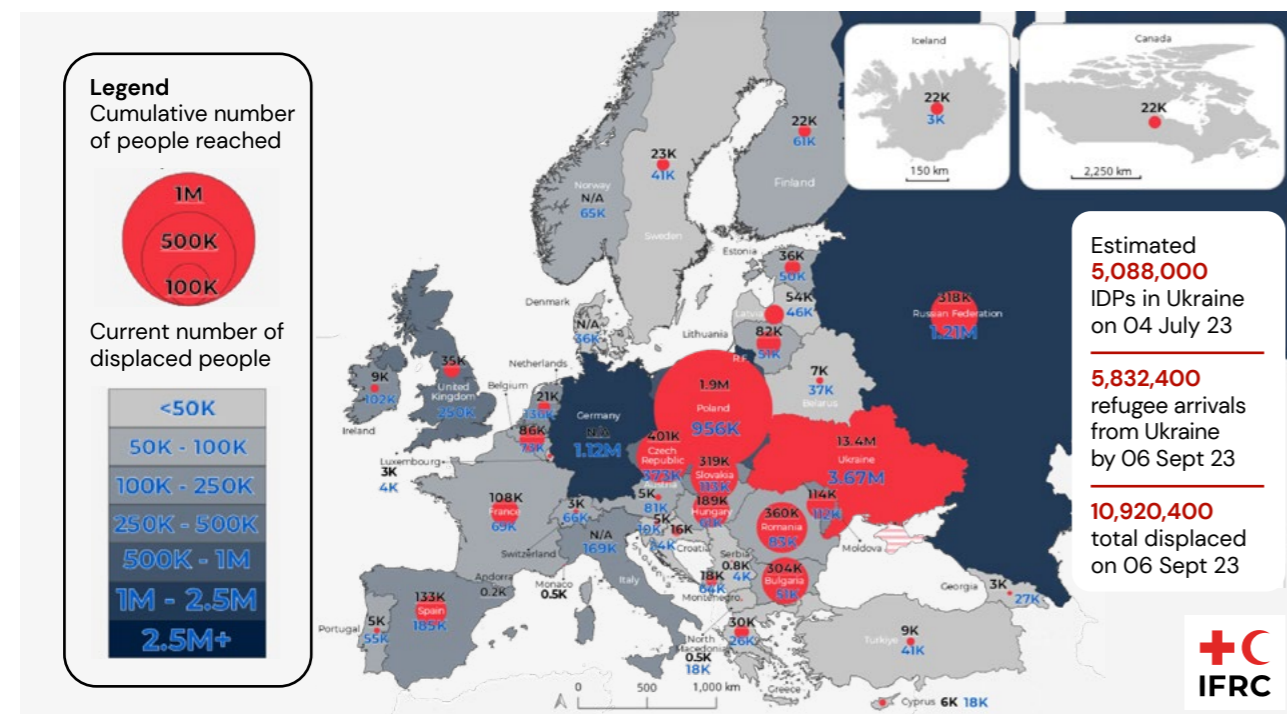


² Read the report [here](#).
³ These stats are from the UN Ukraine Report published in October 2023, you can read the report [here](#).
⁴ Figures are combined from IFRC and ICRC operation



The URCS Rapid Response teams rescue people after bombardments in Kyiv in early January 2024.

Magnitude of refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Ukraine & impacted countries crisis.



IFRC Operations Update #9 available [here](#)

The Australian Red Cross contribution

Funds from the Australian Red Cross appeal have helped provide emergency relief and longer-term humanitarian support to people and communities affected by the crisis. These donations have enabled Red Cross and Red Crescent partners to address immediate and longer-term needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, including to people who are displaced.

These services include:

- emergency relief assistance, such as the provision of shelter and accommodation, health care, access to clean water and sanitation, and cash payments
- deploying technical specialists from Australia to support the operation on the ground
- helping people restore contact with family members separated by the crisis
- monitoring and evaluation of the activities supported by donor funds.

Deploying specialist aid workers to support the humanitarian response

Responding to requests from Red Cross teams on the ground, Australian Red Cross deployed 19 delegates to support the humanitarian operation. These specialist aid workers bring expertise in key areas such as health, water and sanitation, logistics and protection to Ukraine and surrounding countries.

19 total deployments:

- 4 delegates deployed to the ICRC operation
- 15 delegates deployed to the IFRC operation

Ukrainian Red Cross on the frontline

Rapid Response teams continue their work on the ground

On the morning of 2 January 2024, around 100 rockets were directed towards Ukrainian cities. The capital, Kyiv, suffered the most intensive bombardment with dozens of people injured.

Rapid Response teams from Ukrainian Red Cross are stationed all around the country and are active in the first hours after an attack; rescuing people and providing first aid.

URCS teams work tirelessly after the Kakhovka Dam collapses

When the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine collapsed in June 2023, a torrent of water tore through downstream towns and farmlands, reducing homes to rubble and leading to the tragic loss of many lives.

The flood swept up everything in its path, washing farm animals, unexploded mines, hazardous chemicals and dangerous bacteria – some which risked spreading disease into communities.

URCS teams responded swiftly to the dam disaster; evacuating people from flooded areas and distributing essentials such as food, hygiene kits and water purification equipment. Volunteers also provided psychosocial support to help people cope in the immediate aftermath.

Crucial humanitarian support in Dnipro

Since 24 February 2022, the city of Dnipro in the east of Ukraine has faced ongoing missile strikes, resulting in the tragic loss of dozens of lives.

Simultaneously, Dnipro has become a refuge for countless internally displaced persons (IDPs) escaping the relentless conflicts in the neighbouring Donetsk oblast. This dual crisis has created a complex humanitarian situation in the city and its surroundings.

Despite ongoing security threats, the URCS teams remain unwavering in their commitment. Their efforts are focused on providing crucial support to people in the area with food packs, blankets, first aid, psychosocial support and even a much-needed haircut.



Supporting Ukrainians in neighbouring countries

Displaced Ukrainian families find support in Hungary

“My daughter was just a baby when we fled Kharkiv in the spring. It’s been almost a year and she’s a big girl now,” said Alissa pointing to her nearly two-year-old daughter playing by her side.

“Our journey out of Ukraine last year was long and when I arrived in Hungary, I didn’t know where to go or what to do.” After a harrowing week-long journey to Budapest, she found information from a Red Cross volunteer about ways the organization could help. “I feel good here at this Red Cross shelter. It’s hard to be away from my family while the war continues and we worry about them every day,” she said.

The Hungarian Red Cross, with assistance from IFRC, is providing emergency cash assistance, health services, mental health support, essential items, and shelter for impacted families that have fled to seek safety.

In Hungary, the cash assistance program is helping mothers like Alissa. The assistance empowers those in need, providing dignity and choice.

“With the funds I received from the Red Cross, I bought winter jackets for us as the weather has gotten cold and we didn’t bring winter clothes with us from Ukraine,” said Alissa.



URCS teams evacuate people with mobility issues after the collapse of the Kakhovka dam.



URCS Volunteers provide haircuts to those in need.

A mother's journey from Kharkiv to Perth

When the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine escalated, Maryna fled with her two children. Today she has found safety in Australia and is grateful to Australian Red Cross and everyone who helped her.

This is Maryna's story.

"I used to live in Kharkiv, a city in the northeastern part of Ukraine, close to the Russian border. I have two children, Alex, who is 17, and Lisa, 15, and I'm a single parent. I worked as a sales manager, and my life was happy and nice."

She will never forget the day her city was bombed, 24 February 2022. "We woke up at 5am with sounds of explosions ... Nobody believed it could happen."

"The first thing I thought was, 'How do I protect my children?' Our apartment was impacted; windows smashed from fragments of the bombshells. We were forced to leave in fear for our safety. It was extremely scary."



Maryna and her daughter in Perth.

With the airports closed, the only way out of the country was by car. So, Maryna found a driver who agreed to help the family escape. "He picked us up with our pets, a cat and a dog, and took us to Bulgaria. I chose Bulgaria because not many countries had opened their borders for Ukrainian refugees at that time, and I have relatives there as well."

"The trip was extremely scary, but staying in Ukraine was even scarier. It took four days because we often had to stop and wait for air raid alerts to end. On the Ukrainian border, there were a lot of cars and long queues. We waited many hours without water and food to leave Ukraine."

"We woke up at 5am with sounds of explosions... Nobody believed it could happen."

Maryna stayed in Bulgaria for four months. But she could not find a job, her daughter couldn't attend school, and she says it was hard to get any help.

"But I found a soccer academy in Germany that agreed to enrol my son Alex for free as a Ukrainian refugee. He's now a student there. I'm very proud of him and not worried about his future. This is really a great opportunity for his career as a soccer player and for his life."

"Unfortunately, all my savings were quickly depleted on short-term housing and food. I was lost, but I had to find a way."

A childhood friend living in Perth told Maryna about the Australian Government's support for Ukrainian refugees and encouraged her to come. "It was my last chance, and I bought a plane ticket to Perth."

"I hope the actions of Australian Red Cross and everyone who has helped me inspire others and serve as a shining example of what humanity can achieve when we extend a helping hand to those in need."

"Because of a lack of funds, I made an incredibly hard decision to leave my daughter with her grandparents in Bulgaria and travel to Australia in search of work and safety for both of us. This decision played on every emotion a mother could possibly have, but I knew it was for the best."

Maryna arrived in Perth in July 2022. She was granted a humanitarian visa, for which she is so grateful, and supported by the Humanitarian Settlement Program run by Australian Red Cross.

"Red Cross helped me settle into Australia. The team was very supportive, caring and helpful."

Australian Red Cross provided Maryna with temporary accommodation, helped her enrol in English classes, understand how things worked in Australia, and register for healthcare and other government services.

"Red Cross also helped me to find a full-time job, which I started last September."

Because of that job, so many good things have happened, and Maryna's new work colleagues have become like family to her. They helped her find a house to rent, bring her daughter to Australia and much more. "I'm grateful for every day I spend at work. The warmth and acceptance from my colleagues allowed me to rebuild my life, restore my hope, and dream of a brighter future. "My deepest gratitude to Australian Red Cross, my employer, and the Australian Government. Thank you for your support, belief in the potential of refugees, and commitment to creating a society that thrives on diversity and inclusivity."



Children sticking their wishes to the wishing tree.
Photo by Jane Munro, Senior Specialist Protection
Gender and Inclusion at Australian Red Cross.

In Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia, a brightly decorated classroom has a special purpose.

Festooned with drawings and brimming with colorful toys, the space is designed for displaced Ukrainian children to decompress and receive psychosocial support.

Volunteers with specialized backgrounds in psychology run the space, playing games with the children, dancing and making art, playing music, and telling stories.

During a visit in April 2023, Australian Red Cross staff spent time in this child-friendly space, gaining insights into the needs of Ukrainian children and this dedicated support initiative.

In 2023, Georgia witnessed a surge in displaced people from Ukraine, prompting a comprehensive needs assessment by the Georgian Red Cross, supported by IFRC. The findings highlighted key needs: food, hygiene, healthcare, long-term cash aid, and shelter.

The assessment also revealed a lack of child-friendly spaces for Ukrainian children attending Georgian schools. That's where this colorful classroom comes in.

During their visit, Australian Red Cross staff witnessed a poignant moment when children wrote their wishes on post-it notes and placed them on a picture of a 'wishing tree'. Some wishes were universal and innocent, like wanting chocolate or money.

But others reflected the unique experiences of Ukrainian children who wrote down peace as their main wish. In the branches of the wishing tree, the innocent universal wishes of children were intertwined with the hopes of those touched by conflict.

One of the Georgian Red Cross staff members who designed the program, Ketevan Kirkitadze, who recently finished her studies to become a psychiatrist, said "Georgian Red Cross has many great activities, but this one is particularly close to my heart. When I see the difference between Georgian kids and the challenges being faced by Ukrainian kids, I can't imagine doing anything else with my life."

The profound impact of the program was clear to Australian Red Cross staff: children were laughing, singing, and joyfully engaging with the Georgian Red Cross volunteers.

Following a thorough program assessment, Australian Red Cross successfully allocated funding from our Ukraine Crisis Appeal to support the roll out of this Georgian Red Cross initiative.

In the branches of the wishing tree, the innocent universal wishes of children were intertwined with the hopes of those touched by conflict.

These funds will be instrumental in creating an environment where displaced Ukrainian children in Georgia can experience joy, have fun, and find a safe space to navigate their new lives.

Without you, our work would not be possible

We deeply thank you for your continued generosity to our Ukraine Crisis Appeal as we confront the third year of unrelenting violence in Ukraine.

It is thanks to your support that the Movement can continue to create a global network of safety, inclusivity, and dignity for all people affected by this crisis.

From cash assistance and a place to live, to food, first aid and psychosocial support, the Movement is committed to alleviating the suffering of people swept up in this conflict. Addressing the individual needs of each person and ensuring that dignity, healing, and hope is at the heart of all we do.

Thank you for choosing to power this critical work.



The URCS Rapid Response team continue working tirelessly to help people in conflict zones across the country.

Image credit: URCS

