How would you describe the humanitarian situation in Ukraine today?

The ongoing humanitarian crisis is probably the worst since the Second World War. The sheer scale of the displacements and humanitarian needs is immense. As of the month of August 2022, around 18 million people across Ukraine were in need of protection and assistance. The context is constantly changing and continues to deteriorate.

Over 70% of the people in need are located in the west of the country. Many of them are unable to move away and it is extremely difficult to safely access aid. The majority of displaced persons are women, children and elderly people who have left their homes, sons, fathers and husbands behind (due to the national mobilisation). Furthermore, due to the mass displacements and family separations, there is a high risk of gender-based violence, people trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Ukraine conflict is not only affecting the country itself, but has also created a global food security emergency which is rapidly worsening, in particular in certain regions of Africa and the Middle East.

What are the prospects for the future, in particular this winter?

If the front line continues to shift, more and more people will be affected by the fighting, which will lead to a continuous increase in the humanitarian needs and new waves of displacement.

Taking into account the steep rise in fuel and food prices, the harshness of the Ukrainian winters and the reduced gas supply from Russia, the future for Ukraine, in particular this winter, does not look very hopeful.

How is TGH positioned to respond to the population’s needs (in other words, how has the organisation decided which activities to deploy)?

The TGH team is planning for an eventual deterioration in the situation in Ukraine and the corresponding emergency plans have been drawn up and put into place.

With support from various donors, TGH Ukraine has launched a protection intervention providing multipurpose cash assistance, psycho-social support and legal advice, with a specific focus on displaced persons and populations living in hard-to-reach areas.

What actions have been implemented and what results have been achieved so far (implementation, difficulties encountered, acceptance from the population etc.)?

In order to respond effectively to this crisis, TGH has opened four offices in the country: in Lviv, Cherkasy, Vinnytsa, and Dnipro. The team has grown considerably. TGH’s programme strategy is focused on providing unrestricted financial assistance in the following thematic sectors: Protection, Shelter, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. These activities are either directly implemented by TGH or through national partners. TGH’s partnerships aim to improve and build local actors’ emergency response capacities.

The NGO has been working in Ukraine since 2015. How has this benefited the response?

Having worked in Ukraine since 2015, TGH has developed a capacity to implement high-quality humanitarian programmes with a high level of acceptance from the local authorities and communities. This has allowed TGH to establish solid partnerships with numerous national organisations in the country. When the war broke out in Ukraine, these partnerships have facilitated TGH’s operational deployment, as well as the identification of, and access to, isolated beneficiaries in the most difficult to reach areas.
There have been more than 13,000 civilian casualties in Ukraine, 5,600 dead and 7,946 injured, according to official figures which are no doubt underestimates. Around 6.6 million people have been internally displaced, and almost as many have sought refuge throughout Europe. Thousands of homes and buildings have been burnt, economic activity has been brought to a halt, and access to water, food and health services in certain regions has been compromised, in particular in the east of the country. Since the war was triggered by Russia on February 24, 2022, the UN has deemed the humanitarian situation in Ukraine to be “extremely alarming”. Europe is facing its most serious crisis of the 21st century, and with no resolution to the conflict in sight, the toll is likely to increase still further. According to the United Nations, a new wave of displacement is expected in the run-up to winter, bringing with it an increase in the humanitarian needs described.

Described as a “special military operation” by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, this invasion is part of a lengthy deterioration in relations between the two countries since 1991, following the break-up of the USSR. A complex web of geopolitical, economic, historical and identity issues led to Russia’s annexation of the Crimea region and destabilisation of the Donbas region in 2014 (with the proclamation of independent republics). According to OCHA, the UN’s humanitarian agency, more than 15,000 people died in this conflict, including 5,100 civilians, and nearly 9,000 were injured.

The period 2015 to 2021 was one of latent conflict with sporadic fighting along the line of contact separating the territories in the hands of the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk from the rest of the Donbas still under the control of the Ukrainian government. An active supporter of the separatist “republics”, Russia launched a “special military operation” on 24 February 2022, justified on the pretext of Ukraine’s supposed intention to join NATO. This operation was in fact an extremely violent invasion, an open declaration of Russia’s ambition to put an end to Ukraine’s emancipation, even if the price to pay was mass destruction and thousands of civilian casualties.

Well before the Russian hostilities launched this year, TGH had been operating programmes in Ukraine since 2015, initially in the Donbas, close to the line of contact which separates the separatist areas from the areas controlled by the Ukrainian government. After conducting needs assessments the same year, the following year TGH organised its first actions in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, providing the populations of the villages located along the front line with electronic vouchers which can be used to purchase food and other goods from local stores involved in the programme. This voucher assistance system was subsequently completed with a “teachers for work” project aiming to reinforce social cohesion. People no longer able to support themselves were recruited in their communities to carry out home visits to elderly and isolated persons and in return received vouchers.

At the start of the Russian invasion, the TGH team left its offices in Kyiv and in the east of the country for safety in the west. Their expertise, understanding of the country and their network meant they were quickly able to adapt to the changing situation.

TGH very quickly developed an emergency response adapted to the needs caused by the war and the population displacements. It implemented unrestricted financial assistance to displaced persons to help them exercise their rights. Support for the initiatives led by Ukrainian civil society organisations, both existing and new partners. These activities target nearly 100,000 people in 14 regions («oblasts») of Ukraine. Their implementation requires close monitoring of changing needs and preparations for the next phases.

Today, TGH’s activities are focused on the following areas:

- Implementing unrestricted financial assistance. This assistance is paid to the most vulnerable people directly without any conditions attached so they can purchase food, hygiene and health forms or meet other needs.
- Providing immediate support to the most vulnerable populations. Emergency vouchers are provided to the most vulnerable people directly.
- Access to psycho-social support thanks to consultations with mobile teams of psychologists, in particular targeting displaced persons. Remote consultations with psychologists are provided via a hotline. The protection actions implemented also include activities specifically targeting children.
- The implementation of legal assistance for displaced persons to help them exercise their rights.
- Financial and/or material support for institutions and voluntary displaced persons.
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TGH's response to the Ukraine crisis

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