

UNHCR's Protection Response

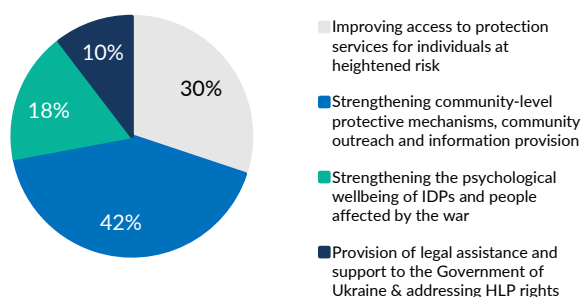
- The protection response by UNHCR and our partners provides tailored support to those most in need, aims to strengthen inclusive national systems and services, and encourages the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in decisions that affect them.
- Our protection response complements, reinforces and strengthens the capacity of national protection services to serve the growing population in need, in line with the Memoranda of Understanding with Ministries and Oblast authorities.
- In implementing our protection response, we work directly with communities, including our network of some 550 community-based organizations, some 100 IDP Councils and predominantly local NGO partners. In 2024, UNHCR worked with 20 partners, of which 16 are national organizations.



UNHCR-supported community-based organization 'Age of Happiness' assists older people through social and psycho-social support activities and learning opportunities, such as for digital literacy, thereby enhancing their wellbeing and integration.
© Age of Happiness, 2024.

- In 2024, UNHCR's protection response has reached **666,212 people**. Of those, 76 per cent are females, 32 per cent or over 213,000 are older people above the age of 60 years, while some 15 per cent are minors. Over 57,000 people supported are living with a disability.
- UNHCR and partners promoted legal and policy developments through **122 advocacy and judicial interventions** aimed at improving access to rights for forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- UNHCR and partners improved access to services for **29,922 people living in collective sites**. Of those, over 11,000 are older people and 3,000 are people living with a disability. UNHCR, in collaboration with authorities and alongside the Office of the Ombudsperson, continued advocating for the implementation of the safety audit recommendations and the implementation of the standards set out in Resolution 930 to enhance the protection of those living in the sites, specifically through GBV preventative action and greater disability inclusion.

Protection response overview
January - December 2024



Protection response: regional reach
January - December 2024



*Figures adjusted following year-end validation.

Hope Away From Home

Nataliia and Anatolii were forced to flee their home in the temporarily occupied Kherson region after it was flooded following the destruction of the Kakhovka dam. The couple had no choice but to flee their home by foot. 'It was an arduous journey, but we were lucky to escape', they said. As many internally displaced people in Ukraine, Nataliia and Anatolii lost all they had in one instant – their house, their belongings, their documents. Fleeing their home also meant that they were stripped of their social environment and support they had. Both are unsure what the future holds for them. 'I don't know whether I will be able to ever go back home', Nataliia said. Until today, Nataliia and Anatolii are still in displacement and live a life in limbo. Many forcibly displaced are trapped in this profound uncertainty caused by Russia's war and the temporary occupation of parts of Ukrainian territory. For now, they are re-establishing their lives in Kyiv. They stay at their son's rented apartment and received support by UNHCR's partner 'Right to Protection' to help them restore their documents. Restoring their documents was their first step to restore hope away from home.

2024 RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Legal aid: a lifeline for thousands

Ukraine's legal system is sophisticated and complex to navigate, even more so in times of war and displacement. Legal aid is a foundational part of the humanitarian response, critical in times of emergency and an indispensable enabler of durable solutions to displacement for millions of displaced Ukrainians and those who are stateless. [In 2024, UNHCR with partners provided over 152,000 legal consultations benefiting over 90,000 forcibly displaced and stateless people with legal assistance.](#) For those, legal aid made a difference in their lives: An older couple who fled Kupiansk had their documents restored to access social assistance; a young mother who fled the temporarily occupied territories received a birth certificate for her undocumented child; a father of three had his disability recognized and received a disability pension; and a young family was able to obtain compensation for their war-destroyed home. Without legal aid, all of them would still be in limbo, unassisted and unprotected.

Working in partnership for quality legal services

UNHCR implements its legal aid programme with five national partners and in close cooperation with the National Coordination Centre for Free Legal Aid established under the Ministry of Justice. Our work is coordinated with other humanitarian legal aid providers through the Protection Cluster's Legal Aid Working Group. In 2024, UNHCR's legal aid response in Ukraine made up 43 per cent of the Protection Cluster's legal aid reach. With a multitude of actors offering legal aid to people in Ukraine, managing the quality of this service is essential. When people need legal aid services, they should receive the same and best advice and support, irrespective of the location and provider. For this reason, jointly with the National Coordination Centre, UNHCR launched a new initiative on the quality of legal aid in November 2024. Read more: [Legal aid serves as crucial lifeline for thousands of Ukrainians in the midst of full-scale war | UNHCR Ukraine](#)

Advocacy: promoting law and policy change for forcibly displaced

In 2024, UNHCR and its partners pursued strategic advocacy efforts to address barriers forcibly displaced and stateless people face and promote legislative and policy change to enhance their protection and prospects for a durable solution. Advocacy priorities included (a) access to social assistance and services; (b) restoration of housing, land and property rights and safe and dignified accommodation for IDPs; (c) access to civil and identity documentation; (d) participatory rights; and (e) access to employment. [Working closely with governmental and parliamentary stakeholders, UNHCR and partners' advocacy contributed to important change and progress](#), such as the creation of the Congress of IDP Councils, further strengthening this critical participatory instrument of IDPs; the introduction of a financing model for social services for older IDPs based on the principle of 'money follows people' based on Resolution 888; and several legislative acts that facilitate IDPs' access to compensation and housing solutions, such as Law 4080-IX on IDP housing or Law 4114-IX granting IDPs priority in receiving compensation for war-affected houses. A key advocacy effort centred on ensuring adequate state budget allocations for IDPs' access to compensation for housing damage, culminating in the adoption of Resolution No. 1432, which allocates 15 billion UAH. This is expected to benefit approximately 10,000 households that have lost their homes due to the war.

Protection of stateless people, asylum-seekers and refugees

In October 2024, UNHCR together with the Office of the Ombudsman hosted a forum to commemorate the conclusion of the 10 year #IBELONG campaign on combatting statelessness. The forum, convening over 60 participants, reflected on achievements during the past decade as well as on future [collective action needed to end statelessness](#). Underscoring this goal, in 2024, through our legal work, nearly 2,800 stateless persons, persons with undetermined nationality or those at risk of stateless were assisted, while our technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice's civil registries helped to facilitate access to birth documents and supported the digitalization of archives to safeguard them from destruction and other war-related risks. UNHCR's work to address statelessness has a particular focus on risks faced by national minorities, such as the Roma community. In 2024, in support of the implementation of the National Roma Strategy, UNHCR jointly with others opened two Roma Hubs in Zakarpatska oblast that serve as multi-functional spaces for Roma communities, where a range of activities and services are offered. Amidst the full-scale invasion, UNHCR also continued to [support asylum-seekers and refugees in Ukraine](#) to access asylum and receive basic social assistance. In 2024, UNHCR's partners provided nearly 900 consultations to some 500 people of 39 nationalities and provided services such as legal assistance, social accompaniment to access state medical assistance and social benefits, enrollment of children into kindergartens and schools, psycho-social support and cash-based assistance for the most vulnerable.

Mental health and psycho-social support

In response to the enormous mental health and psychosocial support needs resulting from war and displacement, and in support of the Government's National MHPSS roadmap, in 2024, UNHCR and partners provided over 34,000 people with community and family-level psycho-social support activities, and nearly 31,000 people received individual psychological support. Both types of interventions [invest in the psychological agency and resiliency of IDPs and returnees, both children and adults](#). In its work, UNHCR promoted the use of evidence-based methodologies for the provision of psycho-social support, such as 'Problem Management Plus' (PM+). UNHCR also contributed to expanding the pool of providers of scalable psychological interventions and trained 80 psychologists and social workers as PM+ helpers in line with certification standards set by WHO, and in collaboration with UNICEF, began with the rollout of 'EASE' for 20 partner staff on scalable interventions tailored to the psychological needs of adolescents in line with the goals of the National MHPSS roadmap and coordinated with the National MHPSS Coordination Centre.

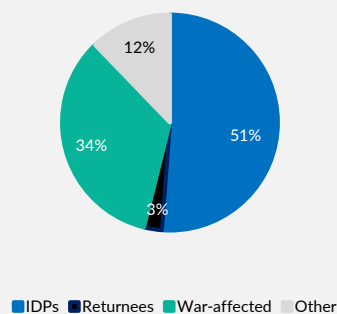
Protection services for children and survivors of gender-based violence

In 2024, UNHCR with its partners continued to contribute to the wider inter-agency response to the needs of displaced and war-affected children and joined efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). As part of these efforts, UNHCR partners supported nearly 6,200 [vulnerable children at risk and their caregivers](#) with social support, maintained its strong community-based child protection support to nearly 32,000 children, and reached some 20,000 children and caregivers with activities to prevent and mitigate risks to the protection of children. Addressing GBV, in 2024, nearly 19,000 people received information on GBV services and referrals, and participated in prevention activities. [GBV survivors were supported with needed services and support](#). Complementing response efforts, UNHCR jointly with UNICEF and UNFPA continued to strengthen case management capacities of humanitarian and state GBV service providers for case management to enhance the sustainability of its efforts. This joint effort also led to the cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) on the development of case management training methodologies for state social workers to be rolled out in 2025. In addition, UNHCR also continued its efforts on GBV mainstreaming in different humanitarian sectors, notably collective site management.

In focus: Older people & people with disability



Older people supported in 2024



Older people and people with disabilities often have specific needs and face unique risks in displacement situations.

Stripped of their homes, social support systems, and most of their belongings, many find themselves alone, isolated, unsupported and in very difficult life circumstances.

In 2024, nearly one third of those supported by UNHCR's protection programme were older people. Over 57,000 people supported are living with a disability.

UNHCR's protection programme addresses the specific needs and risks older people and people with disabilities face when they are forced to flee or are trying to return to their homes:

- **Direct support:** UNHCR's legal aid and social support services are essential and well-tailored to the needs of older people or people with disabilities in displacement or return situations. In 2024, support ranged from restoration of personal documents, help with the recognition of disabilities, access to compensation, pensions, other social benefits and social services, psycho-social support, social accompaniment and transportation services to facilitate a safe and dignified evacuation and access to needed basic services and accommodation.
- **Community-based support:** Community-based support assists older people and people with disabilities in their socio-cultural integration and strengthens community cohesion and resiliency. In 2024, such support included communal inter-generational activities, community initiatives offering learning opportunities and enhancing the social and psychological wellbeing, as well as support by social facilitators in the community to help re-connect people to their environment, overcome social isolation and facilitate continued independent living.
- **Social systems support and advocacy:** UNHCR also worked closely with the Ministry of Social Policy and its Departments to strengthen the social services most in need by older people and people with disabilities, including in the context of evacuations from frontlines, and supported this through strategic advocacy.

Supporting a national system that protects

UNHCR's goal is to support and strengthen the national system protecting internally displaced and other war-affected people, asylum seekers, refugees as well as stateless people. To attain this goal, we work closely with Government counterparts at central and local levels and strengthen the role of communities who have stepped up since the onset of the war as first-line responders. Our work in support of a national system that protects contributes to the localization and greater sustainability of our protection response.

UNHCR's work in support of a 'national system that protects' engages its two main constituents – the Government and national civil society:

In 2024, **main Government counterparts** of UNHCR's protection programme included the Ministry of Social Policy, its regional Departments of Social Protection and Centres for Social Service Provision, the (former) Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories, the Ministry of Development, the Ministry of Justice and its Free Legal Aid Centres and Civil Registries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its consular services and cooperation on 'Ukraine is Home', the State Migration Service and the State Border Guard Service of the Ministry of Interior as well as the National MHPSS Coordination Centre established under the auspices of the First Lady. In addition, UNHCR maintained its strong cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman.

2024 key priorities in the protection cooperation with the Government included:

- Support for **safe and dignified evacuations and relocations of older people and people with disabilities** from frontline areas, and related social systems strengthening of services relevant to the needs of these vulnerable groups, to ensure their continuous access to care in displacement situations or upon return.
- **Strengthening of the free legal aid system** as a lifeline for IDPs and returnees, coupled with efforts to facilitate access to personal documentation, including for those who have lived under temporary occupation, as part of our efforts to reduce and prevent statelessness.
- Provision of expert support to inform the asylum reform needed to align Ukraine's legislation and procedures with the EU asylum acquis, in support of **Ukraine's EU accession process**.
- In implementing the **2024 Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine**, cooperation included rights awareness campaigns for IDPs, joint advocacy and support to the regionalization of the Ombudsman's office to bring the rights-restoring services closer to people.

Toward the end of 2024, UNHCR has also started working with the Ministry of Development on its newly assigned responsibilities for the protection of internally displaced people. This remains an important priority in 2025.

In 2024, UNHCR continued to work with key entities of the **national civil society**, including **IDP Councils, community-based organizations and other community initiatives and volunteers**, who show every day that community-led action matters in the lives of displaced people and the communities they live in. In 2025, we will continue to strengthen these community-based protection systems by leveraging and supporting the role and capacity of national civil society so they continue to extend social support, enhance resilience and self-reliance capacities, strengthen social cohesion and improve access to rights and services - thereby contributing to a national system that protects.



Convening stakeholders to discuss the strategy and support action for the evacuation and relocation of older people and people with disabilities in frontline areas – a joint initiative by the Ministry of Social Policy, the Presidential Commissioner for a Barrier-Free Environment, Protection Cluster, and UNHCR, supported by WHO and UNICEF experts. © UNHCR, 2024.

PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING

UNHCR and its partners' protection and solutions monitoring activity is three-fold:

1. **Monitoring of the protection situation** of IDPs, returnees and other war-affected people in Ukraine, including as part of a Protection Cluster-led country-wide initiative as well as for thematic protection surveys. In addition, UNHCR and partners undertake legal monitoring to inform advocacy efforts.
2. **Border monitoring** at 30 international border crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. Border monitors provide information, legal assistance, protection counselling and social support to people leaving Ukraine to seek international protection as well as to those returning to Ukraine. In 2024, over 17,000 people received support at the borders.
3. **Monitoring of intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine, refugee returnees and IDPs** to inform people-centered planning, provision of information through the 'Ukraine is Home' platform, and support to returnees as they pursue a durable solution.

The monitoring outcomes inform UNHCR's planning and programme and help identify those most in need. The outcomes are also shared through relevant coordination platforms to inform the wider humanitarian and recovery response.

Key Monitoring Findings

The UNHCR-led Legal Aid Working Group of the Protection Cluster identified key **legal challenges related to housing, land and property rights as well as access to social assistance** that IDPs, returnees and other war-affected people encountered in November and December 2024. Among the challenges identified are the suspension of applications for property damage assessments for compensation purposes due to the inability of the Commission to visit frontline hromadas in Kharkiv and Chernihiv oblasts for security reasons. Legal monitors continue to identify challenges regarding the extension of the IDP allowance payments as well as regarding the recognition of a disability as a result of the war. Read more in the [legal aid bulletin for November and December 2024](#).

In 2024, there was a notable increase in cross-border movements from February to August, with a marked overall increase in cross-border movements of 1.7 million in quarter 3 followed by a drop of 1.9 million in quarter 4. Overall, in 2024, there was a greater outflow than inflow of people to Ukraine except for the months of April, August and September. UNHCR's **border monitoring** identified safety and security, energy-related considerations, notably access to electricity, water and heating, as well as housing concerns as the three main considerations by those departing Ukraine during the last quarter of 2024. Of note is a growing uncertainty among those departing about the duration of their stay abroad: In 2024, on average, 54% of surveyed individuals did not know the exact period of their stay abroad. In the last quarter of 2024, an average of 63% expressed such uncertainty, compared to 49%, 42% and 62% on average in the three preceding quarters respectively. Read more in our monthly [border snapshots](#).

The latest round of UNHCR's regional **intention survey** (July-August 2024) found that 61% of refugees hope or plan to return to Ukraine, a 4% decrease compared to the last intention survey of February 2024. Those undecided or not planning to return increased slightly by 3% and 1% respectively compared to six months ago. Return intentions of IDPs remain the same at 73%. See the results of UNHCR's most recent intention survey #6: [Lives on Hold: Intentions and perspectives of refugees, refugee returnees and internally displaced people from Ukraine](#)

DONORS

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by our top government donors and for the generous contributions from individuals and the private sector, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with softly earmarked and unearmarked funds.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit Ukraine's **Operational Data Portal** for more information products [here](#).
- Visit UNHCR Ukraine's **Website** [here](#).

CONTACTS:

- Nina Schrepfer, Assistant Representative - Protection, UNHCR Ukraine
schrepfe@unhcr.org

Contact **UNHCR's Hotline 0-800-307-711** for feedback and advice on assistance and services.