

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 million people in Luhanska oblast suffered from water cuts in September
- 776,000 people crossings recorded at the five operating checkpoints in September
- OCHA study on protracted displacement offers perspectives for Ukraine



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Thousands of people are crossing the makeshift wooden construction at the battle-damaged bridge near the checkpoint Stanytsia Luhanska (Luhanska oblast) every day.

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## Fragile ceasefire brings limited respite

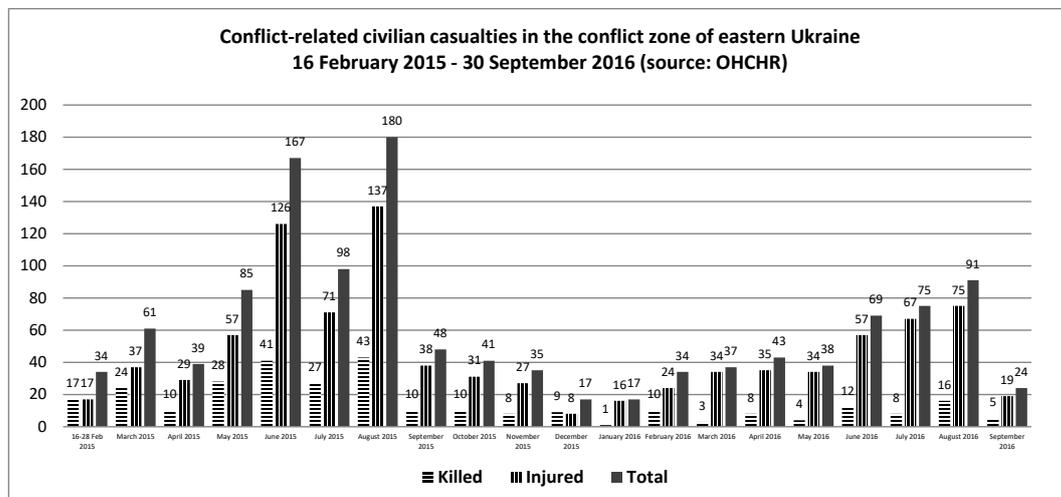
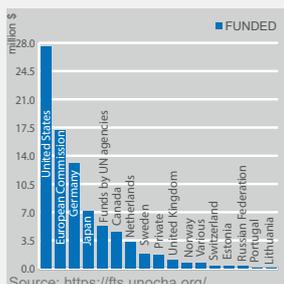
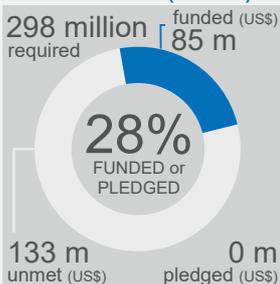
Renewed commitments by parties to the conflict to respect the two-year-old Minsk ceasefire agreement have offered some relief for people living in eastern Ukraine. While fighting continues in hotspots, its intensity decreased, and OSCE recorded over 100 daily explosions against up to 800 in August. Most of the fighting recorded in September related to small arms fire, with peaks of violence involving artillery and mortar shelling. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded 24 conflict-related civilian casualties (five fatalities and 19 injuries) in September against an average of 78 between June and August. Most civilian casualties continued to be caused by shelling and fighting while nine, including five fatalities, were caused by explosions of mines, remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. Since the beginning of the conflict, at least 22,231 people have been wounded and 9,574 have been killed; more than 2,000 of the fatalities were civilians.<sup>1</sup>

## FIGURES

People killed	9,574
People wounded	22,231
Externally displaced	1.1 m
People in need (2016)	3.1 m
People targeted (2016)	2.5 m

Source: UNHCR, WHO, OHCHR

## FUNDING (2016)



Source: OHCHR

## Water cuts affect people across the frontline in Luhansk

Between 600,000 and one million<sup>2</sup> people in Luhanska oblast have seen their access to water cut or severely curtailed after the critical water supply company Popasnyanskiy Vodakanal (PVK) suspended operations on 26 September due to power cuts. The interruption of service was due to PVK's failure to repay accumulated debts to the privately-

<sup>1</sup> These are conservative estimates by OHCHR based on available data; the actual number of casualties is believed to be higher.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate is based on pre-conflict population figures of 1.2 million people, assuming that population has been reduced by at least 20 per cent as a result of the conflict. Of these, some 80,000-100,000 people are estimated to be affected in GCA, and the rest – in NGCA.

*Solid mechanisms for repayment of debts between GCA and NGCA are needed to ensure sustainable water and electricity supply*

owned electricity supplier. While in Government-controlled areas (GCA) authorities, with partners support, provided water trucking and reactivated an old, alternative water source, the situation in non-Government-controlled areas (NGCA) was of great concern, particularly for some 440,000 people in the worst-served branches of the Karbonit system or in Luhansk city.

Mechanisms for repayment by the de facto authorities to the GCA-based sister companies have been subject for discussion during the Minsk-based peace negotiations, and while some progress has been made, a full-fledged solution is yet to be found. ICRC eventually stepped in and worked out a temporary solution to pay for the running costs of approximately two months of supplies, allowing for the restart of electricity supply to PVK on 6 October, thereby, averting a major humanitarian crisis and buying some time to the parties to reach an agreement.

Unless a solution is found, water could be cut again, with disastrous consequences. As winter progresses, the problem will be not only water availability but also lack of heating, as the system is centralized and interlinked. Systems will freeze, making restarting problematic and susceptible to breaks, and increasing the risk for water-borne diseases outbreaks and hypothermia, especially for the most vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities and the very young.

## Ukraine's chance to avoid protracted displacement

*Ukraine can avoid repeating other countries' mistakes with regards to IDPs if action is taken now*

OCHA hosted the mission of Prof. Walter Kälin, former Representative of the United Nations' Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs in September, which represented an opportunity to discuss ways of addressing the protracted displacement of over 1.7 million officially registered IDPs in hosting communities in Ukraine. In his interaction with the Government and with partners in Kyiv and in the East, Dr. Kälin highlighted that Ukraine has a unique chance to avoid for displacement to become protracted and to repeat mistakes of other countries, provided that decisive action is immediately taken.

Dr. Kälin urged the Government to harmonize the contradicting existing legal framework concerning IDPs and to recognize that all IDPs and conflict-affected people, including those living in NGCA are Ukrainians, and, thereby, entitled to the rights of other citizens, including the right to receive pensions and access basic services. He stressed that the link between the IDP status and other rights such as pensions present a major concern in Ukraine. While Dr. Kälin welcomed the creation of the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs and the adoption of a State Program for Recovery and Peacebuilding in the eastern provinces of Ukraine along with other measures, he stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive strategy on solutions for displacement of the affected communities in Ukraine. Such a strategy should set out a national framework which fosters and facilitates localized solutions under the leadership of MTOT in close collaboration with other relevant ministries, local authorities, the international community and the civil society.

The MTOT Minister reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to work to ensure that the needs and rights-based concerns of all Ukrainian citizens affected by the ongoing conflict, including IDPs, host communities and others, are addressed. He informed about the Ministry's recently published communication strategy for IDPs which aims at disseminating critical information to IDPs and promoting a constructive dialogue with all Ukrainian citizens, regardless of where they live. Yet, the Government's attitude towards IDPs remains inconsistent. Recent claims by Ukraine's Minister of Interior Affairs about an alleged link between rising levels of crime and the arrival of large numbers of IDPs from the Donbas and Crimea in Kyiv and elsewhere in the Ukrainian mainland have prompted harsh criticism. Ukrainian NGOs working in the humanitarian and human rights sector issued a protest statement, requesting the Minister to provide evidence for his allegations and to refrain from discriminating statements.

## Verification of the IDP status remains a concern, particularly for pensioners in NGCA

*The verification procedure of the IDP status continues to be hampered by confusing regulations*

The ongoing verification of IDPs continues to be a major humanitarian concern. As numerous IDPs, mainly pensioners residing in NGCA, fail to get their IDP status confirmed, they remain without access to social payments, including their pensions. According to the Ministry of Social Policy, 1.7 million people were registered as IDPs as of 22 September down from 1.78 million registered IDPs in May. Numbers are decreasing mainly in Donetsk and Luhanska oblasts where the verification of IDP certificates continues in full swing. The Government had suspended social payments, including pensions, to some 600,000 registered IDPs in February, allegedly owing to fraud schemes. According to resolution 365 adopted in June, mobile teams of administration officials and/or security forces need to check and verify the IDPs' place of residence and their living conditions.

On a more positive note, on 22 September the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the resolution 646, an instruction on creating, administering and accessing an electronic database of IDPs. The database, which has been developed with support from IOM, is designed to facilitate administration of IDP data on national and local level. However, concerns have been raised in the humanitarian community because the database will be administered by the Ministry of Social Policy, not the MTOT, and NGOs will have limited access to non-personalized data only.

## Shorter opening hours, longer queues

*Hopes are high that an additional checkpoint in Luhanska oblast may open soon*

The number of people crossings recorded at the five operating checkpoints on the 'contact line' has decreased this month, following a significant reduction of the checkpoints' opening hours (7am-6.30pm instead of 6am-8.30pm) effective from 1 September. The State Border Guard Service recorded some 776,000 people crossings in September compared to 875,000 in August, or a decrease by 11 per cent. Waiting periods increased, and queues of more than 200 cars occurred at the busiest checkpoints in Marinka and Zaitseve. Most people cross the 'contact line' regularly to visit relatives, buy food and non-food items which are unavailable or significantly more expensive in NGCA. Moreover, many people, mostly elderly, continue to travel between NGCA and GCA in order to receive social payments from the Ukrainian authorities.

The disengagement of armed forces in the vicinity of Zolote (Luhanska oblast), which is expected to further progress in October, has awakened the hope that a much-needed additional checkpoint in the



area could finally be opened. The first attempt to open the checkpoint failed on 31 March 2016 when de facto authorities claimed the opening had not been coordinated with them and refused to let people cross from the GCA side. While the only operating checkpoint in Luhanska oblast in Stanytsia Luhanska serves pedestrians only, the checkpoint in Zolote is designed for vehicles and the transportation of humanitarian cargo as well. To date, up to 5,000 people crossing the 'contact line' in Luhanska oblast every day need to carry their luggage over a shaky wooden construction replacing the battle-damaged concrete bridge next to the checkpoint Stanytsia Luhanska. This presents a hardship especially for elderly people, and more so during the cold season when rain and snow render the crossing even more dangerous.

Winterisation at the checkpoints becomes a pressing concern, as temperatures are expected to drop significantly in October. In light of the long waiting periods, hot drinks, warm blankets and heating fuel for the heating points are among basic needs at the five checkpoints in the upcoming winter season. The State Emergency Service in Stanytsia Luhanska has reached out for support from partners to replace the tent around the heating point at the pedestrian checkpoint. Moreover, special chemicals are needed for the maintenance of portable toilets in winter. The limited number of portable toilets near the checkpoints and lack of them in no-man's land continue to be of concern. On 30 September, partners installed additional toilets in Marinka and plan to maintain them. Partners respond to the current needs and work on providing additional tarpaulin coverage of the sheds, which would be able to protect people from the cold wind, rain and snow, but not the cold.

## CASH coordination stepped up

While cash coordination systematically took place over time, the Kyiv-based working group (CWG) was revamped in August. At the outset of the emergency, and one year on, a number of organizations did not have in-house expertise on cash transfer programming. The formation of the CWG at the time focused on training the members on terminologies, development of systems and positioning of the group in the humanitarian architecture or context in the country. Now, two years into the crisis and building on the existing structures, the CWG focuses on efficient delivery of outputs and tangible outcomes to ensure quick turnarounds of deliverables and decision making by the members. This will be achieved through drawing together the in-country expertise into thematic technical working groups (TWG), a subset of the CWG, to cover a wide spectrum of activities simultaneously. Some of the ongoing thematic discussions concern the formulation of monitoring and evaluation indicators, the protection of beneficiaries, and markets and transfer values.

## HRP 2016: 29 per cent funded

As of 30 September, the Financial Tracking Service (FTS - <https://fts.unocha.org>) indicates that the HRP 2016 received US\$ 85 million, or 29 per cent of the US\$ 298 million required. Some sectors, for instance health and food security, remain critically underfunded. Despite access restrictions, the humanitarian community continued delivering humanitarian aid to all in need. In September, this included deliveries to Donetsk NGCA of more than 700MT of shelter items and 160MT of food.

The Government of the Russian Federation delivered 600MT of assistance to Donetsk and Luhansk on 22 September, according to the Russian Emergency Ministry.

For further information, please contact:

**Barbara Manzi**, Head of Office, [manzi@un.org](mailto:manzi@un.org), Tel. (+380) 50 440 9005  
**Ann-Dorit Boy**, Public Information Officer, [boya@un.org](mailto:boya@un.org), Tel. (+380) 95 284 7322  
**Jake Morland**, Desk Officer, [morland@un.org](mailto:morland@un.org), Tel. (+1) 212 963 2066