

PROTECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Protection of Civilians:** The security environment deteriorated in February, with increasing numbers of incidents since the beginning of 2021. February reached the highest rate of damages to civilian houses since the ceasefire in July 2020 – a total of 18 incidents were recorded from July to December 2020, while in 2021 so far 29 incidents were recorded, of which 21 in February only. OSCE SMM reports continuing ceasefire violations (increase of 30% in 2021 compared to December 2020), posing risks to civilians living along the contact line. The proximity of military positions to residential areas often leave the latter susceptible to collateral damage from overflying bullets and projectiles. The threat of landmines and UXOs also remains a serious concern as incidents with civilians continue to be reported. In February, a 73-year old man died as a result of a mine incident in Luhansk Government Controlled Area (GCA). The incident took place in an isolated settlement, and partners reported challenges with access to a timely emergency health response.
- Freedom of Movement:** Only two Entry-Exit Crossing Points (EECP) - Stanytsia Luhanska and Novotroitske - remain open on both GCA and non-government controlled (NGCA) sides. Crossings increased by 32% compared to January and are expected to increase further as the weather conditions improve. Although the Cabinet of Ministers adopted [Resolution #1236](#) to provide free COVID19 tests at EECPs, by the end of February free tests were only available at EECP Novotroitske. This situation hinders NGCA residents' access to GCA side, as many are pensioners with limited resources to pay for private tests or self-isolate for 14 days. NGO Donbas SOS reported an increase in calls to its hotline regarding availability of free testing at the EECP.
- Birth Registration:** The Cabinet of Ministers adopted [Resolution #155](#) to allow children born in NGCA to be registered via the e-Malyatko electronic service. Although court decisions are still a pre-requisite for birth registration in such cases, the new regulation is a positive step to minimize the risk of statelessness amongst children born in NGCA.
- Housing, Land and Property (HLP):** The Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories [approved 43 out of 52 applications](#) for subvention from the state budget to local budgets, submitted by local authorities to fund the IDP housing programme 70/30. The decision is expected to benefit 412 IDPs in 14 regions across Ukraine. In February, the Compensation Committees in Donetsk and Luhansk regions approved 64 requests for compensation for destroyed housing.
- Access to services:** Oschadbank prolonged the validity of the expired bank cards until 1 May 2021. The action is very welcome as it will prevent the suspension of social benefits to IDPs and conflict-affected population who reside in NGCA and cannot cross the contact line to collect or renew their bank cards.
- Impact of the Decentralization on Access to Essential Services:** The humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities along the contact line, already more acute due to COVID-19, are once again at risk of increasing. Monitoring conducted by partners in January-February 2021 indicate that the current stage of the decentralization process at Raion and Amalgamated Territorial Communities (ATC/OTG) levels may disproportionately impact communities affected by the conflict, particularly in relation to provision and access to essential services in the short and medium term. Civil Military Administrations (CMA) were established in 18 communities along the contact line, but appointments of Heads of 16 CMAs are still pending. Partners report that the establishment of new service centres or the re-arrangement of existing ones to cover new areas vary in the East and led to disruption of social services in some locations – including essential child protection services. A prolonged halt in service provision may limit access to social benefits. Electricity supply is reportedly being rationed in a number of in community centres, limiting access of children and elderly to extracurricular activities and psychosocial support. Communities are worried about how they will physically access services in a context of persistent restrictions on movements and limited availability of public/affordable transportation to the main centres. Not all the settlements are inter-connected by public transport. In some cases, the roads are extremely poor, even impassable in poor weather.

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RELEVANT ONLINE DASHBOARDS

[Protection Cluster 5W](#)

[Explosive Ordnance Risk Education \(EORE\) Sessions](#)

[MHPSS and GBV Services](#)

[Checkpoints: people's monthly crossings](#)

[Settlements Map](#)

[Legal Aid Directory](#)

●●●● OPERATIONAL RESPONSE – FEBRUARY

- **Legal Aid and Individual Counselling:** Norwegian Refugee Council provided legal assistance to 717 persons; while nine paralegals trained by NRC provided individual counselling to 284 people in Luhansk. NGO “Right to Protection” provided legal assistance to 814 persons and individual protection counselling to 1,084 people at the EECPs. Most of the consultations in EECPs were related to COVID-19 restrictions. NGO Donbas SOS provided individual counselling to 1,479 persons and legal assistance to 451 persons through its Hotline.



- **EECPs:** A free electric car at Stanytsia Luhanska checkpoint, run by NGO “Proliska”, transported 4,483 people with limited mobility, from the entrance of the checkpoint to the “zero” checkpoint and back (approx. 1km). More than 200,550 persons with limited mobility benefitted from the service in 2020 .
- **Psychosocial support (PSS):** People in Need provided PSS support through its hotline to 737 persons (of which 35% people with disabilities). 30% of calls related to social isolation and 23% to mental health problems. NGO “Proliska” provided online and offline individual PSS support to 307 persons. Most of the requests related to depression, anxiety, GBV and grief. Save the Children conducted HEART sessions (Healing through Education and Art) to 69 children, including six children with disabilities. IOM provided psychosocial support through the hotline to 293 persons, including follow-up sessions.
- **Mine action:** The HALO Trust cleared 27 hectares of mine-contaminated land and conducted online and offline Explosive Ordnance Risk Education sessions for 10,589 children, teachers, and caregivers.
- **Gender-based Violence (GBV):** UNHCR delivered equipment to the Novoaidar centre for social services, established by the Department for Social Protection. The Centre accommodates a newly established space for working with GBV perpetrators. Ukrainian Red Cross Society jointly with the Institute of Cognitive Modelling launched an [online platform It Seems](#), where women who suffered from GBV and domestic violence can anonymously share their experience and receive referral services. SOS Children’s Villages launched a shelter for women with children, who suffered from domestic violence in Sievierosdonetsk. The shelter can accommodate 12 persons.
- **Community Empowerment:** PIN funded four NGOs from conflict-affected communities to implement small-scale projects aimed at mitigating COVID-19 negative impact. The projects include capacity-building activities for local authorities to protect vulnerable population, improving access to medical and social services, and PSS activities for children with disabilities. Stabilization Support Services conducted three trainings for 39 female activists from Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions on developing small projects to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in their communities. Danish Refugee Council conducted online training for 30 IDPs on entrepreneurship during COVID-19 quarantine restrictions. Save the Children conducted training sessions on children's rights and inclusion for 24 persons from Toshkivka, Nyzhnie, and Muratove (Luhansk region).



ADVOCACY

- On 5 February, the HLP Technical Working Group **submitted recommendations on the amendments to Decree #767 on compensation for damaged housing** to the Deputy Minister of the Ministry for Reintegration of TOT. The recommendations include involving NGOs in the work of the compensation committees, establishing a mechanism for damage assessment in settlements with limited access, simplification of the documentation requirements, and postponing termination of ownership rights.
- Coalition of NGOs including Protection Cluster partners R2P, Donbas SOS, Vostok SOS, Crimea SOS, and Stabilization Support Services, **submitted to the Ministry for Reintegration of TOT [recommendations](#) to the draft law “On the State policy during Transitional Period”**, the first framework document on the state policy related to the conflict and reintegration of non-government controlled area.