



## **SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE EASTERN UKRAINE REGIONS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT MAY HAVE TO FACE A COMPROMISED ACCESS TO MUCH NEEDED PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND HEALTH SERVICES**

In less than one month, thousands of most vulnerable women and adolescent girls affected by the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine may lose access to life-saving services provided through mobile psychosocial counselling and health services as the long-standing commitment of UNFPA Ukraine to respond to their acute humanitarian needs is under a grave threat if no continued funding materialized for 2017.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant risk in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the areas along the contact line. The high concentration of military and paramilitary groups, coupled with a proliferation of weapons, weak law enforcement and impunity for perpetrators, has increased the risk of GBV, particularly for IDP women and adolescent girls. Low reporting of GBV cases further deepens vulnerability.

Since the onset of the crisis, UNFPA Ukraine is leading the humanitarian response through its multi-component program addressing GBV and reproductive health needs of vulnerable women and adolescent girls, providing life-saving services through mobile psychosocial counselling and ensuring accessibility of medical services to those in need, in particular in remote areas and near the contactline.

- **14,600 survivors of gender-based violence received psychosocial counseling provided by 26 mobile teams across 5 regions.** For over 60% of survivors it was the first ever and only possible chance to access to much needed help. GBV remains a much hidden issue and outreach work is essential to help the survivors
- **Through October–December only, the National Toll Free hotline on Prevention Domestic Violence, Trafficking and Gender Discrimination received 12,878 calls** and provided psychological counselling assistance to survivors of violence. Over 65% of these calls were coming in during night time and weekend hours and around 5% calls received from NGCA. Survivors were also referred to other available services, including psychosocial mobile teams. UNFPA support enabled the operation of Hot Line in 24/7 format (currently 66% of all calls is received during night shift)
- First survivors received help in the first [temporary shelter for GBV survivors](#) which was opened in Kharkiv city in November 2016. UNFPA is supporting local authorities to create similar safe spaces/shelters for GBV survivors in Kryvyi Rih & Berdiansk cities as well in Donetsk and Lugansk regions
- **Over 300,000 people** were reached through 2016 **wave of the massive information and awareness raising campaign «Breaking the cycle»** aimed at raising awareness on GBV issues and available response services
- **Over 120,000 women** benefited from the **non-discriminatory and free of charge access to maternal and other health services** as UNFPA delivered 528 life-saving reproductive health kits and 68,000 gynecological kits and equipment to the local maternities in the East. Over 7 mln of condoms were distributed to prevent the spread of HIV, STI infections and to prevent unwanted pregnancies among the most vulnerable women.

**UNFPA is appealing for US\$3.3 million to provide much needed mobile outreach psycho-social assistance and offer safe spaces to survivors of gender-based violence, sustain access to sexual and reproductive health services for displaced, crisis-affected women and adolescent girls in the situation of ongoing crises.**

**For more information please see:**

**UNFPA HRP projects:** <https://ops.unocha.org/projects.aspx?appealid=2892&type=my>

**UNFPA Humanitarian interventions in Ukraine:**

[www.unfpa.org.ua/eng/humanitarian\\_response/project%20brief.html](http://www.unfpa.org.ua/eng/humanitarian_response/project%20brief.html)

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Thousands of people in the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine have either witnessed, or experienced GBV. UNFPA mobile teams help to break the silence and heal the physical and emotional wounds of GBV survivors.

Among those particularly vulnerable are IDPs like Tetiana, who lived peacefully with her husband in a rural area of Donetsk before the conflict broke out. Since then, their lives have changed dramatically. After Tetiana's husband refused to accept an "invitation" to join the armed militants, he was kidnapped and tortured for several days. The militants brutally beat Tetiana too, kicking her teeth in and slashing her face. The family fled to Kharkiv, scared by the militants' threats to kill their children. Unfortunately, the nightmare was not over for them. Tetiana's husband remained haunted by the horrors he had experienced - he became paranoid and aggressive. The couple decided to separate in order to protect their children from additional stress. It was during that period that Tetiana met psychologist Svitlana Tevantseva, a UNFPA mobile team coordinator, while seeking social and psychosocial support. Tetiana asked for help in finding an apartment, and later revealed the whole story.

Fulfilling one of their core functions, the mobile team referred her to "AMMA" association helped to reduce her stress. Tetiana and her children found a new home in 70 kilometres from Kharkiv and started to helping other families with similar problems. The Village Council greeted them with understanding and tolerance. Since the village's population is ageing rapidly, the young family has been welcomed happily to the community. Tetiana no longer feels alone, and has even started to help other families in similar situations. Knowing she will have a stable home for her family, where they can live, farm, and keep cows again, has been a huge boost for Tetiana's morale, according to mobile team psychologist.

Referring families to needed services is one of the main goals of UNFPA's mobile teams.