

## EMPATHY AND SUPPORT WITHIN CALLING DISTANCE

The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and the eighth year of conflict: the situation in Ukraine continues to pose enormous socioeconomic and mental health challenges, especially for the most vulnerable people in conflict-affected areas who do not have funds to seek professional mental health and psychosocial support. To address this gap, a toll-free Emotional Support Hotline 0 800 211 444, run by IOM with funding from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), has been operating since September 2020 and received 2,076 calls by the end of May 2021. People are calling the hotline from all regions of Ukraine, but the highest number of calls is coming in from the conflict-affected Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Through the IOM Emotional Support Hotline, qualified psychologists have been providing individual counselling and multiple follow-up sessions. In April, the number of people receiving follow-up consultations almost tripled compared to March (157 vs 61 persons). “We link the increased number of requests to the hotline to the lockdowns that were introduced in most regions of Ukraine in mid-spring,” says IOM hotline psychologist Pavlo. The largest group (40.4%) of people receive between two and five counselling sessions, and 13.5 per cent receive between six and ten. “Having a series of consultations helps clients to formulate their request, to decide on the issues they would like to work on together with ▶

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **IOM has assisted over 603,000 vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs) and people in need** in 24 regions of Ukraine since 2014.
- **The total number of IDPs from Crimea and eastern Ukraine is 1,467,720** as of 24 May 2021, according to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.
- The security situation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions remains volatile with the number of hostilities almost reaching the preceasefire level. OHCHR reported about **12 civilians killed and 27 injured from 1 January to 30 April 2021**, a 22 per cent increase, compared with four preceding months. Due to hostilities, critical civilian infrastructure, including a hospital designated for treating patients with COVID-19 and electricity lines powering a key water pumping station in Donetsk Region, sustained serious damages.
- Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska remain the only entry-exit crossing points (EECPs) functioning along the contact line. The planned opening of EECPs in Shchastia and Zolote in Luhansk region did not occur. Despite a slight increase in the **number of crossings** (50,000–60,000 in April), it **remains 95 per cent lower than in the pre-COVID period**.



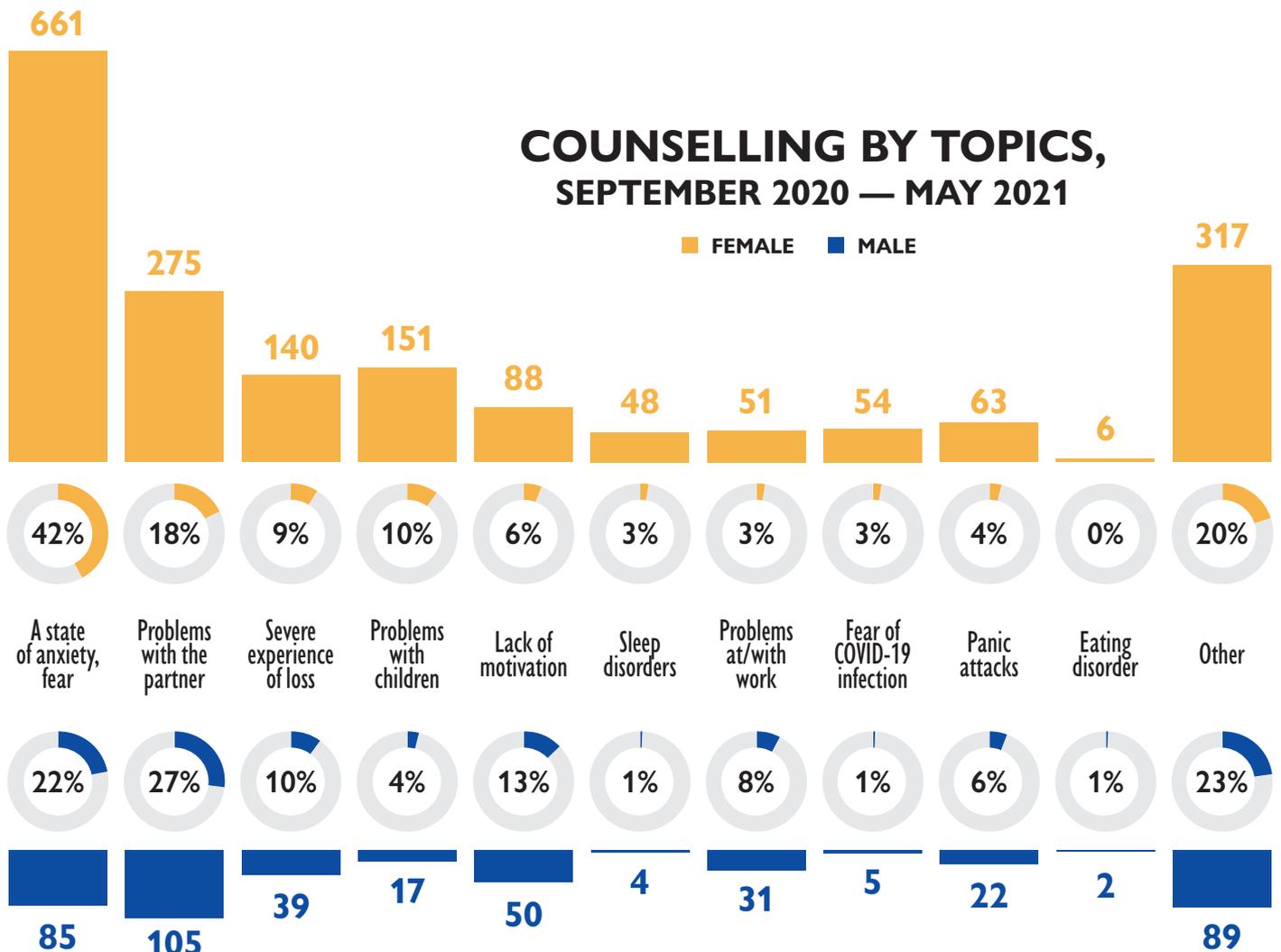
**A billboard from IOM public campaign promoting importance of mental health and advertising the IOM hotline**

**BI-MONTHLY REPORT, APRIL–MAY 2021**

a psychologist, and to get advice and information that will help to achieve a change,” says hotline psychologist Alina. Consultations are provided over the phone, Viber or Skype: this format also allows clients to choose a safe and convenient place, which is extremely important in sensitive cases. A state of anxiety and fear, as well as problems with their partner, remain the top reasons for calling the IOM Emotional Support Hotline. The age range of hotline clients is from 14 to 81. As many as 77 per cent of them are women.

In spring 2021, the hotline psychologists proactively reached out to the beneficiaries of the IOM PRM-funded cash assistance programme: vulnerable people residing in remote, isolated locations along the contact line in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. “Many of these people, especially elderly, have no one to talk to, as their children and neighbours left for work and to find safety,” says Pavlo. “There are approximately 300 pensioners whom we call several times a month and we hear how glad they are to get a call. We understand that proactive mental health and

psychosocial support is much needed in Ukraine’s eastern conflict area.” This direct engagement with people who require psychosocial support is in line with the objectives set by the humanitarian community and aims to improve the access of conflict-affected populations to essential health-care services. IOM psychologists have also been working closely with local authorities, as well as with social and medical institutions in Donetsk and Luhansk regions to train staff on how to manage their own stress and address the needs of the communities they serve.



# EU AID SUPPORTS THE MOST VULNERABLE AMID EASTERN UKRAINE’S SIMMERING CONFLICT



Photo: IOM / Polina Perfilieva

***Vira and her son who has a disability received three tons of coal as EU-funded aid and were able to save funds for other pressing needs***

In eastern Ukraine, where over 3 million people remain severely affected by the conflict entering its eighth year, spring is the time to think about the next winter. To help keep the chill at bay during the cold season, IOM, the UN Migration Agency, with funding from the European Union, has provided essential rehabilitation works to

medical and social facilities in the Donetsk Region, including two hospitals, one ambulatory and a boarding school, that were damaged by fighting, and contributed to the renovations of a newly established centre for internally displaced persons. In total, over 14,000 people will use the services of these renovated institutions, now without

risking their health due to broken windows or leaky roofs.

The same project also assisted over 5,000 households with coal distributions which helped keep families warm over the harsh Ukrainian winter. Three tons of coal per family were delivered to vulnerable households along the contact line to assist people ▶



Photo: IOM / Polina Perfileva

**A medical facility in Eastern Conflict Area before and after the broken windows were replaced by IOM**

like Vira and her son Volodymyr, who, on limited funds, have to cover essential medical costs to meet Volodymyr’s needs. This means other needs had to go unmet. “I used to buy coal on my own and hire people to help move it to the barn, which was quite expensive. Now, as I received coal as humanitarian aid, I can buy medicines for my son,” says Vira.

“My yard was hit by a shell and we sat in a basement for a month,” recalls another IOM beneficiary Valentyna. “Currently we keep suffering from water shortages, because the work of the water filtration station is often interrupted by hostilities. I do not know what helped us get through all these difficulties. I just want peace.” Valentyna plans to use the money she saved on coal to cover other essential expenses, such as drinking water, food and medicine.

The growing number of ceasefire violations since the beginning of

2021 raises concerns over the possible return to the preceasefire level of hostilities or, in the worst case, potential escalation. Any deterioration of security conditions in the east will severely

aggravate the humanitarian situation for 3.4 million in need of assistance, whose resilience is already strained by seven years of armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.



To help focus attention on the plight of the three million people affected by the fighting in eastern Ukraine, IOM developed a social media campaign. It tells the story of “Nina” and “Ivan”, which is an amalgam of several similar stories related to IOM workers.

Watch the campaign video at the [link](#).

### JAPAN AND IOM SUPPORT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO MITIGATE THE COVID-19 IMPACT ON MAIN DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY IN EASTERN UKRAINE



Photo: UN Ukraine / Volodymyr Shuwayev

**The IOM project was officially presented in Kyiv on 14 May, at a press conference attended by Ambassador of Japan to Ukraine Takashi Kurai, Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine Oleksii Reznikov, and UN Resident Coordinator Osnat Lubrani. In 2021, the Government of Japan will support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine with USD 4.5 million through four projects to be implemented by IOM, UNHCR, UNOPS, and the International Committee of the Red Cross**

This spring, IOM launched a new year-long project funded by the Government of Japan. It will mitigate the exacerbating impact of COVID-19 on main drivers of instability in eastern Ukraine by supporting the multisectoral community-driven initiatives to increase the cohesion, self-sufficiency and resilience of conflict-affected communities.

Four Community Initiative Groups (CIGs) in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions will be established and 60 CIG members will benefit from the planned capacity building activities to improve cohesion, engage the community,

and ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups. A total of 40 initiatives are expected to be organized by these groups. IOM will furthermore rehabilitate critical community infrastructure, identified on the principle of participatory decision-making to increase cohesion and support communities' recovery efforts.

Tailored social protection assistance will be provided to 300 victims of trafficking as well as to men, women, boys and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation. Additionally, multidisciplinary training will be provided to 100 social, medical and legal service

providers as well as local NGO specialists, law enforcement officials and border guards to identify and refer vulnerable population for protection assistance.

Vocational boost grants will be available for 60 young people in the target communities: young men and women will have their professional courses covered by IOM and will receive necessary IT equipment. The project will also support start-ups and owners of established businesses: 20 start-up grants will be provided to social enterprises, and 32 existing businesses will receive scale-up grants.

# YOUTH ACTION FOR ENVIRONMENT BOOSTED WITH A NEW PROJECT

Following the successful implementation of the pilot project “Engage, Connect, Empower” in Ukraine’s Volyn, Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk regions, IOM is taking a new step in its support to local communities through youth engagement and environmental protection. In April, IOM launched the second phase of the project “Engage, Connect, Empower: Building Resilience through Integrated Action of Dynamic Youth and Local Government for the Environment (BRIDGE).” The year-long project, funded by the British Embassy in Ukraine and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, is expanding the pilot project to three more regions: Odesa, Kherson, and Mykolaiv.

Through the BRIDGE initiative, IOM will support youth aged 15–34 years old, with a specific focus on families of former labour migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), persons with disabilities, veterans, low-income households and national minority representatives. Youth will participate in trainings on environmental protection, disaster risk reduction, advocacy, communication, and other areas based on the needs of youth initiative groups. This will pave the way for networking opportunities and a series of community-level consultations with decision-makers. To multiply the effect, IOM will support six youth-led regional advocacy campaigns, developed by participants.



Photo: EcoDovhe

**Youth from Dovhe village, Zakarpattia, cleaning their neighbourhood from the garbage within the first phase of the project**

“Taking part in the “Engage, Connect, Empower” project in 2020, we received tons of knowledge that we want to share with every member of our community. As part of the project, we received garbage sorting bins

for every educational facility in our town. We are committed to further increasing our community’s level of environmental responsibility,” said Ivan Dumnych, a member of a youth initiative group from Tiachiv community (Zakarpattia Region).



**The project is implemented in Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Odesa, Kherson and Mykolaiv regions.**

BI-MONTHLY REPORT, APRIL–MAY 2021

## BACKGROUND ON THE CRISIS

The ongoing armed conflict in eastern Ukraine has taken the lives of over 3,000 civilians and injured more than 7,000 since 2014. The ceasefire that was established in late July 2020 contributed to a reduction in the number of casualties over several months; however, ongoing hostilities continue affecting the lives of the people of eastern Ukraine. The COVID-19 pandemic also has a profound effect on those already made vulnerable by the conflict. As many as 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021. Although the number of people in need is similar to 2020, their needs are significantly more severe. The elderly, people with disabilities, female-headed households and children are among the most vulnerable, including approximately 340,000 internally displaced persons in poor living conditions.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Ms. Varvara Zhluktenko, IOM Ukraine's Communications Officer,  
[vzhluktenko@iom.int](mailto:vzhluktenko@iom.int) +38 044 568 50 15 +38 067 447 97 92

## IOM'S ASSISTANCE TO CONFLICT-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE IS SUPPORTED BY:



Funded by  
the European Union



British Embassy  
Kyiv



співпраця з  
НІМЕЧЧИНОЮ  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

KfW



From the People  
of Japan



U.S. Department  
of State Bureau  
of Population,  
Refugees, and Migration

***In line with IOM's global strategy, the IOM Mission in Ukraine aims at advancing the understanding of the opportunities and challenges of migration in the Ukrainian context. Maximizing those opportunities and minimizing the challenges presented by migratory movements are the guiding principles of all activities and programmes the Mission engages in.***

***IOM Ukraine fights trafficking in human beings, assists the Government in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons and dealing with irregular migration, improving its migration management system, and creating migrant-inclusive health practices and policies. At the same time, IOM Ukraine engages in harnessing the development potential of migration, disseminating migration information and managing migration movements and integration of ethnic minorities, promoting the benefits of cultural diversity, and counteracting xenophobia and intolerance.***

***During the 25 years of its presence in Ukraine, IOM has assisted over 800,000 migrants (Ukrainians and other nationalities), IDPs, victims of trafficking and other vulnerable groups, directly or through its project partners.***

*Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of IOM or its member states.*