

EMERGENCY SITUATION REPORT

WHO COUNTRY OFFICE IN UKRAINE

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WHO Country Office in Ukraine - WHO ERF GRADE 3

WHO Regional Office's mission to cities across Ukraine

On 15–19 December, a delegation from the WHO Regional Office for Europe conducted a mission to key Ukrainian cities to reinforce and assess health initiatives amid ongoing war.

Along with WHO Representative Dr Jarno Habicht and Incident Manager Emanuele Bruni, the delegation was led by Dr Gundo Weiler, Director of the Division of Country Support and acting Regional Emergency Director, accompanied by Dr Heather Papowitz, Incident Manager for the Ukraine Response at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and Dr Michel Kazatchkine, Special Advisor to the Regional Director and Special Advisor to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



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Highlights from the delegation's visit are listed below.

- The signing of a Biennial Collaborative Agreement between WHO and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine set the foundation for an enhanced partnership, aiming to bolster the country's health sector amid war, including through the provision of medical supplies and equipment as well as access to basic services for the people of Ukraine, even those hardest to reach.
- The delegation attended a ceremony marking the handover of 20 ambulances donated by the Government of Germany.
- The visit to Lyman health-care facilities – a primary health-care centre and the Central District Hospital – joined by the Ukrainian Minister of Health Viktor Liashko, offered a first-hand account of the resilience of health-care providers in a facility located 60 kilometres away from Bakhmut, an area heavily affected by hostilities. The medical supplies provided by the WHO delegation cover the immediate needs of over 12 000 people, including 600 children.
- In Kherson, the delegation inspected a WHO prefab health-care facility, established as a rapid response measure in place of a destroyed emergency centre. This visit highlighted innovative solutions in providing critical care, especially to front-line responders and trauma patients.
- In Odesa, the delegation visited the WHO-supported Burn Centre and the Cancer Centre, delivering donations such as a generator and a large quantity of medicines from the Government of Germany. This was followed by a visit to the HIV centre to learn how the facility is coping with war-related challenges and adapting to provide uninterrupted care. The centre is recognized for its fast response to HIV, uses a team approach for better care, the availability of PrEP (a preventive HIV medication), and is spreading out its services more effectively. A special project in one hospital now offers more routine HIV testing.

Enhancing Ukraine's emergency medical capabilities

On 16 December, WHO donated 20 advanced ambulances to Ukraine's Ministry of Health to support emergency care amid the war. Designed as mobile intensive care units, the ambulances are equipped with essential life-support devices such as defibrillator-monitors, lung ventilators, and oxygen delivery equipment, ensuring critical patient care during transport. This delivery was made possible with funding from the Government of Germany.

The donation is part of a larger initiative that has resulted in WHO and its partners donating 114 ambulances since 24 February 2022. In 2023 alone, numerous ambulances were delivered in different months: 26 in January, 35 in March, and 20 in December. Funding from DG ECHO, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the Federal Ministry of Health of Germany, and other sources have all been instrumental in this effort. These vehicles, vital for mobile medical response, are distributed strategically across Ukraine.

Prior to deployment, each ambulance undergoes a rigorous inspection by WHO specialists to ensure that it meets operational standards and is tailored to the region's health-care needs. The fleet, comprising three types of ambulances, is designed to meet the diverse requirements of Ukraine's health-care landscape. More ambulances are set to be delivered in coming months.





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Front-line aid: WHO and Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell's joint efforts in Ukraine's humanitarian crisis

In 2023, amid the challenges of Ukraine's war, WHO has been instrumental in interagency humanitarian aid delivery, significantly impacting those affected by the conflict. A key aspect of WHO's contribution has been its role in the efforts of Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell (HOPC) Ukraine. WHO participated in 85 of the 100 aid convoys deployed by HOPC. The careful planning and execution of each convoy highlighted WHO's adherence to principles of transparency, safety, regulatory compliance, and a focused approach to urgent health issues.



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As demand increases for various health services such as emergency, trauma, and mental health care, WHO's continued efforts in these areas are crucial, especially as the situation might worsen during the winter months.

Moreover, WHO reported over 1300 attacks on health-care facilities, which resulted in widespread trauma and health-related issues, with WHO noting that more than half of global health-care attacks from February 2022 to October 2023 occurred in Ukraine. This has drastically limited medical services in the most affected areas, especially near the front lines.

KEY FIGURES

Key humanitarian numbers



1422

Attacks on Health Care
reported by WHO SSA tool



14 630 000

People in need



7 830 000

People targeted by Health Cluster partners



3 670 000

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Strengthening medical emergency support in Ukraine: WHO's strategic emergency medical team (EMT) initiative

The WHO EMT Initiative, focusing on enhancing health-care delivery in disaster situations, has been actively working in Ukraine. This project involves deploying mentors to support the development of Type 1 Mobile Medical Teams, a key element in a broader strategy to provide efficient and coordinated emergency health-care when the national system is overwhelmed or services are disrupted in crisis zones.

These teams, guided by the National Centre for Disaster and Emergency Medicine, reinforce the health infrastructure, providing critical surge support in emergencies.

A 2.5-day training session, derived from the WHO EMT Core Training Package but tailored to the specific requirements of disaster medicine in Ukraine, was held on 6–8 December in Kyiv to enhance both individual skills and team dynamics for comprehensive disaster preparedness.



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The training included a simulation exercise, designed to mimic real-life emergency scenarios, demanding adaptability and swift decision-making. Participants, organized into six teams, assumed various roles, including team lead and media spokesperson, and were tasked with demonstrating effective teamwork and decision-making in complex situations. This training session, supported by 20 people from five health partner organizations, including three classified EMTs from the EMT global network, provided an invaluable, realistic learning experience.

This comprehensive approach to training, including the intensive 2.5-day session in Kyiv, and the strategic deployment of Mobile Medical Teams, strengthens Ukraine's ability to respond effectively to health-care crises through timely and well-coordinated emergency support.



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Strengthening chemical and radiation hazard response: WHO's collaborative initiatives with Ukraine's Ministry of Health

The WHO Country Office continues to work with Ukraine's Ministry of Health to build capacity against toxic chemical and radiation hazards for both the civilian population and the health-care workers responding to such incidents, focusing and prioritizing assistance on regions near conflict zones.

Thus far, 45 chemical preparedness and response trainings have been conducted since the beginning of the war, and the WHO Country Office in Ukraine has trained more than 2000 emergency medical service (EMS) first responders and clinicians from referral hospitals for patients with chemical injuries. This support to the Ministry of Health ensures that relevant medical personnel involved in such response have the necessary skills and equipment to protect their staff and the capacity to manage situations involving toxic chemicals to reduce morbidity and to increase positive patient outcomes.

The WHO Country Office in Ukraine also conducted its second training of trainers on chemical preparedness and response in October for 22 senior EMS ambulance first responders and hospital clinicians from the front-line regions of Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Kherson, Chernihiv, Odesa and Zaporizhzhya. The course covered theoretical and practical skills for safe use of chemical protective suits, organization of onsite operations for effective decontamination of chemical hazards, and life-saving medical interventions.

These efforts are closely tied to the work of Ukraine's EMS and the Center for Disaster Medicine in the area of mass casualty management, pre-hospital clinical management, and evacuation of civilians.

Efforts for radiation preparedness included 18 specialized trainings for 300 hospital clinicians, particularly in regions like Zaporizhzhya, and Rivne, in collaboration with Kyiv's National Research Center for Radiation Medicine.

Additionally, at the request of Ukraine's Ministry of Health, WHO supplied essential equipment to counteract technological hazards. WHO public awareness campaigns on nuclear and chemical safety informed 819 000 people in December 2022 and 350 000 in August 2023.



Empowering front-line medics: training on GBV and PRESEAH response

From September to December 2023, the PRSEAH Pillar team conducted a training for nearly 300 front-line medical workers across Ukraine, particularly from conflict-affected areas such as the Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Sumy, and Kharkiv regions, which are more susceptible to incidents of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

The training comprised 10 short weekly sessions for each cohort of EMTs and primary health-care (PHC) professionals, including doctors, nurses, and emergency medical personnel, focusing on service provision to GBV survivors.

A key component of the training covered the general concept of SEA in humanitarian responses, aligning with WHO and United Nations' zero-tolerance policy in this area, and highlighted the role of health-care workers in reporting and preventing SEA.

The last training session highlighted the importance of awareness-raising and sensitization among health-care providers, as well as training them in appropriate behaviours and response protocols.

Interactive elements like QR codes for pre- and post-tests were integrated to gauge the effectiveness of the training. The assessments revealed a significant increase in the participants' knowledge about PRSEAH, with an average improvement ranging between 20–25%, and in some areas, up to 50%.



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Strengthening diagnostic capabilities: WHO's multifaceted training and quality initiatives in Ukrainian laboratories

In September 2023, a mentoring programme was launched at the Municipal Enterprise “Poltava Regional Clinical Hospital” to prepare its clinical bacteriology laboratory for ISO 15189 accreditation. Using the Laboratory Quality Stepwise Implementation tool and aligning with ISO 15189:2022, the programme initially found the laboratory to be 10% ready for accreditation. By November, significant progress had been made. Key initiatives included developing standard operating procedures, establishing an equipment maintenance system, appointing a biosafety officer, and providing biosafety training. This led to an increase in readiness to 42%, with a focus on quality control and assurance fundamentals.

On 6–8 December, the WHO Field Office in Dnipropetrovsk hosted workshops on laboratory biosafety and biosecurity requirements. Targeted at the staff of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Center for Disease Control and Prevention and its branches, the training, based on the WHO Laboratory biosafety manual and European and local regulations, covered risk assessments, facility design, microbiological practices, and emergency responses. Pre- and post-test evaluations highlighted the training's effectiveness in enhancing participant knowledge.



On 5 December, the WHO Field Office donated rapid diagnostic testing kits for infectious disease screening to the Municipal Children's Clinical Hospital No. 6 of the Dnipropetrovsk City Council to aid in the hospital's emergency room operations.

Furthermore, in an effort led by the WHO Technical Officer, External Quality Assessment Services (EQAS) were introduced in two clinical bacteriology laboratories in Dnipropetrovsk, the first such implementation in eastern Ukraine. The laboratories adopted international quality assessment schemes from RIQAS and Labquality, focusing on microbiology, bacterial identification and antimicrobial susceptibility testing. The first of four annual EQAS cycles indicated successful participation and marked a crucial step in enhancing laboratory quality and reliability in the region.



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KEY FIGURES

Key operational numbers

Health Facilities reached

Week 48, 49 and 50

292

Overall

1244

People provided with supplies

Week 48, 49 and 50

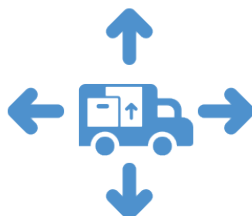
103 809

Overall

9 406 636

Supplies distributed

Week 48, 49 and 50

92 MT

Overall

3382 MT

Interagency convoys conducted

Week 48, 49 and 50

3

Overall

88

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Health Emergencies Lead

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