

# HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN UKRAINE AS A RESULT OF RUSSIA'S ARMED AGGRESSION: NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

**Andrii Voitsikhovskiy, Kharkiv National University of Internal  
Affairs, Ukraine**

**Tetyana Gudz, Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs,  
Ukraine**

**Oleh Honcharuk, Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs,  
Ukraine**

**Nataliia Filipaska, Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs,  
Ukraine**

## ABSTRACT

*The article is devoted to the study of the dynamics and scope of the humanitarian crisis that arose as a result of the full-scale armed invasion of Russia into Ukraine in February, 2022. Russian aggression, which violates International law and the UN Charter, caused the death and injury of thousands of civilians, inflicted serious physical and psychological trauma to the population, occasioned mass internal and external migration, and led to the destruction of critical infrastructure facilities, which ultimately led to humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.*

*The international community still does not have a single legal definition of the term "humanitarian crisis". The Geneva Conventions of 1949, the main documents of international humanitarian law, do not contain a definition of the term "humanitarian". A humanitarian crisis can be described as a serious disruption of the normal functioning of a community or society, which leads to significant losses and requires external assistance. Modern international law and normative legal acts of international organizations also do not define the characteristics, duration or intensity of humanitarian crises, often using the terms "difficult humanitarian emergencies" or "complex situations".*

*During the war in Ukraine, the main state institutions, such as the health care system, education and social security, were significantly damaged or completely destroyed, which led to their ineffectiveness. The limited possibilities of delivery of humanitarian aid further complicated the situation, failing to meet the basic needs of the population.*

*The humanitarian crisis creates specific challenges for vulnerable populations: internally displaced persons face difficulties in housing, access to health care, education, work and social integration; refugees have problems with integration into new communities, lack of financial resources and psychological stress; women experience gender-based violence and discrimination; children are forced to leave their homes, to be separated from their parents and exposed to shelling; people with disabilities face additional difficulties due to increased vulnerability; older adults deal with poverty and limited access to care.*

*Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine has caused a significant humanitarian crisis in the European Union due to the movement of Ukrainian refugees. Millions of people left their homes, seeking refuge in other countries, where they were provided with housing and other*

*assistance. This crisis has significant consequences for European countries, including social, economic and political aspects.*

*The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is seriously affecting global food security, causing disruptions in international supplies. As one of the main producers of grain, oilseeds and other products, Ukraine suffers significant losses due to the destruction of crops, demolition of granaries, mining of fields and export restrictions imposed by Russia on sea routes. It has led to a decrease in grain production, which is necessary to ensure food security in countries facing a food crisis.*

*In conclusion, it is stated that the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the European Union creates serious problems, including security threats, significant human losses, destruction of residential areas, disruption of critical infrastructure and economic degradation. To solve these challenges, a comprehensive approach is needed, which includes strengthening coordination between international and local humanitarian organizations, providing additional funding, increasing the flexibility of international aid, strengthening logistical efforts, developing specialized aid programs, and increasing transparency in the distribution of resources.*

*Adapting migration policies, simplifying asylum procedures, developing mechanisms for distributing refugees from Ukraine between countries and ensuring their legal support are important tasks for the European Union. Humanitarian responsibility for the protection of human rights and dignified treatment of refugees is a priority for European countries, which requires the development of comprehensive programs of social support and ensuring their basic rights and freedoms.*

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Crisis, War in Ukraine, European Union, Vulnerable Population Groups, Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, Women, Children, People with Disabilities, Elderly People, Food Security.

## INTRODUCTION

### Actuality

The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and subsequent hostilities led to a sharp increase in humanitarian needs and a crisis that has devastating consequences for the Ukrainian population (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023). The humanitarian situation in the country is rapidly deteriorating, and in some of its regions it has reached a catastrophic level.

The relevance of the study is caused by a serious humanitarian crisis that affects not only Ukrainian society (Haque et al., 2022), but also aggravates the situation in the whole world, requiring decisive comprehensive solutions. Russia's intense indiscriminate military strikes have led to the destruction of key infrastructure, social institutions, significant civilian casualties, and the forced displacement of people both within the country and abroad.

The ongoing fighting significantly exacerbates the humanitarian crisis, particularly affecting vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons, refugees, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women and children. This conflict creates significant risks for these groups, as it limits their access to necessary resources and support (Shevchenko, 2023).

In view of this, it is necessary to pay attention to the importance of conducting research on this topic (Elvevåg et al., 2022), taking into account the ongoing active phase of the conflict and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Such studies are extremely important for the analysis and development of effective strategies of international

cooperation and support aimed at mitigating the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and protecting the rights of vulnerable population groups in crisis conditions.

## METHODOLOGY

To achieve the goal, when writing the article, a complex of general scientific and special methods, widely used in modern legal science (Patwary et al., 2023), was applied, in particular: statistical analysis method analysis of official statistical data, reports of international organizations and national government structures, as well as media publications to assess the scale of the humanitarian crisis and identifying the main trends of its development (Haque et al., 2022); the method of objectivity ensuring the reliability and completeness of the information used in writing the article (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023); system method assessment of the capabilities of the Ukrainian government (Izarova et al., 2023), as well as national and international organizations in reducing and mitigating the impact of the humanitarian crisis on vulnerable categories of the population; forecasting assessment of the current situation and prediction of the consequences of the humanitarian crisis for Ukrainian society and the whole world (Haematology, 2022); generalization - formation of a comprehensive approach to providing assistance and support to the population during a humanitarian crisis.

### Main Part

In the third year of a full-scale Russian invasion, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine continues to escalate, causing untold suffering and grief (Shibuya et al., 2024). Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine is a gross violation of the UN Charter and international law, which led to the death and injury of thousands of civilians, the destruction of critical infrastructure facilities, including hundreds of thousands of residential buildings, medical and educational institutions, and caused deep physical and psychological trauma to people throughout the country. The war seriously undermined the Ukrainian economy, destroying the development gains of recent years, and led to the impoverishment of almost 25% of the population (Leal et al., 2023; Gutterman, 2022).

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented that in the period from March 1 to May 31, 2024, at least 436 civilians (257 men, 156 women, 12 boys and 11 girls) were killed and 1,760 were injured (939 men, 704 women, 66 boys and 51 girls) as a result of the attack by the Russian armed forces. Among the victims were 6 mass media workers (Preiss et al., 2024), 26 workers of health care institutions, 5 workers of humanitarian organizations and 28 workers of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine. The vast majority of civilian casualties (96%) were caused by the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas, such as artillery shells, bombs, rockets, ammunition and other explosive munitions dropped by unmanned aerial vehicles (Shibuya et al., 2024). Explosive remnants of war and mines accounted for about 4% of civilian casualties.

The Russian armed forces have resumed attacks on energy infrastructure facilities, the largest since the winter of 2022/2023. Five waves of such attacks resulted in civilian casualties and significant power outages for millions of people across the country, with further consequences for water and heating services, mobile communications and the Internet, and electric public transport. The cumulative effect of these constant attacks on the

energy infrastructure can potentially deprive the civilian population of the services necessary for its survival (European Union, 2023).

The United Nations and the humanitarian community are working perpetually to ensure that people affected by the horrors of war receive the assistance they need to meet their most urgent needs and create the conditions for their recovery (Gutterman, 2022). In 2023, more than 11 million people in Ukraine received vital humanitarian aid thanks to the efforts of more than 500 organizations (Lin et al., 2023), almost 70% of which are Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, as well as close cooperation with authorities and timely support from international and Ukrainian donors.

Currently, the international community has not developed a single and generally accepted legal definition of the term “humanitarian crisis”. Although the Geneva Conventions of 1949 are the main documents of international humanitarian law, they do not contain a definition of the term “humanitarian”.

A humanitarian crisis should be understood as a serious disruption of the normal functioning of a community or society, which leads to significant human, material, economic or environmental losses. These losses are so large that the affected community or society cannot cope with them on their own, so external assistance is needed at the national or international level. Such a catastrophic situation can be caused by human actions, for example, armed conflict, or natural phenomena, such as drought.

Modern international law and normative legal acts of international organizations do not contain definitions or lists of characteristics of humanitarian crises, such as diversity, duration or intensity. At different times, international organizations have used the terms “complex humanitarian emergencies” or crises and “complex situations” in their normative legal acts. The definition of a “complex” crisis means that such situations are not exclusively natural, but have components that indicate human influence, and usually continue over a long period of time. These are social crises that affect groups of people with varying degrees of vulnerability and resilience.

The causes of most crises are political, and some consequences may be humanitarian. However, labeling them as “complex emergencies” and “humanitarian crises” separates the consequences from the causes and allows limiting the international response to the humanitarian sphere.

In the conditions of Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, the humanitarian crisis becomes particularly acute. Hostilities result in massive human suffering, numerous civilian deaths, extensive environmental damage, and extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure. The main state institutions and systems, such as health care, education, social security, are significantly weakened or even destroyed, which makes them unable to function effectively in crisis conditions. The limited capacity to deliver humanitarian aid further worsens the situation, as even the basic needs of the population often remain unmet.

In addition, Ukraine is also facing manifestations of a global or complex humanitarian crisis, which requires large-scale, multifaceted assistance from the international community. This includes not only material support, but also technical and financial assistance to restore vital services and institutions. Political and military constraints often become a serious obstacle to the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most affected regions. In some areas, there are significant security risks for humanitarian workers, which complicates their work and reduces the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts. Obtaining and maintaining access to the population for the provision of humanitarian assistance is a difficult task for humanitarian organizations, as such access can be limited not only by the presence of armed conflicts, but also by complex procedures and the absence of defined methods or rules for obtaining it.

The crisis that has arisen in Ukraine is undoubtedly complex in nature, as its roots are political, and its consequences are humanitarian. Labeling such a situation as a “complex emergency” or a “humanitarian crisis” allows the international community to focus on humanitarian aspects, separating them from political causes. This, in turn, opens the way for the international legal settlement of the conflict and the provision of the necessary assistance.

Humanitarian crises during military operations are accompanied by numerous and diverse challenges that greatly complicate the situation. These challenges represent serious shocks and the development of certain negative phenomena that may have global consequences (Boman, 2023). In the context of humanitarian crises, the challenges include a wide range of factors that form humanitarian needs and change the environment in which all parties involved will operate.

One of the most important challenges that arose as a result of the war started by Russia in Ukraine is to solve the problems of internal and external migration of Ukrainians. According to the estimates of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of May 25, 2023, there are 5.1 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine. At the same time, the majority of internally displaced persons come from the eastern regions of Ukraine (about 3.4 million people (Leal et al., 2023)). By the end of April 2024, about 6 million refugees from Ukraine were registered across Europe, and already in February 2024 – 6.5 million. In 2024, about 14.6 million people need humanitarian assistance (Guterman, 2022).

The scale of this migration can be compared with other major migration crises. For example, during the mass migration of 2015, European countries accepted about 1 million refugees from the countries of Africa and the Middle East. In addition, during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, up to 4 million people were forced to leave their homes. Thus, the crisis in Ukraine significantly exceeds the scale of these previous migration waves.

As a result of the displacement crisis, numerous communities throughout Ukraine experienced a significant influx of people and families from other regions (Blanchet et al., 2014). This influx has placed an increased load on public services, goods, housing and labor markets, as well as on the distribution of humanitarian aid and social protection systems, increasing potential tensions between different population groups.

Internally displaced persons often face limited access to basic public services. Reports from monitoring visits to places of compact residence of internally displaced persons and various sociological studies indicate that many of them lost their documents due to military operations. Escaping from shelling or leaving the occupied territories, some left their documents at home in a hurry, some took only passports, and some did not even have them. This greatly complicates their attempts to obtain social benefits, health care and access to education. These problems become especially acute for the elderly, people with disabilities and children. At the moment, there are no generalized statistical data (Blanchet et al., 2014), but the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Ukrainian Helsinki Union for Human Rights and other organizations regularly report on these difficulties.

The second important challenge is the provision of housing for internally displaced persons, who are often forced to live in conditions unsuitable for a long-term stay. According to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, more than 100,000 internally displaced persons live in more than 4,000 places of compact settlement, such as dormitories, sanatoriums, hotels, and sometimes even kindergartens and schools. According to surveys and assessments of the needs of internally displaced persons, almost 40% do not plan to return to their homes due to their destruction (in 2024, 7.9 million people in Ukraine will need emergency assistance with housing and its repair). People are forced to look for new conditions for life, sometimes starting from scratch. In addition, most

IDPs who cannot return to their permanent places of residence due to hostilities or loss of housing gradually run out of financial resources, making it difficult for them to survive.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), among the 25% of internally displaced persons who are considering moving to other places of residence, the majority (84%) plan to return to their previous places of residence. The main reason for this desire is the aspiration to restore a normal life or homesickness and other sentimental motives (64%). Other reasons include the intention to reunite with family (25%), the availability of real estate in the place of origin (22%), economic factors such as the possibility of receiving a higher income (21%), insufficient feeling of security in the current place of residence (3%), and limited access to health services and food (less than 1% for each category). That is, the decision to return largely depends on current conditions in places of displacement and economic factors. Among internally displaced persons who are thinking about leaving their current place of stay, but not returning, 74% are going to move to another area within Ukraine, and 23% intend to go abroad. Only 15% of internally displaced persons, who do not plan to move, plan to integrate in the current place and build a future life there (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that 60% of internally displaced persons in Ukraine have lost their jobs since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia in February 2022. The employment situation of this category of people is extremely critical and is one of the reasons that force them to return home, even to settlements near the front or in the war zone.

Following the onset of full-scale war and the subsequent displacement crisis, the economic resources of internally displaced persons continue to be severely challenged. In this situation, financial support remains one of the most important needs both among Ukrainians who left their homes (71%) and among those who remained (60%). Among the most requested items for displaced people are also feminine hygiene products (39%), clothing, shoes and other non-food items (36%), food (28%) and medicine (26%).

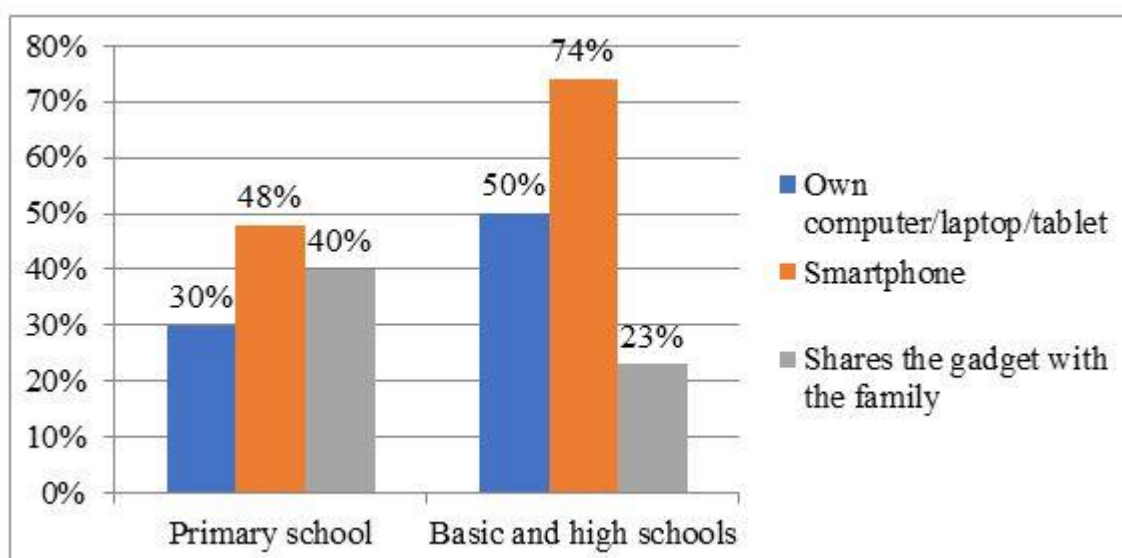
A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found significant winter preparation needs among internally displaced people, as well as those who have returned home or remained in place since full-scale war began (Blanchet et al., 2014). 44% of respondents said that they need help with home insulation, for example, repairing or replacing windows. In addition, 26% of internally displaced persons fear that they will have to leave their current housing due to insufficient heating and thermal insulation, which will not allow them to survive the winter.

A third significant challenge is limited access to education, which threatens the future of internally displaced children. After the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, about 800,000 pupils were forced to switch from face-to-face education to distance and family education, which particularly affected the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, where about 40% of schoolboys and 30% of schoolgirls were forced to go abroad or to other regions of the country. Internally displaced children face numerous difficulties in accessing education, which complicates their learning and development. According to a study by the State Education Quality Service of Ukraine, 86% of internally displaced persons in cities and 80% in villages do not have stable access to educational services, which makes the problem even more acute. The lack of an appropriate educational environment and resources creates serious obstacles for children to continue their education, which in turn can have long-term negative consequences for their education and future.

The results of the teachers' survey showed that when the working conditions of educational institutions are changed, 25% of teachers do not have an office computer, and

20% do not have access to the Internet. However, this need is partially satisfied by the fact that more than 90% of teachers have their own computers and more than 91% can work from home with Internet access (Armitage, 2022). At the same time, a third of teachers use a home computer together with other family members, which can create certain difficulties when working remotely.

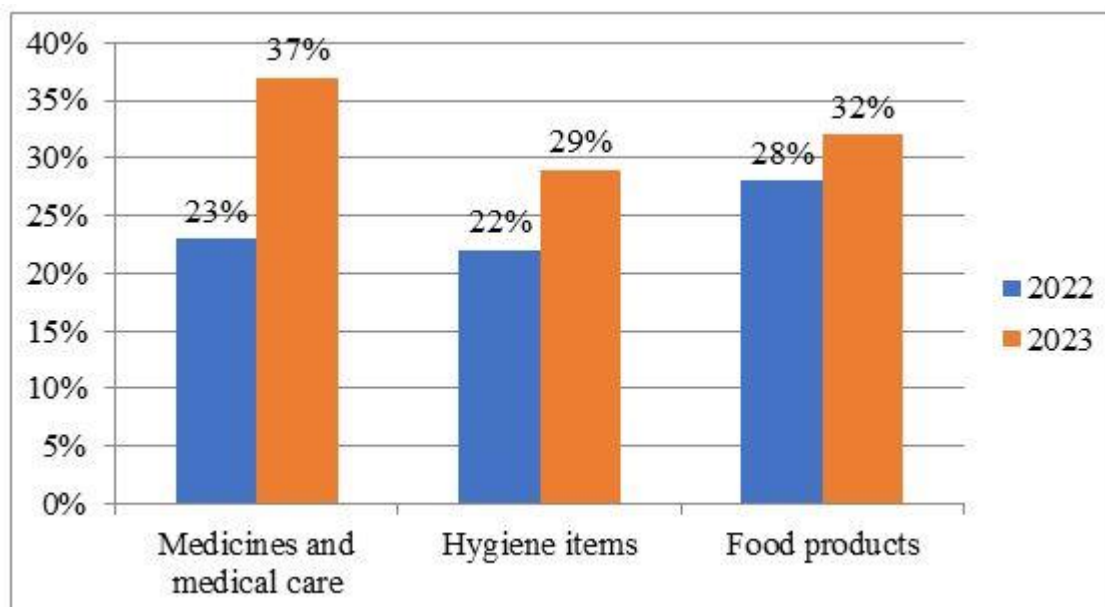
Half of elementary and high school students have their own computer/laptop/tablet for studying, 74% use a smartphone for this. Elementary school pupils are less equipped with technology for learning: 48% of parents said that beginners have a smartphone, 39% have a computer/laptop/tablet. 40% of parents of elementary school pupils and 23% of parents of elementary and high school students noted that the child has one gadget (computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone) that he shares with other family members Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1**  
**CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

In this regard, it should be noted that changes in the educational process, caused by the need to move from face-to-face learning to distance or mixed format, significantly affected the quality of education. Constant air strikes, power outages and problems with Internet access create unstable conditions for the organization of training. All these factors led to significant losses in the educational process, which negatively affected the results of students. Insufficient interaction with teachers, lack of proper technical support and constant stress due to external circumstances made it difficult to learn the material and worsened the general level of knowledge of schoolchildren.

A comparison of the needs of internally displaced persons in 2022 and 2023 shows that these needs have increased significantly in all categories of assistance. This indicates insufficient resolution of the humanitarian crisis. In particular, the need for medicines and medical services increased to 37% (compared to 23% in 2022), the need for hygiene items to 29% (compared to 22% in 2022), and the need for food products to 32% (compared to 28% in 2022) Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2**  
**INSUFFICIENT RESOLUTION OF THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine may worsen due to serious challenges that complicate the solution of existing problems in the war zones (Armitage, 2022). The situation is complicated by problems with access to the victims in these regions. Restrictions on humanitarian access to the eastern regions of Ukraine prevent assistance to people in the most vulnerable situations (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023). Many humanitarian organizations cannot reach these areas to provide the people with the assistance they need. Lack of secure access makes it difficult to assess needs, deliver aid and monitor programs. It is safe and unrestricted access that is key to an effective response to humanitarian crises, as it allows organizations to provide assistance to those in need (Preiss et al., 2024).

Restrictions on access to humanitarian aid increase risks for various vulnerable populations. Victims, especially women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, may experience further isolation, lack of protection and danger. These groups may find themselves without access to essential services such as health care, education and social services.

Women have a significant vulnerability to the consequences of war for their mental health. The humanitarian crisis caused by war has specific challenges for women, who may face both sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. They are often victims of discrimination when receiving care due to gender stereotypes and inequality. It is especially important to consider that for young women factors such as age, gender and military conflict interact to make them particularly vulnerable (Boman, 2023). Young women are often subjected to violence in both private and public spaces. Harassment and violence limit their freedom of movement, leading to loss of access to various social services. It also affects their ability to participate actively in school, work and community life.

Additionally, in crisis situations, young women may lose the opportunity to receive quality medical care, including reproductive services, which negatively affects their health. Gender stereotypes and inequalities can cause discrimination in the distribution of resources and assistance, leaving women unable to receive the full support they need. This increases their vulnerability and makes it difficult to survive in conflict.



A humanitarian crisis has serious consequences for children (Boman, 2023). Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, almost 70% of Ukrainian children have been forced to leave their homes and move both within the country and abroad. The war separated children from their parents, who had to stay behind to defend the Motherland or were unable to leave with their children during martial law. The children who remained in Ukraine are constantly exposed to threats due to mass shelling by the Russian Federation.

Children who find themselves in Ukrainian territories temporarily controlled by Russian troops face the risk of deportation by the Russian authorities. Ukrainian children are separated from their parents and families and sent to orphanages, foster homes or camps in Russia or the illegally annexed Crimea under various pretexts, such as safety, child care or medical treatment. There they become objects of pro-Russian re-education and indoctrination.

According to the report of the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On Violation of the Rights of Ukrainian Children in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine and in Russia: Deportation, Militarization, Education” dated June 2, 2023, as a result of Russia’s war against Ukraine, 470 children died, 949 were injured in various ways degree of severity. By the end of April 2023, 19,393 deported children were identified, 361 children were returned to Ukraine. According to data published in the Russian Federation, up to 744,000 Ukrainian children were resettled on the territory of Russia.

As of April 20, 2024, according to the Office of the Prosecutor General, as a result of the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, more than 1,843 children were injured, of which 545 died and more than 1,298 were injured of various degrees of severity.

In the statement of the Regional Director of UNICEF in Europe and Central Asia and the Special Coordinator for Refugees and Migrants in Europe dated May 13, 2024, it is reported that on average two children die every day in Ukraine. Due to constant Russian attacks, half of teenagers report sleep problems, and one in five of them suffer from intrusive thoughts and memories.

The Russian army, carrying out constant shelling of civilian and critically important objects, causes significant damage to the energy infrastructure, water and heat supply systems, destroys educational and medical institutions, which negatively affects the health and well-being of children. In this regard, children may experience serious psychological injuries that affect their emotional state and development. Psychological stress from constant fear, uncertainty and experienced traumatic events can lead to long-term health problems, such as anxiety disorders, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Due to food supply disruptions and limited access to food in armed conflict, children often suffer from malnutrition. This negatively affects their physical health, causing stunted growth and development, weakened immune systems, and increased vulnerability to infectious diseases. The lack of quality medical services further complicates the situation, because children do not receive the necessary treatment and preventive care.

As already noted, the problem of providing educational services is particularly relevant. The war in Ukraine caused massive and long interruptions in education for thousands of children. Destroyed schools, displacement of families and constant fear for one’s own safety make it difficult to get a quality education. The transition to distance learning in conditions of unstable access to the Internet and lack of appropriate technical means also complicates the educational process. This can lead to a significant delay in the

development of children and a decrease in their educational and professional prospects in the future.

During the war, the need to respect the rights of people with disabilities once again became evident. The humanitarian crisis for this population group is particularly acute due to their increased vulnerability and specific needs. People with disabilities face numerous challenges that make it difficult for them to survive and adapt in the conditions of war.

As of December 2022, there were 2.7 million people with disabilities in Ukraine, and this number is increasing daily due to the war. According to the data of the National Social Service, 4.7 million internally displaced persons are registered in Ukraine, of which more than 172 thousand are people with disabilities. As of September 2023, the number of people with disabilities exceeded 3 million, and this figure continues to grow rapidly due to active hostilities and massive shelling of the civilian population (Amorim, 2022).

According to the monitoring report of the Public Union “League of the Strong” and the Kharkiv Regional Foundation “Public Alternative” on the observance of the rights of people with disabilities during the war, this category of the population has specific medical needs that become even more relevant in wartime. The destruction of medical facilities complicates access to treatment and rehabilitation, as many facilities have been converted into military hospitals or destroyed by shelling. Evacuation of people with disabilities is complicated and dangerous due to the need for specialized transport and equipment.

War causes deep psychological trauma in people with disabilities, who are particularly vulnerable to stressful situations. Lack of access to qualified psychological help only worsens their condition. Destruction of infrastructure and limited access to water, food and other resources significantly complicate their lives (Gutterman, 2022; Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023).

Many of them depend on social services, which cannot function at full capacity in the conditions of war. People with disabilities often face discrimination and social isolation, which is exacerbated in a humanitarian crisis. They may be excluded from assistance programs due to physical barriers or lack of awareness.

Many people with disabilities have lost their homes due to shelling and are forced to live in temporary shelters that are not adapted to their needs. Lack of access to adapted housing creates additional difficulties in survival and adaptation in new conditions. Children with disabilities suffer because of interruptions in education, and their educational needs are often neglected (Elvevåg et al., 2022). The lack of adapted programs and technical means for distance learning limits their opportunities for education.

It is worth noting that the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine has a particularly hard effect on the elderly. Today, Ukraine is among the 30 oldest countries in the world in terms of the proportion of people aged 60, where 8.9 million people, or 24% of the population, belong to the age category over 60 years old. Older Ukrainians face incredible barriers to access to basic necessities and support, due to poverty and limited access to help, services and information (Shevchenko, 2023).

According to the data of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, due to hostilities, elderly people suffer greatly and die in a disproportionately high number. The majority of elderly people remain in Ukraine after the full-scale Russian invasion, with 99% of them unwilling to evacuate their homes. Because of this, many elderly people find themselves in difficult situations, where their needs are often neglected. They have limited access to health services, essential medicines and humanitarian aid, which is vital to their survival (Preiss et al., 2024).

Dilapidated infrastructure and unstable food supplies lead to malnutrition, which is particularly dangerous for this vulnerable group. Many of them were left without the support of relatives who were forced to leave the country or died due to hostilities (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023).

Social isolation, fear and uncertainty increase the psychological pressure on the elderly, which can cause depression and other mental disorders. The lack of stable housing and essential communal services such as electricity, water and heat supply make their lives even more dangerous and unstable. Living conditions in temporary shelters often do not meet their needs, which creates additional difficulties (European Union, 2023).

The report by HelpAge International states that although humanitarian organizations and Ukrainian government officials recognize the special risks faced by older people, and there are some initiatives by international and national NGOs aimed at them, this assistance is insufficient, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

HelpAge International's monitoring found that older women are at greater risk. This is explained by several factors: among the population there are more elderly women than men; elderly women live alone more often; they are less likely to still be working and interacting with others; and they use mobile phones and the Internet less (Haque et al., 2022), which limits their access to information and connections to networks and organizations that provide help and support.

The risks faced by the elderly in Ukraine increase with age. Compared to those aged 60-69, people over 70 are more likely to be single, have more difficulty getting information and are at greater risk of not having enough money to survive.

It is worth noting that 24% of the elderly have a disability, compared to 13% among the entire population of Ukraine. 20% of older adults have physical impairments that affect their mobility, and 6% reported vision problems. People with mobility difficulties described particular barriers they face because of the war, including accessing food, medicine and health care due to the lack of support to leave home. People older than 70 years reported more barriers related to mobility difficulties than younger age groups.

Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine caused a significant humanitarian crisis in the European Union due to the mass displacement of Ukrainians. Millions of people were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries. Many countries have opened their borders to Ukrainian refugees, providing them with housing and material assistance.

European countries such as Poland (Haque et al., 2022), Germany and the Czech Republic have become the main host countries, offering refugees temporary accommodation, access to health services, education and social support. International organizations such as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and numerous non-governmental organizations have been actively involved in providing humanitarian aid, providing the refugees with food, clothing and medical services.

Material support, which includes monetary assistance, psychological support and social integration programs, helps Ukrainian refugees to adapt to new living conditions. Thanks to the joint efforts of governments, international organizations and volunteers, it was possible to alleviate the suffering of many people by providing them with the necessary support during this difficult period (Amorim, 2022).

According to the forecast of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in the conditions of a protracted war, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe in 2024 will remain high and exceed 6 million people; another 400,000 refugees will be in non-European countries. Of them, women of working age (18-59 years) will make

up 39%, children under 18 – 38%, people over 60 – 14%, men – 10%. At the same time, the majority of refugees left for foreign countries during the first half of 2022.

Despite the advantages of temporary protection, which includes assistance and quick access to the labor market, Ukrainians have to overcome numerous difficulties, in particular in finding stable housing and work, access to medical services, overcoming the language barrier, etc. At the same time, the governments of refugee-hosting countries face increasing social and economic challenges due to the costs of helping Ukrainians, which increases negative sentiments in society and leads to changes in the policies of these countries. Although Ukrainians will enjoy temporary protection until March 2025, many countries are cutting aid programs and expecting refugees to become self-reliant. Some countries, such as Switzerland, Ireland, Norway and the Czech Republic, are even ready to pay compensation to Ukrainians returning home.

According to surveys by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the main problem for Ukrainian refugees abroad is housing, since free housing programs were temporary and have already ended in many countries. Access to the housing market is complicated not only by financial difficulties, but also by the fact that many landlords prefer long-term leases and deny users temporary protection. Frequent moves and the lack of permanent housing also hinder the realization of other rights, for example, the education of children in schools.

29% of refugee families with school-aged children reported that at least one child was not attending school in the host country. According to various estimates, 40-50% of refugee children do not go to school abroad, mainly due to distance learning in Ukrainian schools (80%), language barrier (10%), and lack of places in local schools (7%).

Most host countries have implemented various mechanisms to facilitate refugees' access to the labor market: language courses, counseling, job placement, training and retraining. According to estimates, at the end of 2023, more than 40% of adult refugees were working in host countries, and another 8% were working remotely.

Ukrainian refugees also often face problems with access to medical services, as reported by 35% of respondents.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IMO), 1.2 million people returned from abroad, of which 85% were in EU countries.

The humanitarian crisis caused by the movement of refugees from Ukraine has had significant consequences for European countries. The increased burden on social and health services has led to the need to expand infrastructure and staff to meet the basic needs of refugees, such as housing, health care and education. The integration of refugees into society and the labor market requires additional efforts to create conditions that will facilitate their adaptation and socialization (Boman, 2023).

Economic costs for humanitarian aid and support for refugees have increased significantly, including funding for social programs, housing subsidies and health services (Haque et al., 2022). This creates additional pressure on state budgets and requires international financial support. Social tension arises due to cultural and social barriers that complicate the process of integration of refugees and can lead to conflicts in host communities.

It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine seriously affects global food security, causing significant disruptions in international supply chains. Ukraine is one of the world's leading producers and exporters of grain, oilseeds and other agricultural products (Boman, 2023). Deliberate destruction of the grain harvest by missile attacks, destruction of grain warehouses, mining of fields, as well as restrictions

imposed by Russia on the export of Ukrainian food via sea routes led to a reduction in grain production, which was necessary for countries facing a food crisis.

According to the latest report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 828 million people, or 10% of the world's population, go to bed hungry every night, which is 46 million more than in 2022. Due to the war, Ukraine lost 19.3% of its arable land, and more than 5 million hectares of arable land are currently unused due to military operations. According to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, the war caused more than 900 billion hryvnias in soil damage.

Despite the blockade of transport and the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, Ukraine continues to play an important role in ensuring food security, supplying food for 400 million people worldwide and remaining a key player in the export markets of grain and sunflower oil, providing more than 10% of international trade.

Recently, humanitarian needs in Ukraine remain high due to intense fighting in the front-line and border areas, as well as missile strikes on densely populated cities such as Kyiv, Chernihiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and others. These attacks caused civilian deaths, destroyed homes and critical infrastructure, disrupted electricity, water and heat supplies and left hundreds of thousands of people without basic services. Educational and medical institutions, in particular the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, as well as institutions in the Dnipro, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv regions, suffered significant damage, which further complicated the population's access to basic services and increased the need for humanitarian aid.

## DISCUSSION

As of the end of April 2024, 4.4 million people in Ukraine received humanitarian aid from 495 organizations. Humanitarian organizations focused on supporting frontline and neighboring areas in the east, south and north-east, providing food and livelihoods to more than 2.3 million people. In addition, 3.4 million people gained access to water, sanitation and hygiene through water system support (Gutterman, 2022). More than 1 million people received vital medicines and medical assistance. Aid organizations delivered materials for the emergency repair of damaged buildings and essential items to the affected families, assisting more than 800,000 people.

As the number of internally displaced persons increased, international partners, together with Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, stepped up protection efforts, offering counseling, legal assistance, psychological and psychosocial support. Humanitarian workers helped almost half of the displaced people living in shared accommodation. Approaches to support education and child protection have been adjusted to help both those who were forced to leave their homes months ago and those who have moved more recently. The partners also provided multi-purpose financial aid and support for mine action.

Summarizing everything said, it should be noted that the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine during the war was caused by a number of serious problems. The main ones include security threats that have led to significant loss of life and destruction of residential areas, disruption of critical infrastructure such as power grids, water and heating systems, and economic degradation that deepens the poverty and vulnerability of the local population.

Regarding the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, international and local humanitarian organizations have limited resources to meet the needs of food, medical supplies, shelter and other necessities. Logistical challenges in delivering aid to hard-to-reach areas and the need for specialized assistance make prompt response to crisis situations difficult. Insufficient flexibility of the traditional international aid system and lack of

experience in managing urban environments and combat zones are additional challenges (Voitsikhovkyi et al., 2023).

The humanitarian crisis due to the mass movement of refugees from Ukraine has a wide range of consequences for European countries, including social, economic and political aspects (Preiss et al., 2024). The adaptation of migration policies is an important aspect for the effective management of refugee flows, which includes the simplification of asylum procedures, the development of mechanisms for the distribution of refugees between countries and ensuring their legal support. Humanitarian responsibility for the observance of human rights and dignified treatment of refugees is a priority for European countries, which requires the development of comprehensive social support programs and the provision of their basic rights and freedoms.

## CONCLUSION

To solve the existing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the European Union, taking into account the mentioned challenges, it is proposed to take a comprehensive approach with the following measures: strengthening coordination (improving the system of cooperation between international and local humanitarian organizations; this will help to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the efficiency of resource allocation), ensuring financing (attracting additional financial resources to meet the needs of food, medical supplies, shelter and other critical items; this includes facilitating donor initiatives and international grants), increasing flexibility and adaptability (developing a more flexible international aid system that can quickly adapt to different security situations and conditions on the ground), strengthening logistics efforts (development and implementation of effective logistics strategies to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to hard-to-reach regions, in particular combat zones), development of specialized programs (creation and implementation of specialized international and national humanitarian aid programs that take into account the specifics of urban environments and the needs of affected communities), increasing transparency and openness (ensuring transparency in the distribution of humanitarian resources, which will contribute to increasing trust between humanitarian actors, donors and recipients of aid).

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