SOS Children’s Villages
Ukraine Humanitarian Response

Ukraine’s 7.5 million children are in imminent danger and are already suffering the consequences of chronic violence and increasingly insecure surroundings. On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a military operation in Ukraine. The situation is already having devastating impacts on children as they are forced to flee their homes, schools, and communities in search of safety.

After five days of intense clashes across Ukraine, over 500,000 Ukrainian refugees have fled into neighbouring countries, and there are long lines at key border crossings in Poland, Hungary, and Romania.

Unless the fighting subsides, 5 to 7 million Ukrainians are expected to be displaced by the crisis. This will include tens of thousands of unaccompanied and separated children.

Between 26 – 28 February, the OHCHR has recorded 376 civilian casualties, including seven children; these figures are likely to be considerably higher as many reported casualties have yet to be confirmed.

The ongoing hostilities are also disrupting local supply chains and access to food and other basic items, hitting the already conflict-stricken areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts hardest. Critical civilian infrastructure has been damaged and there are reports of damage to schools, kindergartens, orphanages, hospitals, and water infrastructure.

SOS Children’s Villages has been responding to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine since 2014, delivering essential assistance to vulnerable children and their families. This includes supporting their access to education, providing psychosocial support, distributing winter kits and hygiene kits, as well as capacity-building for social workers, teachers and other specialists to identify trauma and assist at-risk children.

SOS Ukraine has teams on the ground in Luhansk, Kiev and Lviv, scaling-up our humanitarian response. SOS is also preparing a regional refugee response in neighboring countries, including Poland, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

Situation summary in the Ukraine

- Prior to the recent hostilities, 2.9 million Ukrainians were already in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance, including 378,000 children.
- An additional 500,000 people have fled into neighbouring countries (primarily Poland).
- 5 to 7 million Ukrainians are expected to be displaced due to the recent escalation of hostilities.
- There are more than 64,000 children in foster and kinship-care in the country; at least 16,000 are expected to urgent humanitarian assistance.
How SOS Children’s Villages is responding

SOS Children's Villages is rapidly scaling up its response and has initial plans to respond to the needs of approximately 45,000 vulnerable children and families impacted by the conflict. SOS Ukraine will respond to critical needs through the provision of safe shelter, food items, medical supplies, winter kits, hygiene kits, education materials, as well as mental health and psychosocial support. In addition, SOS will work with other humanitarian agencies to identify, assist and reunify children who have been separated from their families.

Our emergency response builds upon expertise and experience in Ukraine emergency programming and child protection. It links initial emergency response activities with longer-term development. Our holistic emergency response in Ukraine includes:

Relocation assistance and safe shelter: In coordination with partners such as UNICEF and other NGOs from the Ukrainian Child Rights Network, we support vulnerable families displaced by the conflict with cash assistance to cover costs associated with travel, safe housing and associated costs.

Protection from harm: Our emergency response team works alongside local governments and partners to keep children and families safe. We coordinate with national governments and other humanitarian actors to identify, assist, and reunify children who have been separated from their families. We also provide mental health and psychosocial support to children, parents, and frontline staff.

Health and Food Assistance: Through the provision of cash assistance, we help conflict-affected families access food, clean water, hygiene materials and essential medical supplies and services.
About SOS Children's Villages in Ukraine

SOS Children's Villages began working in Ukraine in 2003, and in 2010 opened the first SOS Children's Village in Brovary, Kyiv region. The work in Luhansk region, eastern Ukraine, began in 2012, and was reorganised in 2014 to respond to the needs of children and families on both sides of the contact line. The programme in Luhansk City (the non-government-controlled area) is to close by April 2022.

Programs of SOS Children's Villages in Ukraine include:

**Family Strengthening:** Since 2003 we have been supporting families who are at risk of breaking down. The help we provide varies depending on the needs of each family but can include counselling, social and material support. We also run workshops on topics relating to child protection and health.

**Foster Family Care:** Children without parental care find a loving home in one of the SOS families. The families have the legal status of “foster families” and receive all the support they need from SOS Children's Villages. We also provide short-term care for children in crisis situations. The children stay with us (usually less than six months) until they can return to their families or move to another form of family-based care.

**Emergency Response:** We support both families who are living in the conflict areas and those who have been internally displaced. We provide medical, educational, and social support.

**Youth Program:** We support young people to gain the necessary skills and develop their talents to help them find employment and become independent.

**Advocacy:** SOS Children's Villages works with the government and other agencies to promote social reform that improves the rights of children in the country.