

Ukraine Conflict

Addressing Acute Needs,
Protecting Displaced Populations
and Maintaining Food Systems



WFP RESPONSE STRATEGY

APRIL 2022



Context of the Crisis

The **unprecedented nature of the crisis in Ukraine** challenges traditional approaches to humanitarian response and will require WFP and its partners to deploy solutions that **build on the existing social protection systems, institutional capacities and market infrastructure** of a highly digitized middle-income country in order **to rapidly scale up assistance to meet the needs of the 6 million displaced and conflict-affected people** facing acute levels of food insecurity.

Since the conflict began on 24 February, almost a quarter of the country's estimated population of 44 million are displaced. Over 4 million have fled the country as refugees. 7.1 million are estimated to be internally displaced. This represents over a quarter of the Ukrainian population, a level of displacement that was only witnessed in Syria after a decade of conflict. The intense military escalation has resulted in loss of life, injuries and mass movement of civilian populations throughout the country and across borders, as well as in the severe destruction of civilian infrastructure and residential housing.

Hard to reach populations in conflict-affected urban centers in the north, east and south of Ukraine **continue to have most serious needs, with residents facing critical shortages of food, water, medicine, and electricity.** Many people are unable to seek safe haven through humanitarian corridors or reside in areas that have been by conflict without access to essential services or markets. The delivery of **immediate life-saving food assistance for populations in encircled, partially encircled and recently devastated cities is of paramount importance.**

Conflict-affected populations are starting to deploy coping strategies, such as cutting down on meals or limiting portion sizes. Almost half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) are worried about not having enough to eat in coming days, and 1 on 3 reported that they ate less than two meals per day.

Exceptional efforts are being undertaken to ensure humanitarian assistance is targeted to the most vulnerable populations **in line with humanitarian principles and regardless of ethnicity or political affiliation,** with a focus on providing critical support to women, children, older and disabled people directly affected by the current conflict.



WFP Response Strategy

WFP is scaling-up its operation on a “no-regrets” basis to respond to what is becoming the fastest growing humanitarian crisis in modern times. WFP has already reached one million people as of late March, with the **current focus on reaching populations in encircled and partially encircled cities and accelerating efforts to reach IDP populations across the country.** In parallel, WFP is developing strategic interventions to support supply chains and preserve market functionality. These efforts to ensure that food is available to consumers at affordable prices will be critical for preventing widespread and prolonged food insecurity.

WFP has set up presence in the region, including in Poland, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia to ensure supply routes and access to the populations affected by the conflict. WFP is providing support to refugees at border crossing points and host communities in Moldova. Regional actors continue to be vital in supporting the Ukraine response, including as logistics corridors for WFP operations and potential locations for regional procurement.

WFP clearly recognizes the **leading role of local actors – including the private sector and civil society – in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations in Ukraine.** Efforts are being made to promote localization of the response through implementation through a network of local humanitarian NGOs. At present, WFP is working with four national partners to deliver food assistance. Through direct support to the food sector of the economy -including transporters, millers, bakeries, wholesalers and retailers - and efforts to complement the national social protection system, WFP will ensure that **humanitarian assistance serves to strengthen existing social and market infrastructure to provide the foundation for a transition to localization and post-conflict recovery.**

WFP is increasing its footprint on the ground, and opened field presence in Zakarpatska, Vinnitsiya, Kropyvnytskyi, and Dnipro, with plans to expand to Kyiv and Odesa. This will ensure increased efficiencies in our operations as well as better coordination with actors on the ground, including the local government.

As a humanitarian actor WFP will ensure that its interventions will be implemented in compliance with humanitarian principles. Conflict-sensitive programming and joint advocacy for unrestricted humanitarian access are key to an effective and sustained humanitarian response in Ukraine. Great emphasis will be placed on the need for staff at all levels of the operation to understand the rapidly evolving context, as well as the goals, strategies, and tactics of parties to the conflict.

This knowledge will be used to inform reactive and agile programming, to seize opportunities to deliver that may emerge at short notice, and to course correct programmes where necessary.

The WFP Response will work across the following three pillars to address urgent food security and nutrition needs in Ukraine:

1. HARD TO REACH AREAS – IN-KIND ASSISTANCE TO ENCIRCLED CITIES AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED POPULATIONS

WFP has a trained team of humanitarian access experts supporting its operations in Ukraine to ensure we can reach all people in need. This involves advocacy efforts for humanitarian space, risk analysis on anticipated access constraints, and programme and operations strategies that look at key access challenges, conflict sensitivity and humanitarian principles. In addition, WFP will continue to invest in its Humanitarian Military Interaction (HMI) presence to navigate the difficult context.

For hard-to-reach locations, **WFP is working in coordination with partners from the humanitarian system to obtain access and deliver life-saving food assistance through humanitarian convoys.** The most urgent and critical needs are in locations with high levels of insecurity, disrupted food supply and retail capacities, and limited or sporadic humanitarian access.

Ready to Eat Rations are the main modality for reaching populations in highly constrained contexts and those fleeing from conflict. In addition, **WFP is working through bakeries to ensure the continued availability of bread for vulnerable populations.** In conflict-affected contexts where populations have access to commercial transport, but retail markets remain compromised, WFP is working with local and international NGO partners **to scale up monthly General Food Distributions to provide sustained food access to resident and IDP populations.**

Local administration continues to perform a critical function in providing essential services to affected populations, including the provision of food assistance. Where resources and capacities are stretched and have potential impacts on access to food in collective centers for IDPs, hospitals, and food banks, **WFP will provide commodities through institutional feeding modalities to address critical gaps at the city and community levels.**

Ensuring child nutrition is a central aspect of the response strategy. For many families, infant feeding is a major challenge. **WFP is paying special attention to the needs of 6-23 month old children and providing supplemental food to households who cannot access nutrient-rich diets or infant cereals.** WFP is also coordinating with UNICEF and may provide logistics and distribution channels for ready- to-use infant formula for 0-5 month old children, as required.

2. CASH-BASED TRANSFERS – IMMEDIATE RELIEF AND TRANSITION TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

WFP is the leading provider of humanitarian cash-based transfers worldwide, with extensive experience providing cash assistance in conflict settings safely and effectively. Wherever feasible, WFP will provide humanitarian assistance through cash and vouchers. Multi-purpose cash is currently distributed through Western Union in local currency. Options for expanding the range of financial service providers are being explored. Where cash is not feasible due to liquidity or market concerns, WFP is deploying value vouchers through established retailers.

WFP will proactively contribute to the Cash Working Group to ensure a coordinated and harmonized approach between humanitarian partners, including the establishment of mechanisms for the de-duplication of targeted households. This includes coordinating and collaborating with partners of the cash working group to implement joint market monitoring. In addition, WFP will ensure that the highest standards of data protection and data privacy are applied across response modalities.

The deployment of cash and in-kind modalities provides WFP with the ability to adapt to evolving contexts in the country and shift between modalities based on viability of markets. The potential for complementarity and coordination with national social protection mechanisms is being explored to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian cash transfers over the long-term.

3. FOOD SYSTEMS - PRESERVING MARKET FUNCTIONALITY

Ukraine is a lower-middle income country and a net food producer coming off a bumper harvest in 2021. The principal concern for food security at the national level is related to linking supply adequately with demand to ensure that agricultural stocks are processed and reach distribution channels to retailers across the country.

This can be done through using cash-based transfers, including commodity and value vouchers to ensure effective demand, while linking private sector actors with humanitarian action to address critical gaps in the supply chain. These gaps include lack of fuel, transportation, physical access, and labour that result in localized food shortages.

This is particularly evident in encircled areas and across conflict lines. Where conditions allow, WFP will continue to support internal markets through local procurement for in-kind modalities.

Ukraine's food supply chains are complex and involve a large number of actors who may experience difficulties in accessing financing. Looking ahead, FAO estimates that approximately 20 percent of planted areas will not be harvested in July, while grain market analysts estimate that the spring planting area will be about one third smaller than usual. The potential for increased damage or destruction of agricultural infrastructure, including grain storage silos, presents a significant risk to future food production.

Ukraine's three most important agricultural commodities are maize, wheat, and sunflower seeds. Production in 2021 was approximately 40 million tons, 33 million tons and 17 million tons respectively. The main challenge to the agricultural economy in Ukraine is related to exporting existing stocks of grains to provide storage capacity for the 2022 harvest. As of mid-March, **total wheat stocks in the country were six million tons and maize stocks were 15 million tons according to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food.** Based on informal reports from private sector actors, actual grain stocks held in **Ukraine's Black Sea ports are estimated to be approximately 2.75 million tons.**

WFP will build on a flexible combination of its own **market monitoring as well analysis and market intelligence flowing from strategic partnerships with the private sector, national think tanks and other institutions to leverage the extensive existing economic and market analysis expertise in the country.** These initiatives will enable near-real time monitoring of market dynamics, flexible adaptation of modality choice and identification of critical supply chain gaps.

Vulnerability Targeting

WFP will employ a phased approach to targeting, with increased granularity and precision as the response evolves and allows for a stronger evidence base to build targeting criteria upon. From the start of the operations, WFP focused its assistance on people in vulnerable situations, including IDPs and those living in areas in intensive conflict. Moving forward, geographical targeting of the most conflict-affected locations will be combined with community-based targeting and household vulnerability criteria. Internally displaced people, vulnerable host communities and people living in conflict-affected urban areas will continue to be prioritized for WFP assistance.

Within these groups, **the most vulnerable families will be targeted with initial vulnerability criteria including households with people with disabilities, households with pregnant and lactating women and households with high dependency-ratios.** 6–23 month children in conflict-affected areas will be targeted for nutritional support with infant cereals.

Initial evidence from a WFP web-survey indicates that **IDPs resort more frequently than the overall population to coping mechanisms for food consumption, including skipping meals, confirming the need to address IDP food insecurity.** To refine the targeting approach, WFP will combine evidence generated from its ongoing phone-assisted nation-wide surveys, qualitative assessments, and consultations with affected populations to make sure that WFP's targeting criteria are appropriate, localized and responsive to needs.

After a careful assessment of the associated conflict sensitivity and protection risks, WFP will deploy **mobile phone-based registration technologies** linked to national IDs for displaced and hard to reach populations during the rapid scale up phase of the response. WFP will make every effort to avoid collecting, storing or sharing any beneficiary personal data that could be used against individuals, families or communities. Conducted in collaboration with humanitarian partners, this approach will allow for an **accelerated process for safely registering those targeted for cash assistance with verification and vulnerability targeting criteria being refined in subsequent payment cycles.**

Protection and gender

Of the 6.5 million people internally displaced in the country, reports indicate that over 75% are female, 38% are children, and 7% are persons with disabilities.

In response to these trends, WFP will integrate gender equality-enhancing elements in its programme in Ukraine to address the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys in the emergency context. The protection needs of minority groups and marginalized communities will be a critical aspect of programme design and delivery. The food security and nutrition needs of people living with HIV will be addressed through existing community-based health networks.

Increased military presence heightens risks of gender-based violence, human trafficking, exploitation, and maternal mortality. Prior to the current conflict, a nationwide study conducted by FAO in 2021 found that 22% of Ukrainian women between 15 and 49 years of age experienced physical or sexual violence, with domestic violence increasing – particularly in conflict affected areas – in the recent years.

Lack of adherence to international humanitarian law and protection of civilian populations from unlawful attacks is compounding these issues. WFP will ensure that conflict analyses are systematically updated, and that conflict sensitivity risks are routinely discussed within programme and management structures in order to capture lessons learned and enable continuous review and adaptation of protection approaches.

In collaboration with humanitarian partners, WFP is establishing Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs), as effective processes to engage with beneficiaries and affected populations, understand our impact, and adapt our programming to ensure Ukrainians are part of our decision making. Where possible, WFP is exploring ways to support the existing hotlines and CFMs already in use by the government and partners.

WFP is committed to reinforcing Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Assault (PSEA) systems for the WFP operation, including PSEA training for employees and partners. This includes communication efforts and engagement of communities, ensuring that they are aware of how to report SEA and other feedback and concerns through CFMs.

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131
wfp.org | wfpinfo@wfp.org