SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Government of Ukraine (GoU) rapidly reacted to the COVID-19 outbreak and was among the first countries in the South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECEA) region to introduce nationwide quarantine, immediately closing educational institutions and public spaces across the country, and suspending cross-border air and train travels. The National Action Plan to Prevent the Spreading of COVID-19 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as early as on 3 February 2020, and, consequently, the Unified System of Civilian Protection has been activated to support the national response efforts. However, there are major challenges to the country’s ability to respond to operational issues, preparedness for a potential second wave of COVID-19 or future pandemics, and to Ukraine’s capacity to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the public health crisis. The COVID-19 outbreak in Ukraine is set against a backdrop of a country that has been affected by six years of armed conflict and large-scale displacement, a fragile economy, an underfunded and inadequate health system, and an ageing population. As of 8 May 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has reached 14,195 with a reported total of 361 deaths\(^1\). However, the actual numbers are expected to be higher\(^2\).
As countries around the world started going into COVID-19 lockdown, Ukrainian migrants and travellers rushed to return home. By the 31 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had assisted over 145,000 Ukrainians to return home with thousands of others finding their own ways to reach Ukraine’s borders. According to the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) data, on 27 March alone, following an announcement of the planned border closing, 37,000 Ukrainian nationals crossed the border returning to Ukraine.

Under normal circumstances, Ukraine operates 219 Points of Entry (PoE), of which 49 are considered essential. On 7 April, further PoEs have been closed, with just 19 PoEs remaining fully operational. According to the SBGS Press Office statement, the average number of daily border crossings was at 9–10,000 from 13 to 16 April, and increased to 12,000 daily border crossings on 17 and 18 April (during the Easter period). The needs for the SBGS of Ukraine are estimated at around USD 1 million just for the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with further essential items needed such as sanitizing equipment and supplies, as well as adaptation of current infrastructure (isolation wards, airlocks, etc.). In addition, once GoU lifts travel restrictions, critical infrastructure needs to be prepared for a possible increase in numbers of potentially infected travellers arriving at the points of entry. This includes specialized medical equipment being available to the health facilities operated by the SBGS for their initial response, and for the isolation of travellers at PoEs, suspected of being infected with COVID-19.

The Government of Ukraine had established several hotlines and other communication channels (designated webpage, info channels in Viber, Messenger, and Telegram) to provide the population with accurate and reliable information about the pandemic situation in the country. The criticality of effective COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) became obvious when GoU announced the closure of all POEs. This message provoked panic, and thousands of Ukrainians rushed from Poland to Ukraine, which led to crowds at the PoEs and further exacerbated public health risks. In March 2020, the IOM-supported National Toll-Free Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline that is advertised predominantly to migrants, has received nearly 200 complaints regarding the operation of COVID-19 governmental hotlines.

Social media monitoring confirms that migrants are frequently blamed for “bringing” COVID-19 to Ukraine. Placing Ukrainian evacuees from Wuhan for quarantine in Novi Sanzhary was a litmus test for Ukraine’s society that showed how a perceived threat to public health could rapidly escalate into violent outbreak in the community. In many countries, coronavirus brought out fears, stereotypes, and xenophobia, that in Ukraine are channeled toward the returning migrants who are commonly blamed for disease transmission. This underlines the need for accurate information provision and fact-based communication on health risks.
IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF MIGRANTS AND HOST COMMUNITIES

IOM is concerned about the wellbeing of migrants and mobile populations. This population includes also returning migrants who are not very familiar with the new medical referral system established by national authorities in 2018 for primary care, and in particular the role of the General Practitioner/Family Doctor/medicine.

In addition, there is a need to also assist foreign citizens present in the country (285,000 foreigners registered in the country as of 2019) who may face difficulties accessing helplines and information in general because of the limited service provision in other languages than Ukrainian.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine imposes a significant challenge not only to the recovering but underresourced public health system. It is yet another ordeal for the vulnerable population of the country. Ukraine has the second-largest HIV epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with only 68 per cent aware of their status. The displacement of people living with HIV who moved from the conflict-affected Donetsk and Luhansk regions negatively impact their access and their timely use of the AIDS treatment and care services which can easily result in the interruption of treatment and may further aggravate the HIV/AIDS epidemic status and progression. In general, immunocompromised persons like PLHIV with advanced disease, low CD4, high viral load and not on treatment faced an increased risk of COVID-19 infection and complication. Migrants who are living with HIV but have no access to HIV services in the country and are not on treatment faced the considerable risk of contracting COVID-19 if exposed. Also, physical distancing measures such as the lockdown to control the pandemic could severely aggravate access to Antiretroviral therapy (ART) for migrants who are on treatment. In addition to financial barriers, especially by the loss of income because of the lockdown, migrants are unable to go back to their home country to have the medications.

NEEDS IN THE EASTERN CONFLICT AREA (ECA)

The ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 is set against a backdrop of a country that has been affected by six years of armed conflict, an underfunded and run-down health system, and an ageing population. In the conflict-affected Donetsk and Luhansk regions, there is an abnormally high proportion of elderly people (36 per cent of total population), many of whom live in remote settlements with limited services and access to existing ones. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) is consistently identified as a gap both at the household and institutional level. With the COVID-19 outbreak, WASH needs of the social institutions, in particular medical facilities, have substantially increased as a result of recommendations on cleaning practices to mitigate against the spread of the virus. IOM evidence collected through the ongoing projects shows that over half of the social institutions located in the non-government controlled areas (54%) have no funding to purchase hygiene items. Medical facilities located in the Eastern Conflict Area (ECA) have traditionally been underfinanced from a consumables, equipment and infrastructure perspective and/or damaged by the shelling as a result of the ongoing conflict, which compromises their ability to provide adequate care and secure a consistent water supply.

Furthermore, access for conflict affected populations to services, and more crucially, health care in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, particularly in the area close to the ‘contact line’, remains challenging because of high costs of medicines, lack of specialized medical personnel, long distances from commercial and service centres, limited public transportation and expensive private transportation options and more recently, movement restrictions. According to the IOM Ukraine Express Survey conducted at the end of March 2020, over half of respondents in ECA identified challenges with access to crucial COVID-19 PPE, and 21 per cent of respondents living near the contact line said there is no pharmacy in their settlement and the average distance to the nearest being well out of walking distance at seven kilometres.

COVID-19 impact on the economy will be especially felt in the ECA and is already showing a substantial impact on the livelihoods of conflict affection populations. IOM’s quick impact surveys on livelihood beneficiaries that took stock of the effects of quarantine restrictions identified that 81 per cent of respondents reported a direct impact on their business operations with 34 per cent reporting a partial and 47 per cent full shutdown in April. As restrictions continue through May, indications from the 1st impact survey paint a grim picture for the capacity of businesses to further weather the COVID-19 storm.

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*Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2020, OCHA

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4 UNAIDS Data 2019


6 This number represents the foreigners that reside permanently in Ukraine, as provided by the State Migration Service of Ukraine. Nevertheless, it doesn’t include foreigners with the irregular status in the country

7 Five hundred and twenty (520) livelihood beneficiaries of IOM Ukraine programmes were interviewed over phone, using the IOM Beneficiary Contact Database. The interviews were conducted among the people living in nine regions including Donetsk, Luhansk (GCA), Kherson, Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia regions.

8 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2020, OCHA
In crisis situations such as the current pandemic, migrants are often at risk of increased vulnerability to exploitative practices, including human trafficking. Ukrainian migrant workers are prone to the risks of exploitation as evidenced by the high numbers of Ukrainian victims of trafficking identified even before the pandemic outbreak. Every year, IOM Ukraine identifies and assists more than 1,000 victims of trafficking of Ukrainian origin (1,345 victims in 2019; 68% male, 32% female) who were exploited for forced labour and sexual exploitation. The vulnerabilities and the risk of migrant worker abuse might further increase in times of crisis. People previously less at risk of trafficking may become victims as a result of losing jobs due to the pandemic while vulnerabilities of persons already at risk of trafficking may be further increased. Drawing parallels to past crises and IOM experience in Ukraine demonstrate a significant increase in vulnerabilities and the consequent increase of the identified number of victims of human trafficking following the financial crisis of 2008–2009, and more recently, following the beginning of the armed conflict and economic instability in Ukraine in 2014. The protection of victims of trafficking may also be impacted by the pandemic, especially when they experienced pre-existing socioeconomic difficulties. They have also higher risks of re-exploitation when they cannot benefit from assistance and care because of the suspension of services. Referral pathways – such as those for victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, and vulnerable children – are likely to face disruptions, leading to interruptions in case identification, referral, and protection processes resulting in immediate protection gaps for vulnerable migrants who go unidentified and/or unassisted; and longer-term weakening of referral pathways and protection systems.

Due to the mobility restrictions introduced by most countries in the world, thousands of Ukrainian migrants and travellers remain stranded abroad and with no means to reach their home. According to the data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), almost 16,000 Ukrainians have registered for the MFA's Protection Programme, of them, nearly 9,000 are seeking ways to return to Ukraine, and over 400 have no means to cover their essential needs (food, rent, and medicines, among others).

As countries prolong lockdowns, the needs of Ukrainians abroad will grow, and their savings will run out. This can lead to increased vulnerability and may even push them into situations of exploitation or abuse. Migrants facing disruption to travel plans, loss of income, reduced access to support services or illness as a result of the crisis may become stranded and/or be pushed into vulnerable or exploitative situations. Medical and social services are stretched, with limited ability to meet the specific needs of stranded and/or vulnerable migrants, such as regularization of status, protection of rights, translation and interpretation assistance, assistance with documentation, sustainable case resolution, including family tracing and reunification, assisted voluntary return and reintegration, as well as livelihood support.

Experts estimate that there are approximately three million Ukrainian migrant workers abroad at any given time with the vast majority of recent mobility occurring towards Poland and other Eastern EU countries. The majority of Ukrainian labour migrants are lower skilled migrant workers who often find themselves living in cramped and sub-standard housing where the risk of contagion is greater and the risk to other sicknesses (as well as to psychological strain) during a lockdown is more significant. Vulnerabilities of Ukrainian labour migrants should be further examined and factor in specifics of migrants’ profile (age, gender, employment sector and other characteristics) in different countries of destination. Migrants are the backbone of the Ukrainian economy — remittances sent by migrant workers to Ukraine reached USD 15.8 billion in 2019, having increased by 86 per cent in the past five years and now accounting for more than ten per cent of GDP. Families of migrant workers rely on money sent home to provide for their immediate needs from food and lodging to education and health care. COVID-19 and related mobility restrictions put at risk livelihoods of households whose main income source is work abroad. Business closures and economic slowdown globally are likely to cause a surge in returning migrant workers to Ukraine posing a number of protection concerns and further exacerbating the far-reaching socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. In the beginning of April, according to the State Employment Service of Ukraine, an average of 7,000 people were registered as unemployed each day while almost no new vacancies were appearing on the labour market. This indicates difficulties that returning migrants will encounter when looking for new sources of income in Ukraine, especially if their skills are not matching the demand of the domestic labour market.
Integrating Migration in COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Ukraine

In April, GoU has established a single mechanism for coordinating the provision of international assistance to Ukraine in combating the spread of the coronavirus. Taking into account the absence of a single executive body responsible for coordination of migration issues in Ukraine which currently fall under responsibilities of several ministries and state agencies, it is essential to ensure that COVID-19 impact on migrants and mobile population is not overlooked. Needs of migrants and mobile populations should be assessed and included into the GoU’s action plans for response, recovery, and preparation for future risks.

IOM’S APPROACH AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

IOM, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) Country Team, stands ready to assist Ukraine to respond to COVID-19, prepare for a potential second outbreak, and address its long-lasting impacts, providing operational and technical support in the area of migration and health.

IOM Ukraine is a trusted partner of GoU in all aspects of migration and border management, provision of technical support and capacity development, as well as rapid responses to emerging crises or changing circumstances. The COVID-19 response will build on IOM’s long-lasting partnerships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Border Guard Service, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and other governmental and civil society partners. IOM’s integrated approach will provide structural support important to tackle the range of vulnerabilities, exacerbated by COVID-19, of returning migrants, victims of trafficking, IDPs and affected communities.

IOM Ukraine COVID-19 response recognizes that the immediate health implications and long-term socioeconomic impact of the pandemic disproportionally affect men and women, including men and women migrants, who may have different vulnerabilities and face different challenges. IOM Ukraine assesses the gendered implications of any planned action in the COVID-19 response ensuring that a gender perspective and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities. IOM Ukraine further advocates with GoU and other stakeholders to avoid exacerbated repercussions for disadvantaged groups and to ensure that COVID-19 response and recovery measures take into account needs of those who face the greatest risk of being left behind irrespective of their gender and migration status.

To mitigate a long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM Ukraine will offer support to the Government to develop a robust policy and administrative framework that facilitates circular migration, maximizes benefits of well-organized labour migration, strengthens protection for Ukrainian citizens abroad, and widens opportunities for socio-economic reintegration of returning migrants citizens in their local communities. IOM will further work with the local communities to enhance social cohesion and to reverse the narrative about COVID-19 and returning migrants in the communities of return.

Actions proposed by the IOM Country Office in Ukraine are aligned with the Joint UN COVID-19 Response in Ukraine, and consistent with IOM’s Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 contributing to IOM’s four strategic priorities (1) effective coordination and partnerships as well as mobility tracking; (2) preparedness and response measures for reduced morbidity and mortality; (3) efforts to ensure that affected people have access to basic services, commodities and protection; and (4) mitigation of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

IOM is actively seeking additional financial support from donor partners to address immediate risks posed by COVID-19, mitigate its short to medium-term effects, support GoU pandemic preparedness for a potential second wave, as well as to counter long-lasting impact caused by the outbreak and consequent economic downturn.
**IOM'S AREAS OF INTERVENTION**

**Strategic Priority 1:** Ensure a well-coordinated, informed, and timely response through mobility tracking systems and strengthening partnership and coordination structures established at the community, national and regional levels.

**COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Funding Requirements: **USD 100,000**

IOM is engaged in ensuring strong and efficient coordination among relevant actors at the national, sub-national and local levels to support the pandemic response, particularly in coordinating cross-border efforts through:

- Engaging and supporting inter-agency efforts to develop national and regional preparedness and response plans through need and situation assessment and response planning processes.
- Supporting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Ukraine (technical advisory, capacity development, coordination) in assisting Ukrainians stranded abroad because of COVID-19, and, when travel restrictions are lifted, return to Ukraine.

**TRACKING MOBILITY IMPACTS**

Funding Requirements: **USD 165,000**

Surveying 4,000 IDPs, returnees, conflict-affected population, returning migrants

IOM’s capacity to provide data and analysis on population mobility dynamics remains crucial for a more targeted and evidence-based response. IOM will contribute to providing a comprehensive understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on mobility by:

- Mapping, monitoring, and analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on migrants, displaced persons and other populations of concern whose situation have been affected by the pandemic, ensuring that their needs are taken into account in overall response, including critical analysis to inform the medium- and long-term response to the broader socioeconomic dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Tracking, monitoring, and analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees, conflict-affected population, including the establishment of flow monitoring and enhancing data collection at entry/exit points capitalizing on the global footprint of IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

**Strategic Priority 2:** Contribute to global, regional, national, and community preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 to reduce associated morbidity and mortality.
RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)

Funding Requirements: **USD 550,000**
Beneficiaries: 100 communities, 10,000 individuals consulted by dedicated hotline staff

IOM is contributing to RCCE strategies that ensure that mobility is properly considered in public health messaging, and that migrants and mobile communities have access to timely, context-specific and correct information on appropriate COVID-19 prevention measures, including through:

- Communication with communities to prevent stigmatization of returnees.
- Communication with migrants and travellers (including through existing Migrant Advice Hotline) to enable access to timely and correct information on COVID-19 and enhance awareness raising among mobile populations.
- Running a medical helpline that will support GoU efforts to enhance accessibility of risk group population, particularly migrants and mobile populations, to COVID-19 related information including preventive measures, as well as testing and treatment options.

LOGISTICS, PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN

Funding Requirements: **USD 3,000,000**
Beneficiaries: at least 30,000 IDPs and conflict-affected people

IOM will contribute towards the Government of Ukraine’s efforts to effectively prepare and respond to COVID-19 disease spread in the conflict-affected area, including through:

- Supporting the procurement and distribution of PPEs and hygiene kits to medical facilities and other social protection sites, targeting at least 74 hospitals and 198 care homes and specialized centres in government controlled (GCA) and non-government controlled (NGCA) areas. All responses will be supplemented with appropriate COVID specific messaging.

POINTS OF ENTRY (POES)

Funding Requirements: **USD 1,900,000**
Beneficiaries: 17,000 PoE staff, 500 MoH male and female officials and health workers.

IOM will continue supporting the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, border authorities and partners to enhance prevention and response measures at the operational PoEs through:

- Enhancing the capacity of PoEs and support the efforts of the immigration, border, customs and health authorities to detect, isolate and manage potentially ill travellers, infected by COVID-19.
- Upgrading isolation facilities at identified PoE to manage suspected/ill travellers, and providing supplies to contain any further spread of the virus at critical border infrastructure.
• Providing an orientation package on psychological first aid for the Ministry of Health of Ukraine officials, border guards, health-care workers at the airport and ports.

• Developing a specialized health training curriculum for SBGS, with modules dealing with the proper use of PPEs, management of ill travellers at PoEs, staff well-being and psychological first aid, as well as migrants’ rights and vulnerabilities during COVID-19 outbreak.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPC)

Funding Requirements: **USD 2,000,000**
Beneficiaries: at least 36,000 IDPs and members of conflict-affected communities

The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene is an essential part of prevention efforts during infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19. Combined with improved access to Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services, infection prevention and control measures are an effective way to prevent or limit transmission of the disease and IOM Ukraine will focus its efforts in the Eastern Conflict Area through:

• Improving WASH capacity in 18 key medical facilities and other social institutions, including renovation of 8 water towers in ECA;

• Supporting the procurement and distribution of hygiene kits to medical facilities and key community sites targeting at least 74 hospitals and 198 care homes/collective centres/specialized centres in GCA and NGCA.

Strategic Priority 3: Ensure access of affected people to basic services and commodities, including health care, and protection and social services.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Funding Requirements: **USD 20,000**
Beneficiaries: 900 vulnerable migrants

IOM will provide life-saving support to vulnerable migrants in Ukraine affected by widespread transmission of COVID-19, focusing on:

• Supporting the procurement of critical medicines and essential supplies for the Migrant Accommodation Centres and vulnerable migrants in the country.

PROTECTION

Funding Requirements: **USD 3,600,000**
Beneficiaries: 500 migrants, 840 conflict-affected people, 250 frontline staff, 200 consular staff, 800 former VoTs, 1,000 Ukrainian migrants and travellers stranded abroad because of COVID-19
The current COVID-19 emergency is exacerbating all pre-existing vulnerabilities and risks of violence and discrimination. IOM is committed to ensuring protection of migrants, displaced persons and other vulnerable populations remains at the centre of its COVID-19 response through:

- Providing livelihood grants to local businesses to support key services, accessibility for vulnerable groups and COVID-19 related initiatives.
- Providing psychosocial support to vulnerable migrants including returning migrants, children of labour migrants, victims of trafficking, IDPs, conflict-affected people and their families, including prevention and referral of gender-based violence and domestic abuse cases.
- Offering disaster assistance package to former victims of trafficking most affected by COVID-19.
- Providing last-resort financial assistance to Ukrainians stranded abroad because of COVID-19 contributing to their urgent needs (rent, medicine, food) and, when travel restrictions are lifted, return to Ukraine.
- Developing, translating and distributing information through electronic platforms (e.g., email distribution lists, social media, websites).
- Operating hotlines/web platforms and responding to requests for information and support from individual migrants.

**Strategic Priority 4:** Support international, national, and local partners to respond to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

**Addressing Socioeconomic Impacts of the Crisis**

Funding Requirements: **USD 5,800,000**

Beneficiaries: 700 IDPs and conflict-affected populations, 240 vulnerable migrants, 3,000 returning migrants, 100 communities of return, 3,000 seasonal migrant workers.

- Providing economic recovery support to those most affected by the crisis (IDPs, returning migrants, migrant households, previously supported micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as other vulnerable migrants including victims of trafficking, violence and abuse).
- Small-scale funding for infrastructure projects/community development projects that will generate new jobs, including for returning skilled labour. This will focus on areas where the inflow of returning migrants is high, placing additional strain on limited local resources and adding to the already growing unemployment.
- Return migration: labour market assessment and job matching services (referrals, trainings, requalification) and income-generating opportunities targeted at the returning migrants and their communities.
- Supporting safe and well-organized circular migration. Pre-departure health assessments and medical certification as well as information dissemination to support the protection and safety of seasonal migrant workers.
### SUMMARY OF FINANCING REQUIREMENT:

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<th>Strategic Priority</th>
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In April 2020, IOM Ukraine provided masks to state border and migration agencies of Ukraine to protect their staff, as well as travellers and migrants, from COVID-19

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