UHF

Ukraine Humanitarian Fund

UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN FUND



ANNUAL REPORT

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Credits

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The latest version of this document is available on the UHF website at https://www.unocha.org/ukraine/about-ukrainehumanitarian-fund.

Full project details, financial updates, real-time allocation data and indicator achievements against targets are available at <u>CBPF DataHub</u>.

About UHF

Front Cover

December 2023, Kholmy Village, Chernihivska Oblast, Ukraine.

Mariia, a 30-year-old woman, lives with her 3-year-old daughter Valeriia. The family moved to Kholmy Village from the border village of Khotiivka, both in Chernihivska Oblast, which the Russian Federation shelled. In December, ZOA, with financial support from UHF, provided the family with solid fuel and installed new windows to keep the house warm in winter. In the photo: Olha Kunysh, ZOA aid worker (left) and small Valeriia, Mariia's daughter (right). Credit: ZOA / Nataliia Bohdan

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LETTER FROM THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR

The war that started in the east of Ukraine in 2014 has reached its 10-year mark, inflicting immeasurable suffering on the population. The dramatic escalation of the war since the Russian Federation's invasion in February 2022 continued to steadily intensify in 2023, ravaging front-line communities with over 17.6 million people – about 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population – requiring humanitarian assistance in 2023.

In this very challenging context, the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) achieved some very notable successes throughout 2023. It was at the forefront of supporting national civil society and enabling a locally led response aligned with OCHA global strategic priorities.

Particular emphasis was placed on supporting smaller organizations providing much assistance along the front line. In total, over 300 civil society organizations (CSOs) and volunteer groups working as front-line responders accessed UHF funding in 2023 to assist war-affected people, mainly in hard-to-reach areas. The focus on national actors also enabled the UHF to effectively scale up its response to rapid onset emergencies, such as the response to the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, where national partners who had direct access to the areas most affected were immediately granted additional funding.

UHF's national partners were also at the forefront of the winter response, supporting emergency repairs, providing solid fuel and heating appliances, cash for rent and energy and cash-based agricultural livelihood assistance to provide safe and warm housing for war-affected people throughout the harsh winter months.

Whilst Country-based Pool Funds (CBPFs) have traditionally funded larger national nongovernmental organizations(NGOs), the UHF has also created innovative ways to ensure that smaller community-based and volunteer organizations can access direct funding by reducing overly bureaucratic due diligence requirements. As a result, 30 per cent of the US\$181 million allocated was provided to national NGOs, of which \$57 million was allocated directly. Recognizing the indispensable role of women-led organizations (WLO) in crisis response efforts, the UHF also disbursed \$9 million to national WLOs, representing almost five per cent of the total UHF allocations.

To more equally share the burden of the risk faced by national actors, the UHF has also worked to ensure the safety and security of national frontline responders by providing a comprehensive duty of care package of support, including securityrelated and first aid training, stress management and psychosocial support, and the provision of insurance and personal protective equipment.

Throughout 2023, the UHF also faced many challenges, not least a dramatic and unexpected decrease in donor funding, which led to limiting allocations to areas along the front line while deprioritizing other areas. The rapid scale-up of the response in Ukraine in 2022 also led to recruitment challenges in 2023, with the Fund operating for much of the year at about 50 per cent capacity. This has now been addressed, with the Fund team fully staffed with 21 personnel by the end of last year.

I am deeply grateful to members of the Advisory Board and 26 contributing governments and private donors for helping us navigate these challenges and contributing \$182 million in 2023. This enabled 49 humanitarian partners to provide humanitarian assistance worth \$181 million to 3.2 million people throughout the country. Your steadfast support and generosity to the Fund made this possible.

I also wish to acknowledge the joint efforts of our partnering Ukrainian and international NGOs and UN agencies who scaled up massively to help people in an incredibly fast-changing humanitarian operations context. Cluster coordinators, strategic review committees and OCHA's Humanitarian Financing Unit, thank youfor ensuring that all allocations were based on need and given to the best placed partners who could implement the intended response activities competently.

Denise Brown, Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine

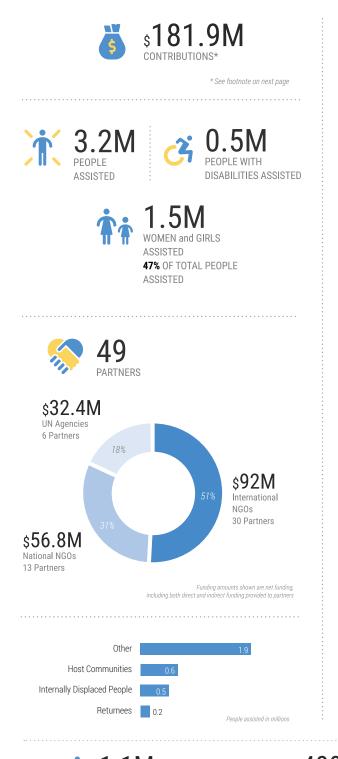
Providing support in terms of advocacy, funding and capacity strengthening to national NGOs, particularly the smaller civil society organizations that provide assistance along the front line, was a top priority for the UHF throughout 2023.

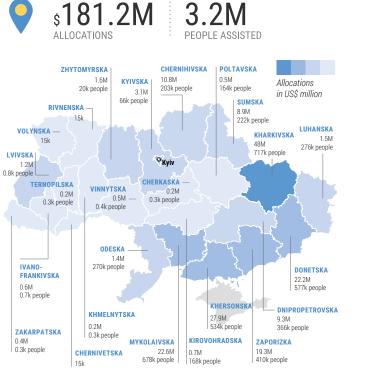
Denise Brown, Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine

27 December 2023, Hontarivka Village, Kharkivska Oblast, Ukraine. Local NGO "We Are Brothers, We Are Ukrainians" volunteers are preparing to install stoves for families.

YORK

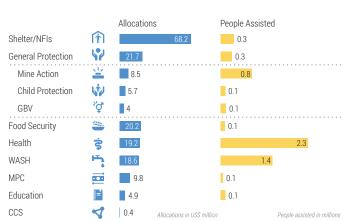
2023 IN NUMBERS





* The Annual Report uses the number of people targeted as a proxy for the number of people reached and henceforth the term people assisted will be used. This approach allows for more timely global reporting as the final data on people reached only becomes available over a year after the allocation of CBPF funds. The reported outcomes will be available on the https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/ the CBPFs will continuously monitor if targets are reached.

** Figures for people assisted may include double counting as individuals often receive aid from multiple cluster/sectors The maximum methodology was applied by the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund to estimate the number of people assisted in 2023. The total number of people assisted is thus the sum of the maximum number of targeted beneficiaries by gender and age per cluster/sectors and location at admin level three/district.



230,000

People supported with winter items, including solid fuel

\$9.8M Provided as multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA)



People had access

to health-care services

People supported with transportation services, including people with disabilities



People provided with specialized GBV services, including

psychological support and legal aid and counselling

100,000

PAGE 6

Donor contributions

In 2023, the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) received contributions from 26 donors, including US\$41.5 million from the United Kingdom, \$25 million from the United States of America, \$21.5 million from the Netherlands, \$19.5 million from Norway, \$19.2 million from Germany and many others. Throughout the year, the UHF maintained almost the same number of donors as in 2022 (30).

In 2023, the UHF remained the largest Country-based Pool Fund (CBPF) in the world, with nearly 17 per cent of the total contributions for the Country-based Pool Funds (CBPFs) globally and seven per cent of the total 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funding in Ukraine.

At the same time, the UHF experienced a decline in donor contributions by over 40 per cent in 2023 compared to 2022, receiving only \$182 million against \$327 million received in 2022. This significantly impacted the Fund's ability to allocate funding to partners in the second guarter of the year once the rollover of funds from 2022 had been allocated.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Review of Small Grants

At the end of 2022, the UHF allocated \$20 million to enable partners to collaborate with smaller Civil society organizations (CSOs) and volunteer groups who were not eligible to receive UHF funding directly. The allocation sought to deliver a transformative impact on partnerships with local actors and to provide capacity-strengthening support to smaller informal organizations. Moving into 2023, over 300 CSOs and volunteer groups working as front-line responders accessed this funding in 2023 to assist war-affected people, mainly in the hard-to-reach areas.

Given the high level of interest and participation, the UHF was keen to draw lessons from the 2022 allo-



United Kingdom			41.
United States		25.0	
Netherlands		21.5	
Norway		19.5	
Germany		19.2	
Finland		8.7	
Belgium		7.5	
Australia	N	6.8	
Switzerland	+	6.6	
France		6.5	
Denmark		3.8	
Sweden		2.9	
Canada	*	2.3	
Ireland		2.2	
European Union	$\langle \bigcirc \rangle$	2.2	
Spain		1.3	
New Zealand		1.2	
Poland		1.0	
Iceland		0.7	
Korea		0.5	
Japan		0.5	
Luxembourg		0.4	
Lithuania		0.2	
Estonia		0.1	
Bulgaria		0.1	
Private Sector	PRIVATE	0.0	In US\$ millio

DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS

cation on meaningful support to CSOs and volunteer organizations. In August 2023, the UHF conducted an in-depth review of the impact of the funding provided and the support given to local actors. The review aimed to achieve the following objectives with a view of identifying possibilities for the scale-up of support:

- Develop a clear understanding of challenges faced by CSOs and volunteer groups (VOs) and by UHF granting partners.
- Identify lessons learned, best practices and innovation, particularly partnership practices and tools.
- Assess the impact of the capacity support provided by UHF granting partners to CSOs and volunteer groups.

In October 2023, review findings and recommendations were presented to and endorsed by the UHF Advisory Board and shared widely within the humanitarian community in Ukraine. The full report is shared with this document¹, and the recommendations form the basis of the UHF's "Localization Strategy Note", which outlines the work to be taken forward by the UHF in 2024. Some key recommendations include:

- Provision of flexible and sustainable funding to local actors, including the fair sharing of the programme support costs (PSC) and core operational costs.
- Ensuring the safety and security of national frontline responders by ensuring that the UHF partners provide a comprehensive duty of care package, including security-related and first aid training, stress management and psychosocial support, and provision of insurance and personal protective equipment.
- Development of a "contextualized due diligence and capacity assessment" aimed specifically at smaller Ukrainian CSOs and enabling them to access direct funding from the UHF.²

Improved Outreach and Support to National NGOs

To improve outreach and partnership with national actors, the UHF has developed a decentralized field office structure in line with OCHA field office coordination set-up. In practice, this means national and international UHF Programmes and Finance Officers are based in locations of strategic importance to the humanitarian response and proximity to most national actors on the ground. Presently, the UHF has staff present in Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv and Odesa. The stated aims of this structure are:

- Improved partner relations and clarity on where to go and who to contact within OCHA and the UHF.
- Focus on the provision of support over compliance through developing a partnership approach.
- strengthened coordination, particularly with local actors and area-based coordination (ABC) mechanisms.
- Decentralized authority reduces bottlenecks and speeds up approvals.
- Flexible and able to shift resources to where they are most needed as changes in the context occur.

Relationships between the UHF and national actors at the field-office level have been developed with the support of OCHA field coordination. Beginning with the Contextualized Capacity Assessment (CCA) tool described above and the development of capacity development plans, the UHF will adopt the principles of good partnership and take a mentoring approach, particularly with smaller CSOs and volunteer organizations.

Several benefits of this structure for the UHF and partners have been observed over the years and led to some improvements and innovations. Primarily this structure has enabled the development and implementation of the contextualized capacity assessment (see "Risk Sharing and Risk Management" section) that enables more direct funding to smaller CSOs. Additionally, this structure has enhanced coordination and communication between national actors, area-based coordination mechanism and OCHA, linking these smaller CSOs with the formal coordination architecture and response planning processes.

Risk Management tools such as monitoring and financial spot checks have been adapted to provide constructive feedback, whilst feedback from partners will be encouraged through various means, including key informant interviews, partner surveys and regular meetings.

CHALLENGES

Reduced donor funding was the most significant challenge. It led to the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) limiting its allocations to target geographic areas along the front line while deprioritizing other areas, particularly in central and western Ukraine, where substantial needs remain high, especially among displaced people. Whilst the UHF has received close to seven per cent of the funding for the

¹ See Annex D on page 28.

² Please refer to the section "Risk Sharing and Risk Management" on page 20.

DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS

2023 HRP, CBPF donors globally have committed to funding levels of 15 per cent of HRP funding. In 2024, the UHF will work closely with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and donor Advisory Board (AB) members to advocate for increased levels of funding to be provided in accordance with the Humanitarian Program Cycle rather than during the last quarter of the year.

Reduced funding could also potentially hamper UHF's significant progress in strategically supporting local responders and greatly reduce its impact on localization in Ukraine in 2024. The UHF recognizes that localization is beyond simply channelling funds to national and local organizations and is about systematically promoting the participation of local actors in the larger humanitarian response and strengthening their voice and capacity through fair, principled partnerships.

The UHF has invested significant time and resources towards localization, creating formal coalitions and informal communities of practice to strengthen coordination and develop their and others' capacities. Such strategic localization requires significant initial investment, which foresees returns over time as additional funds are channelled more efficiently and accountably through partners whose capacity is strengthened. Sustained funding for the UHF is therefore critical to ensuring that achievements to date and the resulting drive for locally-led response be carried forward through a trusted pool of national and local partners at the same scale and with increased accountability, both to these partners and people receiving their support in Ukraine.

One example of this work is the UHF's informal support of a nationally led initiative for the creation of a national non-governmental organization (NNGO) Alliance, which seeks to act as a coordination forum for national actors to engage with the HC-led response architecture in Ukraine. Together with the OCHA's Coordination Unit, key donors and the NGO Forum, the UHF supported a group of NNGOs providing advice on the formation of the NNGO Alliance and the development of a countrywide Localization Strategy to be presented to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for endorsement in 2024. This Alliance will play a key role in strengthening the voice of NNGOs and ensuring their participation and leadership in response decision-making.

Scale up and Capacity

Following the escalation of the war by the Russian Federation in Ukraine in February 2022, the UHF had to significantly scale up its operations to manage the huge and rapid increase in donor funding. By December 2022, donor funding had increased by more than 2,600 per cent from \$12 million to \$327 million, the number of UHF partners increased by nearly 170 per cent from 50 to 133, and Humanitarian Finance Unit (HFU) staffing requirements to effectively manage the Fund increased by over 400 per cent. This rapid growth had serious "knock-on" effects for the UHF that had negative consequences throughout 2023.

The capacity to effectively manage the huge increase in funding whilst remaining accountable to the five principles of CBPFs (Inclusiveness, Flexibility, Efficiency, Timeliness and Risk Management) was severely tested. Particularly challenging and time-consuming was the recruitment of finance staff, and for most of 2023, the HFU was at less than 40 per cent capacity in this area, leading to increased delays in budget approval, reporting, financial spot checks and audits. By December 2023, however, this had been addressed with six new finance officers recruited, and significant improvements in these core areas were noted.

Limited Number of Eligible National Partners

The scale-up was initially enabled by a waiver of the standard CBPF eligibility process approved by the Executive Officer (EO). The waiver allowed international NGOs working with other funds to be eligible for UHF funding without undergoing the full capacity assessment. Simultaneously, the UHF conducted a standard capacity assessment of actors not covered by the waiver. Despite taking more than a year to complete, only a small percentage of NNGOs were successful, and the majority were larger NGOs with international affiliations. Local actors cited the complexity of the tool and a high number of due diligence requirements as the reason – see local partner challenges below.

Since the delivery of humanitarian assistance in remote areas is undertaken almost exclusively by national actors, it was clear that a new eligibility tool contextualized for Ukraine was needed. Considering this, the AB tasked the HFU to develop a contextualized capacity assessment (CCA) tool specifically aimed at smaller national actors. Based on feedback received from national partners and in line with CBPF Global Guidance, the HFU developed a new contextualized tool that aimed to make it easier for local actors to meet UHF eligibility requirements. More details on this are found in the "Risk Sharing and Risk Management" section of this report.

Humanitarian Context and Allocations

In Ukraine, the war that started in the east of the country in 2014 has reached its 10-year mark, inflicting immeasurable suffering, causing deaths and destruction, putting millions at risk of serious violations, and generating grave humanitarian needs. The dramatic escalation of the war since the Russian Federation's invasion of 24 February 2022 continued to intensify steadily in 2023, ravaging front-line communities and adding to the widespread destruction of vital infrastructure that had already decimated essential services across the country. Over 17.6 million people – about 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population, required humanitarian assistance in 2023.

Needs are also high among the nearly 4 million people who are internally displaced across Ukraine, particularly some 111,500 people currently living in collective sites. Prolonged displacement has pushed many to the brink, as they have depleted their resources and capacity to cope with the loss of jobs or income, increasing their exposure to exploitation and abuse and increasing the possibility of resorting to negative coping strategies. For many, returning home will not be an option until houses have been rebuilt and basic services restored in areas of origin. At the same time, violence has pushed thousands to flee again, mainly in areas around Kharkivska and Sumska oblasts.

Over 3.3 million people need assistance in the front-line communities in the east and south of Ukraine. In these communities – including the territories occupied by the Russian Federation – millions struggle to have adequate access to water, food, a roof over their heads, health, protection and other essential services and supplies. In central and western oblasts, millions need humanitarian services, including home repairs and reconstruc-

tion, psycho-social support, livelihoods training and social cohesion support.

In June, the destruction of the <u>Kakhovka Dam</u> in Khersonska Oblast brought additional challenges in a region where hostilities were particularly intense during the entire year. The blast resulted in a significant drop in water level in the Kakhovka Reservoir, adding another emergency to the existing humanitarian crisis. The aftermath included an unverified number of civilian casualties, widespread flooding, damage to and loss of homes and essential services, interruption of sustainable water access for hundreds of thousands, and vast agricultural lands left without irrigation.

In 2023, homes, schools and hospitals continued to be bombed every day, with attacks spiking towards the end of the year. The destruction left nearly 720,000 people in the worst-affected parts of Ukraine with no access to adequate and safe housing. In Khersonska Oblast, for example, nearly 30 per cent of people live in damaged buildings. Access to education remained highly constrained, with around 4,000 educational facilities damaged or destroyed since February 2022. Across the country, only 50 per cent of children attended classes entirely in person, 25 per cent had learned through a mixed in-person and online approach, and another 25 per cent have only online access to studies. Almost half of all educational institutions were damaged or destroyed in Kharkivska and Khersonska oblasts alone, and a staggering 80 per cent in Donetska Oblast, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Education. Access to health was also impacted, with over 1,500 attacks on health care verified by the World Health Organization (WHO) between 24 February 22 and 31 December 2024. Nearly half of health centres were rendered non-functional in some parts in the east and south of Ukraine.

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The ongoing contamination from land mines and explosive ordnance further complicates the situation. Ukraine is potentially considered one of the world's most mine-contaminated countries in the world. The situation has significantly worsened since the escalation of the war in February 2022, with the number of mine-related incidents in 2023 causing civilian casualties steadily increasing each month, according to the <u>UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission (HRMMU).</u>

By December, approximately <u>11 million people</u> had received at least one form of humanitarian assistance and protection services, close to the 11.1 million people targeted for assistance under the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). At least 60 per cent were women and girls, and nearly 20 per cent were children. To ensure adequate support to 17.6 million people in need of assistance, aid organizations in Ukraine expanded their operations in 2022 and continued to adapt to new challenges in 2023. Despite continuous efforts by partners, some activities, particularly related to the provision of essential services in areas close to the front line, were affected by insecurity and access challenges. However, aid delivery to communities along the front line steadily increased throughout the year. Inter-agency convoys reached communities where massive destruction had severely impacted livelihoods and services. Partners working in northern oblasts undertook missions to assist communities in Chernihivska and Sumska oblasts that the Russian Federation continued to attack. In 2023, the UHF partners targeted approximately 3.2 million people affected by the war with assistance, including 1.5 million women and girls and more than 480,000 people with disabilities.

Under the revised Winter Response Plan, humanitarian partners made efforts to support people ahead of the winter. By the end of December, aid organizations had reached <u>1.7 million people</u> with specific winter supplies and services. This included solid fuel and cash for fuel to ensure heating for over 710,000 people, winter clothes for 230,000 people, and support for the operation and maintenance of district heating systems for over 410,000 people, among other activities. From January to December, 107 inter-agency convoys were dispatched to deliver life-saving supplies to people close to the front line, where needs were direst. These humanitarian convoys – an average of nine per month – transported items critical for winter, such as high thermal blankets, stoves, heaters and generators as well as repair materials and emergency food to almost 400,000 people in front-line communities in Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Sumska and Zaporizka oblasts.

By the end of 2023, aid organizations had reported 227 incidents affecting humanitarian operations in the country, averaging four a week. Over 30 of these incidents involved violence against humanitarian personnel, and at least 55 were strikes and attacks causing damage or destruction of humanitarian warehouses, facilities and assets. These were mainly concentrated in areas where fighting and hostilities were most intense and humanitarian needs were high. In December alone, five NGO warehouses were hit in Khersonska Oblast, damaging tons of relief items. Attacks caused the death of at least 15 aid workers and injured another 35. Eleven of the aid workers were killed in the line of duty.

At the end of December, funding against the 2023 HRP totalled nearly 70 per cent of the US\$3.9 billion requested for aid operations in Ukraine. Almost 600 humanitarian organizations implemented activities under the 2023 HRP in Ukraine. Of these, more than 430 were national organizations. The UHF continued its efforts to strengthen the localization of the response, ensuring that national and local NGOs, often front-line responders, were further supported and actively represented and participated in the coordination mechanisms. Moreover, through its mandate, OCHA enhanced the Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) efforts in providing strategic support for the localization agenda and advocating to enhance the duty of care for aid workers.

ALLOCATIONS

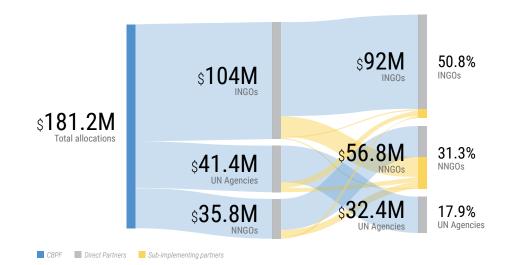
In 2023, the UHF remained a crucial source of flexible funding for relief operations, supporting the swift scaling up of aid provision during war-related emergencies across Ukraine. In 2022, the UHF received a generous \$327 million, including \$117 million in the last quarter, allowing a significant carry-forward of \$130 million into 2023.

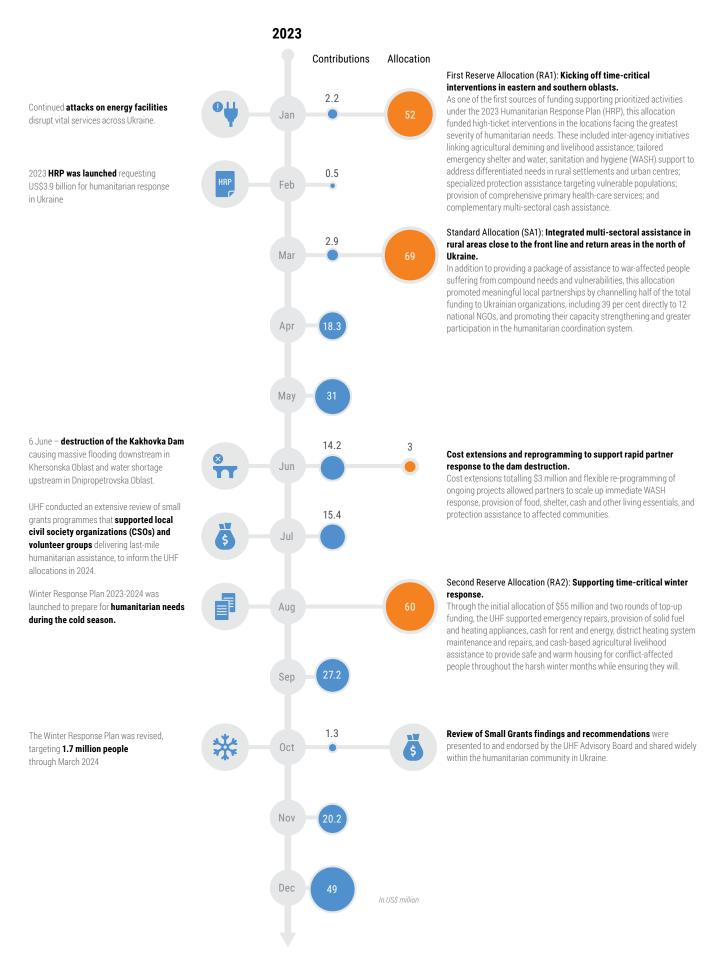
The UHF allocated \$181 million through three allocations, including \$113 million through Reserve Allocations for the most time-critical interventions and \$69 million through Standard Allocation for integrated multi-sectoral assistance to vulnerable war-affected people in rural front-line communities. These allocations were aligned with the priorities and activities under the 2023 HRP. The UHF provided more than 30 per cent of total allocations to the national NGOs (\$57 million) directly and indirectly via sub-granting. For the last three complete years (from 2020 to 2023), the funding of the national partners by the UHF increased by 1,300 per cent.

Furthermore, these allocations leveraged the comparative advantages of the Fund's partners, such as UN agencies with large-scale procurement capabilities, distribution and additional resource mobilization capacities of international and national NGOs with extensive country presence and expertise in capacity assessments as well as capacity strengthening of local organizations and local and national organizations from war-affected communities with access and agility to deliver last-mile assistance in areas close to the front line. Meaningful local partnerships were pursued as a strategic priority of the Fund throughout the year, most prominently with the Standard Allocation. Further, the Fund capitalized on the agile and flexible programming capacity of its partners to respond quickly to emerging time-critical needs triggered by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June and gaps in the Government of Ukraine's programmes for solid fuel provision and heating support in the first months of the <u>harsh winter</u>.

In January, the UHF launched the first Reserve Allocation (RA1) of \$52 million. As one of the first sources of funding supporting prioritized activities under the 2023 HRP, this allocation funded interventions in locations facing the greatest severity of humanitarian needs. These included inter-agency initiatives linking agricultural demining and livelihood assistance; tailored emergency shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support to address differentiated needs in rural settlements in areas where the Government regained control and urban centres; specialized protection assistance targeting vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, women, children, older people, and displaced and separated families; provision of comprehensive primary healthcare services including mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS); and complementary multi-sectoral cash assistance.

This was closely followed in March by the **first Standard Allocation (SA1)** of \$69 million. These funds aimed to provide integrated multi-sectoral assistance to vulnerable internally displaced people, those who returned to their homes, and others





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affected by the war in rural areas close to the front line in eastern and southern oblasts and areas of return in the north of the country. This allocation targeted almost 500,000 people with 32 projects. **The allocation pursued UHF's continued commitment to local partnership** through promoting participation and strengthening national and local partners with access to communities close to the front line and the ability to deliver principled and contextually relevant assistance. Through this allocation, the UHF channelled \$34 million (50 per cent of the total amount) to Ukrainian organizations, including \$27 million (39 per cent) directly to 12 national NGOs.

In early June, in response to the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, which resulted in flooding and displacement downstream and water shortage upstream of the Kakhovka Dam, the UHF supported the **rapid response through cost extensions** of \$3 million to six partners to enable flexible re-programming of ongoing projects. Cost extensions were used as the quickest modality for allocating funds to partners during a rapid onset emergency, and once again, projects of national partners or international partners working with local actors who had direct access to most affected areas **were prioritised for funding**. The UHF response to the Kakhovka Dam destruction was followed by the **second Reserve Allocation (RA2)** of \$60 million, launched in August, to fund critical activities of the HCT-led winter response plan. Through an initial allocation of \$55 million and two rounds of top-up funding totalling \$5 million, the UHF supported emergency repairs, provision of solid fuel and heating appliances, cash for rent and energy, district heating system maintenance and repairs, and cash-based agricultural livelihood assistance to provide safe and warm housing for war-affected people throughout harsh winter months.

Programming Highlights

Promoting the Centrality of Protection

The Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) prioritized protection through all allocations in 2023, with partners expected to include in their proposals activities that demonstrated protection considerations such as ensuring the safety and dignity of recipients by appropriate targeting of the most vulnerable people requiring assistance. The Fund worked closely with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and the Protection Cluster to ensure that the centrality of protection was factored in cluster discussions and proposal reviews. Partners were also required to specifically mention how protection mainstreaming would be integrated into their proposed response.

Projects that incorporated protection principles were prioritized for funding, specifically those that promoted meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid, including the prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence (GBV). Examples of protection considerations included the incorporation of psycho-social support into shelter damage assessments and repair assistance; specialized services for unaccompanied children and those affected by the war; and provision of case management, legal aid and mine survivor assistance along the provision of food security and livelihoods support, especially to those displaced.

Together with almost 50 partners, the UHF targeted 3.2 million people across Ukraine, including more than 480,000 people with disabilities and 1.5 million women and girls through 74 projects, mostly in Donetska, Kharkivska and Mykolaivska oblasts in the east and south of Ukraine. The large number of people assisted – at least 500,000 – received support from the UHF-funded projects implemented by the Protection Cluster and Child Protection and GBV Areas of Responsibility (AoR) partners. The importance of protection in UHF's programming is evidenced in the sector receiving nearly 12 per cent of total UHF allocations through the year (US\$21.7 million) and is the second most funded sector by the UHF.

Addressing Gender Equality, Responding to Gender-Based Violence and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

The UHF recognizes the indispensable role of women's rights organizations (WROs) in crisis response efforts. In 2023, the UHF disbursed \$5.4 million directly and an additional \$3.5 million through indirect mechanisms to WROs, culminating in a total contribution of \$9 million. This allocation represents almost **five per cent of the total UHF allocations** over a year period, amounting to \$181 million.

In 2023, the UHF appointed a dedicated staff member as a Gender Focal Point. The UHF Gender Focal Point collaborated closely with the GenCap Gender Advisor and the Gender Review Committee members to integrate gender considerations into project reviews and proposals, also provided essential support in verifying gender mainstreaming practices and guided the new UHF team and partners in Ukraine in monitoring these practices during field visits. Additionally, the Gender Focal Point participated intently in the global OCHA Gender Focal Point and in the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group meetings.

This appointment underscores the UHF's commitment to integrating gender and age considerations into humanitarian programming effectively. Throughout the year, dedicated volunteers from the GiHA and various clusters have provided pivotal support. For each funding allocation, these volunteers assisted in the review and evaluation of project proposals, focusing on the incorporation of gender mainstreaming. They offered constructive feedback aimed at enhancing the integration of gender considerations across various pro-

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gramming facets, including needs assessments, logical frameworks and monitoring processes, following specialized training by OCHA GenCap Gender Advisor.

This concerted effort ensured that all proposals submitted incorporate Gender with Age Marker (GAM) coding. Moreover, prior to each funding allocation, partners were equipped with training on gender and age considerations. This comprehensive approach, bolstered by the expertise of the GenCap Gender Advisor and the GiHA Working Group, significantly contributed to the mainstreaming of gender and age considerations within the UHF's humanitarian programming.

Regarding GBV, the UHF actively encouraged its partners to incorporate GBV protection strategies, including prevention, risk mitigation and response, into their activities, assessments, frameworks and budgeting. In addition, during 2023, the UHF funded 11 projects focusing on GBV with a total funding of \$4,048,809, where it focused on the provision of specialized GBV services, safe spaces, prevention procedures and advocacy on GBV issues. This approach highlighted the UHF's commitment to fostering environments that safeguard against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and GBV, thereby ensuring the integrity and efficacy of humanitarian efforts.

In 2023, the UHF emphasized its dedication to the PSEA by advocating for the integration of PSEA indicators within partner programmes. This initiative aimed to facilitate evaluation stages, with proposals incorporating standard indicators. They received full scores during the proposal evaluation stage, whereas those with fewer and no PSEA procedures included were allocated lower scores. During the capacity assessment process, the UHF placed emphasis on ensuring they have established policies and mechanisms dedicated to PSEA. Organizations identified as lacking in this regard were provided with targeted recommendations and specific timelines to develop and implement PSEA policies and procedures.

Inclusion of People with Disabilities

Throughout 2023, the UHF consistently prioritized projects by partners that demonstrated a commitment to reducing discrimination and removing barriers preventing people with disabilities from fully participating in and benefiting from the humanitarian response. The UHF, in collaboration with disability inclusion experts, supported partners in all project development and implementation stages, including needs assessments, logical frameworks, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, placing emphasis on allocating the appropriate resources for these initiatives.

In preparation for its Standard Allocations, the UHF enhanced its guidance and facilitated training sessions on disability inclusion, leveraging the expertise of disability inclusion specialists. The training was designed to equip UHF partners with the knowledge and tools to integrate disability inclusion strategies into their project proposals effectively. Topics covered included best practices for inclusion and using various tools and guidelines to estimate and address the needs of people with disabilities accurately.

The UHF continually promoted the three standard disability inclusion indicators, which were developed in collaboration with the Protection Cluster and disability inclusion specialists of the World Health Organization (WHO) and NGO Humanity & Inclusion (HI) in 2022. Based on best practices identified during previous years, submitted projects were reviewed against specific criteria to ensure the accessibility of services for people with disabilities. In this process, partners who demonstrated full compliance with these accessibility standards were awarded 10 points. Those achieving partial compliance received five points, while submissions lacking provisions for disability access did not receive any points. Moreover, the UHF demonstrated its unwavering commitment to promoting disability inclusion by allocating \$4,176,782 to two initiatives. These projects provided a comprehensive suite of services, including general protection, child protection, GBV response, mine action services and the distribution of hygiene supplies.

Advancing Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)

In 2023, in line with Grand Bargain commitments and preferences of people affected by the war in Ukraine, the UHF continued to promote the strategic use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) throughout its allocations. Particular attention was given to multi-purpose cash (MPC) assistance as a preferred response approach to the basic needs of affected people unless contextual circumstances precluded it.

Building on an environment exceptionally conducive for cash programming, characterized by a high level of digitalization of the economy, vast market functionality, a robust banking sector and a large availability of service provision mechanisms, MPC continued in 2023 to play an efficient, flexible and dignified role in addressing essential needs while protecting livelihoods and stabilizing local economies.

MPC specifically prioritized rapid assistance to the immediate needs of affected people after a war-related shock, including new displacement, evacuation or renewed exposure to front-line hostilities. Assistance was also provided to war-affected socio-economically vulnerable people to ensure that their basic needs were met, and they averted falling into negative coping strategies, particularly in situations of prolonged displacement or continued front-line vulnerabilities. This approach prioritized the most vulnerable groups, such as single-headed families, pregnant and lactating women, older people, large families and people with disabilities.

In 2023, the UHF allocated almost \$40 million (more than 20 per cent of total allocations) as CVA through international and national NGOs and the UN agencies. At least 15 per cent of the CVA funds were allocated directly to national NGOs. Most people were supported with sector-specific unconditional cash transfers and MPC assistance. Moreover, half of the funds were allocated to the Shelter/NFI Cluster partners to support the most vulnerable war-affected people during the harsh winter season in Ukraine.3

3 Read the full story here: https://pooledfunds.impact.unocha.org/ stories/helping-keep-ukrainians-warm-through-the-winter

December 2023. Kozylivka Village, Chernihivska Oblast, **Ukraine**

The Dovzhuk family moved from Donetska to Chernihivska Oblast and are not going to return. They have been living in the Kholmynska Hromada for two years. A total of six people live in the house: the couple, three children (the youngest is 1.5 years old) and Hanna Dovzhuk's 57-yearold mother. UHF partner ZOA provided the family with a voucher for firewood on New Year's Eve. The family bought 14 cubic metres of firewood from the local forestry. In the photo: Hanna and Yaroslav Dovzhuk with the firewood.

Credit: ZOA / Nataliia Bohdan

PROGRAMMING

HIGHLIGHTS

CASH TRANSFARE AMOUNT

Shelter/NFIs	Î				19.9
Food Security				9.9	
MPC			8		
General Protection	4	1			
Child Protection	4	0.5			
Health	\$	0.2			
Mine Action	<u> </u>	0.2			in US\$ million





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December 2023. Kharkivska Oblast, Ukraine.

Aid workers install a stove in Vira's house in Kharkivska Oblast, northern Ukraine. December 2023.

> Photo credit: JERU / Simona Supino



SUCCESS STORY/UKRAINE: BRAVING WINTER AND AIR STRIKES TO HELP PEOPLE IN NEED

By Nataliia Pushkaruk, OCHA

With winter exacerbating Ukraine's dire situation, humanitarian organizations are providing essential assistance with funding from the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) and ensuring no one is left behind.

As Ukraine endures yet another harsh winter amid a new wave of attacks, humanitarian workers are tirelessly supporting the people most affected, especially in the cities, villages and towns of the country's eastern and southern regions. Their efforts have been vital in reducing people's suffering since the war escalated in February 2022.

One of these people is Antonina, a 69-year-old woman from Pervomaiske Village in Ukraine's Mykolaivska Oblast in the south. She shared her harrowing experience:

"Everything burned down completely. In my apartment, the walls were damaged. Windows, doors – everything was destroyed."

Antonina's village was under occupation by the Russian Federation for several days, and residents had to live in their basements for a long time.

Antonina was attempting to rebuild her life while still living in her severely damaged home. Her spirits remain unbroken. Fortunately, she received vital winter supplies – including a mattress, pillow and thermal blanket – from Caritas Czech Republic in Ukraine and the Ukrainian charitable foundation New Dawn, funded by the UHF. "Now, at least I have something to sleep on," she said gratefully.

Russian Federation escalated its aerial attacks on 29 December 2023. Since then, nearly 3,000 Ukrainian families, including people living in cities close to the front line, have seen their homes damaged or destroyed. Millions of people have no electricity, water or heating due to targeted attacks on infrastructure. The war's impact on Ukraine's economy has reduced incomes, exacerbating families' struggle to afford daily essentials.

Vira and her family are also receiving vital assistance. They live in Hontarivka Village, just 39 km from the border with the Russian Federation in Kharkivska Oblast, and face harsh realities. With no centralized gas supply, they rely on firewood for heating – a luxury becoming too expensive for many people. Frequent strikes in the region have searched for essential warmth, a significant challenge. PAGE

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SUCCESS STORIES

December 2023. Kharkivska Oblast, Ukraine.

A Joint Emergency Response Ukraine (JERU) worker (left) talks to Vira and her children.

> Photo credit: JERU / Simona Supino



Vira shared a common challenge facing people affected by the war:

"Have you seen the prices for firewood? Where will we get the money if a firewood truck costs UAH15,000 (US\$400)?" she asked. "There is no gas, and there is no anything."

Families like Vira's received vital assistance from Joint Emergency Response Ukraine (JERU), a collaboration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, and the Ukrainian NGO "We Are Brothers. We Are Ukrainians". They provided a stove and firewood, which brought hope, warmth, and a lifeline in a time of great need.

JERU's Country Director, Derya Mutlu, said: "Wherever we have been, winter has always been the biggest concern for people; whether they will have enough money for heating, whether families will be able to provide themselves with the necessary amount of firewood and fuel, heat their homes and pay unaffordable utility bills. That is why our winter projects always aim to meet these essential needs."

Since March 2022, JERU has provided winter assistance to more than 32,000 Ukrainians in remote areas of Kharkivska, Mykolaivska, Sumska and Zaporizka oblasts and to those people forced to leave their homes and settle in the relatively safe areas of Dnipropetrovska, Khmelnytska, Poltavska and Ternopilska oblasts. Derya highlighted that they could only have responded to all these needs with their national partners, who work closely with small communities and know their most urgent needs. He added: "During our visits to remote villages, we notice that people miss social interaction. Therefore, we see a great need for further psychosocial support, especially for older people in rural areas. Due to the proximity to the front line or border of Ukraine with the Russian Federation, children are forced to study online. Thus, psychologists' sessions always provide fresh air for them. We believe that to reach long-lasting positive results, we must work closely with our Ukrainian partners and share our capacities and experience with them."⁴

"Wherever we have been, winter has always been the biggest concern for people; whether they will have enough money for heating, whether families will be able to provide themselves with the necessary amount of firewood and fuel, heat their homes and pay unaffordable utility bills. That is why our winter projects always aim to meet these essential needs."

⁴ Read the full story here: https://pooledfunds.impact.unocha.org/stories/helping-people-to-survive-the-winter

Risk Sharing and Risk Management

Risk Sharing

The delivery of humanitarian assistance is an inherently risky business. Humanitarian actors, especially national or local organizations, often operate in very high-risk contexts. Risk Management commonly involves the identification of risk and then the 'treatment' of risk, which can include risk reduction, transfer, avoidance or acceptance. Unfortunately, traditional risk management strategies have largely generated risk transfer to implementing partners. This places an unfair burden, particularly on national actors who are legally liable for fiduciary and compliance risks as well as most of the safety, security and reputational risks. This approach is proving increasingly challenging and new, more equitable approaches are needed.

In 2023, the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF), in collaboration with the Country-based Pool Funds (CBPFs) Section, engaged with stakeholders to develop practical ways that risk sharing can be operationalized in Ukraine. With the support of implementing partners, the UHF has been piloting several initiatives that aim to reduce barriers to direct funding and share the burden of risk more equally along the implementation chain based on the findings and recommendations of the review mentioned above. These initiatives include:

- Development of a Contextualized Capacity Assessment (CCA) for national civil society organizations (CSOs) partners – see below.
- Ensuring the safety and security of front-line responders through the provision of a duty of care package of support, including security-related and first aid training, stress management psychosocial support and personal protection equipment (PPE).
- Increase flexible funding to local actors, including through micro-grants (donation agreements) to smaller front-line responders (CBOs

and volunteer groups) with reduced reporting requirements.

 Ensure that, as much as possible, UHF granting partners provide a fair share of overhead costs and programme support costs (PSC), which local actors cite as critical for their long-term sustainability.

Contextualized Capacity Assessment

In August 2023, the UHF Advisory Board tasked the Humanitarian Finance Unit (HFU) to develop and pilot a contextualized capacity assessment tool specifically aimed at smaller national Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs. Based on feedback received from national partners and in line with CBPF Global Guidance, the HFU has extensively reviewed the CBPF capacity assessment tools and due diligence requirements and developed a new contextualized tool that aimed to make it easier for local actors to access funding.

The UHF identified 17 CSOs, and they were provided with extensive training on CBPF requirements and project submission on the Grant Management System (GMS). These partners could apply for a maximum of US\$250,000. Projects funded under this pilot closely monitored and the partners supported with the implementation of a capacity development plan. The UHF will adopt the principles of good partnership and take a more mentoring approach to partner management. Based on the successful completion of the capacity development plan and implementation of projects, partners will be able to apply for a maximum of \$500,000 under a future UHF Allocation. Capacity will be monitored, and after the successful completion of three projects, partners will be able to apply for the full CBPF Capacity Assessment.









Risk Management of Projects

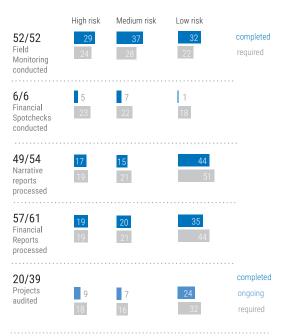
In 2023, the UHF team decentralized to five OCHA sub-offices in locations of strategic importance to the humanitarian response and close to most national actors. The decentralization of the Fund enhanced relationships with partners and led to improved adherence to the UHF assurance requirements. With the significant reduction in donor funding, the frequency of UHF allocations slowed down in 2023 compared to the response scale-up period of 2022. This provided the UHF with more opportunities to carry out project monitoring and financial spot checks.

For all accessible areas, the UHF staff monitored the projects in person. The UHF utilized virtual monitoring processes to manage the implementation of four projects undertaken by two partners in areas occupied by the Russian Federation. Overall, the UHF achieved more than 100 per cent compliance with the Operational Manual requirements in terms of programme monitoring. The UHF conducted 98 monitoring incidents out of 74 which required monitoring. In addition, two monitoring exceptions were granted. On final narrative reports received from partners, the UHF achieved 83 per cent compliance, having received 76 reports of the required 91 reports.

On final financial reporting by partners, the UHF achieved an 88 per cent compliance rate. However, due to an acute shortage of finance staffing in the UHF, the Fund managed only 20 per cent of the required financial spot checks with two exceptions, resulting in a 23 per cent compliance. Having filled the vacant finance posts by the end of 2023, the UHF will ensure full compliance with required financial spot checks in 2024.

Regarding the audit of completed projects, the UHF had a total of 66 projects that were due for audit by the end of 2023. Of these, 40 projects were under audit at the end of 2023. The remaining 26 projects will be audited in 2024. The UHF has been working closely with the CBPF Section to finalise arrangements for partner-based audits for 42 projects to make the audit exercise efficient and cost-effective due to the expected high volume of projects that will become due for audit in 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION BY PARTNER RISK LEVEL TYPE



UPDATED RISK LEVEL BASED ON PERFORMANCE INDEX



UPDATED RISK LEVEL BASED ON PERFORMANCE INDEX



Partners with recommendation but not adjusted

Risk Management of Partners

By December 2023, the UHF had 143 eligible partners comprising 69 INGOs, 62 national international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (including CSO partners), 10 UN agencies and 2 partners from the Red Cross societies. The UHF carried out an open partnership drive from September 2022 to March 2023, under which 192 prospective partners applied for full capacity assessment. This resulted in 41 fully assessed new partners in addition to the 15 Contextualized Capacity Assessment (CCA) partners. At the same time, 12 inactive partners who had not received UHF grants in the past three years were made ineligible, and they could seek re-assessment in six months.

By the end of 2023, the UHF had 28 low-risk partners, of which 14 were INGOs, 7 national NGOs and 7 UN agencies. The Medium-Risk category had 72 partners, of which 45 were INGOs, 23 were national NGOs, 3 were UN agencies, and one was a Red Cross society member. Of the 43 high-risk partners, nine were INGOs, 31 were national partners, and one was a Red Cross society member. The 17 CCA partners were accommodated in the High-Risk category and were all national partners.

In early 2023, the UHF undertook a comprehensive revision of the UHF Risk Management Framework (RMF) to include risks associated with supporting partners working within the expanded area occupied by the Russian Federation. The review included operational challenges faced by the UHF partners, such as limited access to people in need or to the funds allocated by the UHF and limited means of procurement and distribution of relief items. The impact of limited access to project locations and partner offices on UHF's assurance activities was also analysed.

Risk Management of Funding

In 2023, the UHF introduced a robust analysis of the financial absorption capacity of partners that was applied to subsequent allocations. This led to instituting funding ceilings and a stated number of active projects that a partner could implement simultaneously, classified according to existing risk levels. Projects considered included those under which assessed partners were implementing directly as well as indirectly as sub-partners. This control measure was introduced to reduce the Fund's exposure to risk by distributing the funds to a larger number of partners and ensuring that each partner had the corresponding capacity to manage the funds entrusted to them.

Regarding instances of potential diversion, misconduct or fraud, the UHF received three self-reported instances, and one incident of non-compliance observed by the UHF staff. All these incidents are under the review of the Oversight and Compliance Unit (OCU). Initial assessment does not indicate any loss to the UHF.

Annexes

Annexes list

Annexes title

24	ANNEX A	2023 UHF ADVISORY BOARD
25	ANNEX B	ACRONYMS
27	ANNEX C	COMMON PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
28	ANNEX D	REVIEW OF SMALL GRANTS RECOMMENDATIONS

ANNEX A 2023 UHF ADVISORY BOARD

STAKEHOLDER	ORGANIZATION
Chairperson	Humanitarian Coordinator
Donor	Government of Germany
Donor	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)
Donor	United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)
UN	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
INGO	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
INGO	International Rescue Committee (IRC)
INGO	Medical Teams International (MTI)
NNGO	Development Center (DC)
NNGO	NGO Resource Center (NGORC)
NNGO	East SOS
Observer	NGO Coordination Forum
UHF/OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

2023 ACRONYMS

ΑΑΡ	Accountability to the affected people
AB	Advisory Board
ABC	Area-based coordination
CBO	Community-based organization
CBPF	Country-Based Pooled Fund
CCA	Contextualized Capacity Assessment
СССМ	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CMCoord	Civil-military coordination
CPF	Common Performance Framework
CSO	Civil society organization
CVA	Cash and voucher assistance
EO	Executive Officer
EORE	Explosive ordnance risk education
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCDO	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GAM	Gender with Age Maker
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GenCap	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity Project
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GMS	Grant Management System
НС	Humanitarian Coordinator
НСТ	Humanitarian Country Team
HFU	Humanitarian Financing Unit (OCHA)
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle

ANNEXES

HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
INGO	International non-governmental organization
LMD	Last-mile delivery
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MPC	Multi-purpose cash
MPCA	Multi-purpose cash assistance
NFI	Non-food item
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NNGO	National non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCU	Oversight and Compliance Unit
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
PiN	People in need
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PPI	Partner Performance Index
PSC	Programme support costs
PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RA	Reserve Allocation
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RMF	Risk Management Framework
SA	Standard Allocation
SCA	Simplified capacity assessment
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SoP	Standard Operating Procedure
UHF	Ukraine Humanitarian Fund
UN	United Nations
vo	Volunteer organization
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WG	Working Group
WLO	Women-led organization
WRO	Women's right organization

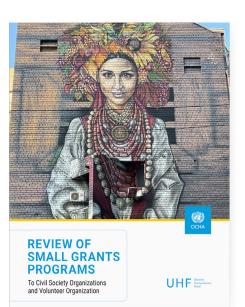
ANNEX C COMMON PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



performance against a management tool that provides a set of indicators to assess how well a Fund performs in relation to the policy objectives and operational standards set out in the Countrybased Pool Funds (CBPF) Global Guidelines. This common methodology enables management and stakeholders involved in the governance of the Funds to identify, analyze and address challenges in reaching and maintaining a well-performing CBPF.

The UHF measures its

CBPFs embody the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and function according to a set of specific principles: Inclusiveness, Flexibility, Timeliness, Efficiency, Accountability and Risk Management.



REVIEW OF SMALL GRANTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dowload the full report

ANNEX D



Fund

UNOCHA.ORG/UKRAINE GMS.UNOCHA.ORG FTS.UNOCHA.ORG CRISISRELIEF.UN.ORG CBPF.DATA.UNOCHA.ORG

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