

War in Ukraine

Two years since February 2022 escalation



Summary

Nearly two years since the war in Ukraine dramatically escalated across the whole country, MSF teams have continued to respond. However, some activities are now being wound up or handed over. MSF activities for the last 12 months have focused on providing medical and mental health care in the east and south of the country, but we have responded to other needs, notably for physiotherapy, in central Ukraine.

MSF's activities in Ukraine before 2022

MSF first worked in Ukraine in 1999. The initial focus for our activities was on providing treatment for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C. Since 2014, war has been simmering in eastern Ukraine, in Luhansk and Donetsk *oblasts* (provinces). For people living in small villages close to the fighting, access to healthcare remained a challenge. Between 2014 and 2019, MSF assisted conflict-affected people in the region by running mobile clinics, offering healthcare workers peer support, and training them to provide mental health care to patients.

In 2020, MSF handed over a three-year hepatitis C project in Mykolaiv, and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in Zhytomyr and Donetsk oblasts by donating personal protective equipment, rapid diagnostic tests, and oxygen concentrators to health facilities. We also offered psychological support to healthcare workers, and to patients and communities. In Donetsk oblast, MSF treated patients with mild to moderate symptoms in their homes through our mobile clinics.

After the escalation and MSF's humanitarian and medical activities

Following continuous low-level conflict in eastern Ukraine since 2014, on 24 February 2022, Russian forces attacked multiple cities across all of Ukraine, leading to full-scale war. As of late January 2024, the intense fighting and shelling have left 3.7 million people internally displaced and 6.3 million have left the country as refugees.¹ MSF teams working in eastern Ukraine have suspended our usual medical activities, including our HIV programmes.

For our response during 2022, please refer to the report produced in February 2023, or refer to the articles listed on the War in Ukraine topic page on [msf.org](https://www.msf.org/war-ukraine), <https://www.msf.org/war-ukraine>.

Response to the war during 2023

Ukraine

Working predominantly in the south and east, MSF teams during 2023 continued to support the Ukrainian healthcare system by filling in the gaps caused by the war. Our teams work across five key groups of activities:

- evacuations and referrals;
- medical and mental health care via mobile clinics;
- surgical, emergency and intensive care services;
- physiotherapy; and
- treatment for post-traumatic stress.



Eastern and southern Ukraine

Medical evacuations and referrals by train and ambulance

Medical evacuation train: east and south of Ukraine to the west of Ukraine

Ambulance referrals: Donetsk, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

Near the frontlines in the east and south, the healthcare system has struggled to cope with both the old and new emerging medical needs caused by the fighting. To support the healthcare system, MSF has implemented an evacuation strategy, which moves patients from overburdened Ukrainian hospitals close to the frontlines, to safer Ukrainian hospitals with more capacity. We have 15 ambulances and have been running a medically equipped train to transfer patients, both capable of transporting those in critical condition. Due to a shift in the war's dynamic, whereby patients stay in eastern Ukraine, rather than being referred to the west, our activities using the train have wound down. To support the evacuation and referral system, we also run a stabilization point in Kherson oblast.

¹UNHCR - <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/>

Medical and mental health care via mobile clinics

Locations: Donetsk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Poltava and Kharkiv oblasts.

The war has disrupted continuity of care for those living with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, and the mental health of people after experiencing fear, isolation and fighting – both for internally displaced people and those still living near the frontlines. MSF mobile clinic teams of psychologists, doctors and health promoters are supporting patients and communities in several locations in eastern Ukraine – especially those living in displaced people’s shelters and areas with few healthcare staff – with medical consultations, psychological consultations, medical and non-medical donations. We ended these activities in Poltava oblast at the end of 2023. We are also supporting the capacity of the healthcare system by reconstructing health facilities and training healthcare staff.



MSF medical staff consult with a patient at a mobile clinic in a village in Donetsk oblast. Ukraine, August 2023. © Yuliia Trofimova/MSF

Surgical, emergency and intensive care services

Locations: Donetsk oblast, and hospitals in Kherson city, Kherson oblast

Near the eastern and southern frontline areas, our teams are seeing patients with traumatic injuries from shelling, bomb and shrapnel blasts. Health facilities also continue to treat patients with high needs, for example people injured in car accidents or those who experience heart attacks or strokes. We have run emergency departments and provided surgical care to patients at hospitals in Donetsk oblast. MSF currently has a mobile emergency response team that provides surge capacity for emergency and surgical response in hospitals, and which also provides training to staff. In Tropinykh hospital in Kherson city, we support the surgical unit with staff, including surgeons and anaesthetists.

Most of the patient admissions are related to violent trauma, with one in every five patients being in a critical, life-threatening condition. MSF staff alleviate the burden on the healthcare system, and specifically on the trauma centres, by triaging and stabilising patients. The staff assess the needs, determine the urgency and, depending on the needs, stabilise the patient and refer them to an in-hospital department, to emergency surgery, or refer them to other Ministry of Health hospitals.

Physiotherapy

Locations: Poltava, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Zhytomyr, and Sumy

A huge number of people have suffered severe injuries caused by the war, needing adequate, early post-surgical treatment. MSF teams are supporting the Ukrainian healthcare system with specialisation and training in physiotherapy and post-operative care, as well as psychological consultations. Rehabilitation and mental health services were not particularly developed in the healthcare system prior to the war, but the large number of people with major injuries needing post-operative care is enormous; the trauma patients we see are at risk of developing long-term medical problems or permanent disabilities without proper care.

MSF provides both theoretical and on-the-job physiotherapist training to the staff involved in physical rehabilitation of war-wounded patients at different hospitals – one in Mykolaiv and two hospitals in Kharkiv oblast. Until the end of 2023, we also provided these activities to two hospitals in Poltava oblast.

We have provided training and donations to an early rehabilitation project for war wounded Zhytomyr oblast, where we also provide training and technical support to hospitals.

Central Ukraine

Medical and mental health care via mobile clinics

Locations: Kirovohrad

In Kirovohrad oblast, MSF teams provided internally displaced people with medical care via mobile clinics until January 2024. Teams also provided mental health support, including psychologists who provided psychoeducation and recreational activities to patients.

Physiotherapy

Locations: Kyiv city, Vinnytsia city, Cherkasy, Kropyvnytskyi

We run an early rehabilitation project for war wounded at the Ministry of Health hospital in Cherkasy oblast, where we support war wounded patients with physiotherapy, psychological and nursing care. We also provide training and technical support to the hospital.

Until November 2023, MSF ran rehabilitation projects for war-wounded people in a hospital in Kyiv managed by the Ministry of Interior and in a hospital in Vinnytsia, managed by the Ministry of Health. In both places we provided physiotherapy, and mental health and social services, including counselling. We handed over these activities to French medical NGO Mehad in November, who continue to develop activities.

Our teams provided theoretical and on-the-job training to physiotherapists at a hospital in Kropyvnytskyi, in Kirovohrad oblast. We ended our activities here in January 2024.



Physiotherapist Viktoriia Vantsarovska works with a patient at the MSF rehabilitation project in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, September 2023. ©Verity Kowal/MSF

Treatment for post-traumatic stress

Location: Vinnytsia

In 2023, MSF started providing specialised psychotherapeutic services for people experiencing war-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in Vinnytsia, with a new, custom designed mental health centre that opened in September. We offer psychological sessions for both individuals and members of the patient's support network. Our specialists provide them with techniques to help reduce and prevent worsening of symptoms, increase their coping skills, improve interpersonal functionality, and decrease consequences of traumatic stress.

A specially trained mental health promotion team is responsible for community engagement and mobilisation through partnerships with key organisations and other health providers in Vinnytsia city. In addition, we train medical doctors, psychologists, and social workers in partner organisations, and medical staff in basic healthcare centres in referral criteria to MSF services.

Tuberculosis treatment

Locations: Zhytomyr oblast

In Zhytomyr, the tuberculosis project that we had been running there for five years closed. At the end of November, we handed over our biosafety level 3 laboratory, used for TB diagnosis, to the Ministry of Health.

Other activities

Since the beginning of 2023, MSF made nearly 600 donations (amounting to a value of more than €2 million) of medicines, medical consumables and equipment, hygiene kits and blankets. We've also made donations to 96 different health facilities across nine different regions of Ukraine – to 35 facilities providing basic healthcare services and 61 specialised healthcare facilities.

MSF response in figures—Ukraine

Medical train (figures covering period 28.03.22 – 31.10.23)

133 medical train trips
3,727 patients transported

Ambulance referrals (figures 06.05.22 – 31.10.23)

9,745 transportations
1,530 intensive care-level transportations
62 per cent of transported patients with violent trauma

Mobile clinics (figures 01.01.23 – 31.10.23)

12,334 individual mental health consultations
61,929 outpatient consultations
2,451 sexual and reproductive health consultations

Emergency and surgical (figures 01.09.22 – 31.10.23)

3,078 emergency room admissions
319 surgical interventions (both assisted and performed by MSF)

Physiotherapy (figures 01.04.22 – 31.10.23)

19,773 physiotherapy sessions
1,007 patients

Treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (figures 01.05.23 – 31.12.23)

778 counselling sessions
237 patients

Expenditure during 2023

Total: €31.3 million

2024 outlook

Budget forecast for activities in Ukraine in 2024: €12.2 million

During 2024, our teams continue to treat patients with post-traumatic stress disorder at a centre in Vinnytsia. In eastern Ukraine, we are continuing to run ambulance services and mobile emergency medical response near the frontlines, including supporting hospitals in Kherson city with surgical staff. MSF also continues the support for war wounded patients with physiotherapy, psychological and nursing care at the early rehabilitation project at the Ministry of Health hospital in Cherkasy oblast.

Poland

In Poland, MSF teams are working with the Ministry of Health to ensure that patients can access treatment for drug-resistant tuberculosis, including those previously supported by MSF in Ukraine.

Expenditure during 2023

Total: €1.19 million

Russia

MSF has been present in Russia for 30 years. We work with partner organisations in St Petersburg and Moscow ensuring people from Ukraine living with HIV and/or hepatitis C continue to receive treatment.

To respond to the needs resulting from the war in Ukraine, we work in close collaboration and partnership with regional non-governmental organisations in Voronezh, Belgorod and Rostov-on-Don regions. A team of local social workers, medical consultants, psychologists, and legal counsellors ensure that people from Ukraine receive medical services in licensed medical clinics and have access to other state healthcare and social services. When necessary, we cover any medical care gaps and pay for the necessary medications and medical consultations. We also provide people with food, hygiene kits, and small household items when needed.

From August 2023, the support for Voronezh – a partner NGO – ceased and a new partnership started with an NGO assisting a temporary accommodation centre in Taganrog, Rostov region. Many people displaced come to the centre without anything, therefore we provide essential food and personal hygiene items. Those in need of medical and mental health care are seen by a doctor and a psychologist from the partner NGO.

MSF response in figures—Russia

20,567 people who have received support

6,450 people who have received medical support, of whom **4,093** received mental health support.

Expenditure during 2023

Our response in Russia was not covered by the Ukraine Emergency Fund.

Total: €1.26 million

Budget forecasted for 2024: €1.71 million