

Ukraine humanitarian crisis: Ensuring protection and health services for millions of people living with chronic diseases

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

- The NCD Alliance joins the urgent call from its members, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other key humanitarian actors to all parties to protect the civil population and respect the Geneva Conventions and their First Additional Protocol, fully applicable in the international armed conflict taking place in Ukraine.
- Health must be a priority of the humanitarian response and include the continuation of essential health services, including supplies and medicines for people living with chronic conditions.

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 (Geneva, Switzerland) -- Globally, an estimated [22 percent of people live with one or more noncommunicable disease \(NCD\)](#) [3], such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental and neurological conditions.

For Ukraine's population of 44 million, this means some nine million people are living with NCDs, including [over two million people](#) [3] living with [diabetes](#) [4]. In addition, nearly [a third of the population](#) [5] live with high blood pressure.

[NCDs are the leading cause of premature death in Ukraine](#) [6] and accounted for [91 percent](#) [7] of the 617 000 annual deaths in the country last year. The NCD with the highest mortality by far in Ukraine is cardiovascular diseases (63 percent of NCD deaths), followed by cancer (15 percent of NCD deaths).

"In any humanitarian crisis, ensuring access to essential medications and health services must be prioritised for those whose lives depend on them," said Katie Dain, CEO of the NCD Alliance.

Chronic conditions often require regular treatment or medical appointments to ensure people remain in the best possible health and to prevent complications. In addition to the catastrophic toll of the conflict, many more people will see their lives and wellbeing threatened as some essential health services, including first-aid, prehospital and hospital care, have become inaccessible as a result of the conflict.

The Ukrainian government announced on 7 March that 34 hospitals have been damaged or destroyed since 24 February. As of 4 March, over 300 healthcare facilities have found themselves along conflict lines or changed areas of control (including 159 hospitals, 153 primary healthcare centres, 4 laboratories). Another 618 health facilities are within 10km of the conflict lines.

“We call on all actors involved in this armed conflict to support Ukrainians by ensuring access to healthcare both for those remaining within the national borders and those who have fled to neighbouring countries. This care should be adapted to the needs of this population, following appropriate assessments and adhering to at least the [Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#) [8],” said Dain.

The NCD movement is responding to the urgent need for aid in Ukraine. Below is a snapshot of responses from NCDA partners and members:

- The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) [9] is working closely with its offices in Ukraine to rapidly respond to the health emergency and minimize disruptions to the delivery of critical healthcare services and treatment. WHO is working with the Ukraine Ministry of Health and WHO Regional Office to assess NCD needs, including insulin and medical supplies to direct emergency procurement and donations. NCDs are among the key health risks identified by the first [WHO Ukraine Public Health Situation Analysis \(PHSA\)](#) [10], carried out in March 2022. WHO priorities during this emergency include meeting trauma needs for injured patients and controlling infectious disease outbreaks, as well as essential health services and medications for people living with NCDs and infrastructural support to hospitals so they can remain functional, safe and accessible to all who need them. The WHO estimates that this may incur a cost of USD 57.5 million.
- The [International Diabetes Federation \(IDF\)](#) [11] is closely monitoring the situation to ensure that emergency relief is provided to 2.3 million Ukrainians living with diabetes. IDF is also calling on all its members to join the [Connect Solidarity network](#) [12] to support Ukrainian refugees living with diabetes across Europe. WHO, in partnership with the Ukraine Ministry of Health and its Regional Office, is assessing needs for insulin and medical supplies across the 24 oblasts in order to direct emergency procurement and donations.
- NCD Alliance supporter [Direct Relief](#) [13] has mobilised its resources to support medical needs in the country as they become known. Direct Relief has shipped USD 26 million in lifesaving medical aid to Ukraine over the past six months, with the most recent shipment arriving last week with USD 5.4 million in medical aid for a Ukrainian NGO that serves hospitals, ambulance stations and medical centres.
- The [Union for International Cancer Control \(UICC\)](#) [14] is responding by setting up a Solidarity Fund to help bridge funding into the region to support the needs of cancer organisations struggling to serve patients affected by the conflict. The majority of people with cancer in conflict-affected areas are unable to get appropriate care, as regions become inaccessible, hospitals damaged or destroyed, and health workers are injured, killed or displaced. Health systems in neighbouring countries also risk being overwhelmed by refugees. WHO in partnership with City Cancer Challenge (C/CAN), is undertaking a rapid assessment of cancer facilities across various modalities of treatment.
- The [World Heart Federation \(WHF\)](#) [15] is extremely concerned by the current situation in Ukraine, and calls for an immediate end to all violence, and a swift and peaceful resolution in order to avoid further loss of life and the collapse of the health system in Ukraine. WHF is committed to advocating for the safety of health providers, who are on the frontlines, caring for the sick and saving lives.

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About the NCD Alliance

The NCD Alliance (NCDA) is a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to supporting a world free from preventable suffering, disability and death caused by noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Founded in 2009, NCDA brings together a unique network of over 300 members in more than 80 countries into a respected, united and credible global civil society movement. The movement is unified by the cross-cutting nature of common risk factors including unhealthy diets, harmful use of alcohol, tobacco smoking, air pollution and physical inactivity, and the system solutions for chronic NCDs such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, mental health and neurological disorders. www.ncdalliance.org [17]

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[3] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30264-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30264-3/fulltext)

[4] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/diabetes>

[5] <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240000490>

[6] <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ukraine-phsa-shortform-030322.pdf>

[7] <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240000490>

[8] <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>

[9] <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/ukraine-emergency>

[10] [https://healthcluster.who.int/publications/m/item/ukraine-public-health-situation-analysis-\(phsa\)---short-form](https://healthcluster.who.int/publications/m/item/ukraine-public-health-situation-analysis-(phsa)---short-form)

[11] <https://www.idf.org/news/255:idf-member-direct-relief-mobilises-to-provide-emergency-health-supplies-in-ukraine.html>

[12] <https://www.connectsolidarity.eu/>

[13] <https://www.directrelief.org/>

[14] https://mailchi.mp/uicc.org/ukraine_solidarity_cancer_fund?e=f6e8093b5f

[15] <https://world-heart-federation.org/news/world-heart-federation-expresses-unequivocal-support-for-ukraine-and-its-people/>

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