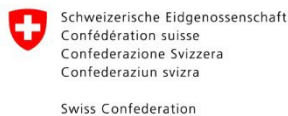


# DRC



## DRC Ukraine Newsletter: June 2022



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In Ukraine, landmines and other explosive remnants of war pose an increasingly growing threat to the freedom of movement and safety of civilians. The main aim of humanitarian demining – like that carried out by DRC – is to restore peace and safety, as well as access to land and infrastructure in communities affected by conflict and explosive ordnance.

I am familiar with what Ukrainians are currently going through, because I had a similar experience 23 years ago in my country, Kosovo. It has made it even more important for me to support DRC's humanitarian mine action in Ukraine where our demining teams tirelessly clear the contaminated territories and thereby reduce the risk of accidents. It makes me proud that I can help with my experience in Ukraine, supporting also the building of national demining capacity.

DRC was among the first international organisations that resumed humanitarian mine action after conflict erupted on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Currently, we have deployed four demining teams and a non-technical survey team to conduct clearance and survey in Chernihiv Oblast in the north of Ukraine. They will be

working for the next couple of months in this area until the job is done and we have a new designated location.

It takes a specific personality and the right skill set to work as a deminer who needs to be constantly focused and extremely cautious when they clear territories inch by inch, regardless of heat or cold. However, they do not work alone. Team leaders make sure that standard operating procedures are followed and paramedics are always near in case of an emergency. Also, supervisors and international technical advisors assist the teams technically and administratively to conduct demining activities in the safest way.

We see now that the demining task is evolving by the day and is an ever-urgent issue in Ukraine. Every cleared hazardous area has a great impact on the communities — it allows adults and children to move around with no fear, get back to their homes safely, and step by step return to a peaceful life.

*Mentor Roka,  
Humanitarian Mine Action Technical Field Manager, Ukraine*

## Protection



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The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine has deprived millions of people of their rights to access basic needs which raised protection risks for vulnerable individuals and groups. Moreover, internally displaced persons or people living close to active combat zones are in dire need of protection and access to basic services and food. DRC's Protection Team has provided a support grant to a civil society organisation in Lviv in western Ukraine – the Charitable Foundation Litterarum Cupidus – for emergency assistance to the affected population in their area.

This has allowed for 600 food packages to be distributed among the most vulnerable families displaced in Lviv, and the conflict-affected families that stay at their homes in the southeast of Ukraine. This assistance was funded by the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

*“It is the fullest food kit we received and it will help us greatly. This set is enough for our family to have meals for three weeks. It's especially helpful that the kit includes long-storage milk and sunflower oil”,* says Liudmyla, one of the displaced women supported under the project.

*By Vsevolod Borovets, Protection Assistant, Lviv*



# Legal Assistance



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Valentyna, 46, is currently residing far from her home in Mykolaiv Oblast in the south of Ukraine, where intense fighting is forcing people to flee their areas. Her daughter left for Poland after the Russian Federation launched a military offensive on February 24, and Valentyna planned to join her. However, she was not allowed to cross the border as she was subject to a travel ban issued, by court order in 2014.

Confused, Valentyna returned in despair from the crossing point to Lviv in western Ukraine, where she found temporary refuge. She did not know why there was such a ban, so she turned to DRC lawyers for help.

DRC managed to solve the problem remotely. We collected the necessary documents and made a request to the state institutions of Ukraine with the requirements to verify the data of the case and to lift the travel ban. It turned out that the enforcement proceedings, on which the decision to ban travel was made, were closed in 2017 but the executor did not lift all the bans.

Following consideration of the application, the State Border Guard Service was informed about the lifting of the temporary restriction on Valentina's right to leave Ukraine. Valentina soon left for Poland. Directly from the crossing point, she called us and was happy to announce that she would soon see her daughter.

The provision of legal aid is funded by the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

*By Oksana Chekmeniova, DRC Legal Aid Officer, Dnipro*

# Capacity Building Programme



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The NGO Lviv Mediation Center is based in western Ukraine. Since 2015, they have been advocating and creating awareness of the culture of peaceful dispute resolution.

Following the conflict escalation in 2014, Lviv Mediation Center's representatives have been involved in volunteering and providing humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected people arriving from elsewhere in the country, primarily the east. In June, they joined DRC efforts to respond to the crisis evolving in Ukraine since February 2022.

They have established five mobile teams with experienced mediators and psychologists, who will provide conflict-related and psychological counselling to internally displaced people living in temporary shelters and to volunteers or staff working in those shelters. The mobile teams aim to expand their outreach and work in shelters also in Stryi, Rivne, Uzhhorod and Mukachevo, all in western Ukraine.

*"Our assistance will hopefully reduce the stress of people living in shelters. It will also help decrease tensions between displaced people, unavoidable in such a setting. Besides, we strive to raise awareness of conflict resolution tools and non-violent communication among displaced, contributing to the culture of peaceful conflict settlement in the long run,"* says Anna, a representative of Lviv Mediation Centre.

With support from DRC, the mobile teams will also collect information about various needs of the shelters and establish referral mechanisms to make sure people are directed to the right support.

*By Yuliia Demchuk, Peacebuilding Specialist, Kyiv*

## Economic Recovery Livelihoods



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Food for Life is an aid organisation that provides about 2,000 people in Ukraine's central Dnipro city with hot meals every day. *"The grant from DRC helps us support those in need,"* says Yuri, director of Food for Life.

Operating in Ukraine since 1994, Food for Life has an extensive network of volunteers and distribution centres. The day after the conflict broke out earlier this year, they already began to respond.

*"That day we prepared 500 meals, which were distributed to volunteer centres and others places where people in need gathered. By mid-March, we had already reached 2,000 servings and we have kept this level ever since,"* Yuri adds.

The organisation provides hot meals to internally displaced as well as to the elderly and to patients in hospitals who remain in the city and also need support. Currently, Food for Life collects requests from individuals with children who need food and hygiene products. The plan is to distribute aid to this group once a month.

DRC supported the work of Food for Life through funding from the Government of Switzerland and UKaid.

*By Volodymyr Malynka, Communications Officer, Kyiv*



# Humanitarian Disarmament & Peacebuilding



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Across Ukraine, civilians suffer from deterioration of the security situation.

Mykola\*, a 10-year-old boy who lives in a small village in Chernihiv Oblast, often travels several kilometres by bicycle to a location where he found a destroyed self-propelled missile, a Howitzer. He collected ammunition littered there and was excited to show his findings to his friends. With schools closed – either because they were destroyed or contaminated with explosive ordnance – more children were left with nothing to do and look for entertainment. In some cases, throwing ammunition into a fire and watching it explode is one of them.

Anti-Personnel, Anti-Vehicle mines, as well as unexploded ordnance threaten the lives of civilians. Given that clearance may take years, DRC strives to meet the needs of communities by raising awareness about the risks of mines and other explosive ordnance, and carry out risk education media campaigns. These activities help creating life-saving awareness for boys like Mykola and his friends, and are possible with the support of the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

*\*Name changed for confidentiality purposes.*

*By Hanna Reshetnikova, HDP Programme Officer, Kyiv*