



Direct Humanitarian Assistance

Snapshot of Plan International's Impact
in East and Central Europe (2022-2025)



About Plan International's Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response

Plan International initiated its Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response immediately following the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 by setting up operations in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. The organisation established a presence within Ukraine in August 2022 and has since been amplifying civil society partners' integrated humanitarian programming in East and Central Europe (ECE).

Plan International and partners' humanitarian response aims to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks faced by refugees, displaced and conflict-affected people inside Ukraine and host countries. Whilst providing direct life-saving humanitarian assistance, Plan International's objective is also to address structural inequalities and promote social, gender, and economic justice across ECE by increasing the resilience, well-being, and agency of girls, young people, as well as minority or non-dominant groups.

By consistently maintaining partner spending above 70%, Plan International's localised and partner-led approach has ensured faster, more contextual and sustainable delivery of assistance, whilst strengthening the long-term capacity of local civil society actors in ECE. From 2022 to 2025, this approach has allowed Plan International to reach more than 1.7 million people across 65 partners and 87 projects in four countries.

Plan International's reach by country in ECE



Key insights

Across all countries, Plan International and partners' humanitarian response has been characterised by adaptability and dignity-centred approaches to ensure that the immediate needs and long-term resilience of displaced and refugee communities were addressed:

- Emergency assistance through various modalities, including cash and voucher assistance, has allowed Plan International and partners to meet the evolving needs of displaced and refugee communities in Ukraine and host countries.
- Whilst interventions primarily addressed urgent needs in ECE, they also enhanced participants' well-being and social adaptation, leading to improved integration for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in their new communities.

507K

people reached by Plan International and partners' **direct humanitarian assistance** in ECE.

Impact of Direct Humanitarian Assistance Interventions¹

Since the onset of the crisis, Plan International and partners have laid a strong foundation for cash programming in Ukraine to meet the evolving needs of affected communities. This approach enabled recipient households to preserve their dignity by covering their basic needs and improving their financial stability. It also empowered local partners to deliver more sustainable and impactful assistance. Although CVA has been primarily used to cover needs related to medicines, food, and personal hygiene products, cash for winter energy has also allowed households to improve their situations.

Over the last year in **Ukraine**, direct life-saving support remained a priority for Plan International and partners as the war continued to disrupt the lives of children and families. Flexible modalities, including multi-purpose cash assistance, cash for protection, winterisation support, repair vouchers, non-food items (NFIs), and microgrants, enabled households to meet urgent needs quickly and effectively. These interventions have also been critical to strengthen coping mechanisms, support protection outcomes, and empower affected populations with agency. In areas where cash was not viable, such as during household evacuations from frontline areas, gifts-in-kind provided essential support.

About the CVA Modality

In 2024, Ukraine was the world's most significant cash response with an estimated USD 668M delivered in support of people in need.ⁱ By providing money or vouchers, CVA enables people in crisis to purchase what they need most, helping them regain control over their lives with dignity and choice.ⁱⁱ Following the 2022 Regional Refugee Response Plan,ⁱⁱⁱ Plan International delivered a total of **EUR 5.1M** in CVA to refugees and displaced communities in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland and Romania.

¹ Plan International has been using an integrated approach in its humanitarian response, working across multiple programmatic areas in projects. Whilst Plan International's entire strategy and project portfolio in ECE is humanitarian, interventions including protection and education work are humanitarian and often life-saving too. Direct humanitarian assistance thus covers CVA, food and non-food items, as well as emergency services.

About Winterisation Support

As part of its regional strategy in ECE, Plan International delivers emergency services to people in need. From October onwards, this includes **winterisation support** to cover harsh weather conditions. As per the CVA working groups' guidance, a thorough assessment by country teams and local partners ensures the best modality (i.e., in-kind or cash support) is selected to meet the needs of project participants.²

effective for refugee households to meet critical health-care needs and enhance their food security. In the last year, Plan International continued to provide humanitarian assistance in Moldova by providing emergency packages and services at the borders according to the needs of refugees from Ukraine.

In **Romania**, Plan International's partners ensured support for both refugees and host communities through an emergency shelter and mobile outreach, which met basic needs and promoted integration. The emergency shelter in Bucharest was the first point of entry for families arriving in Romania, whilst the mobile team supported refugees in private accommodations by distributing food and NFIs, providing social work services, and assisting with documentation and navigating the Romanian social system. Community facilitators and information officers also supported refugees to register at community centres, access services and referrals, as well as receive counselling for temporary protection and medical appointments. Whilst food vouchers were also delivered, the various modalities of partners' humanitarian interventions in Romania were particularly relevant for refugees in a context where most organisations provided food support only.

In host countries, emergency assistance through various modalities remained central for Plan International and partners to meet the immediate needs of refugees. Throughout the years, Plan International **Moldova** and its partners distributed winter kits, food, hygiene items, and CVA, whilst helping refugees navigate systems and access services. The distribution of medical and food vouchers has been particularly

² In Ukraine, winterisation may also take the shape of in-kind distributions, with clothing and blankets distributed to families in need, particularly those with children, individuals with disabilities and older people.



Mother and her daughter look for clothes at the Moldova for Peace warehouse © Plan International

Finally, in **Poland**, Plan International adapted its programming with partners to reflect the evolving humanitarian landscape. Interventions initially focused on emergency aid, cash assistance and NFIs to meet refugees' immediate needs. Whilst Plan International and partners continued the delivery of CVA and hygiene kits, refugee arrivals stabilised in Poland from 2024 onwards. Plan International thus pivoted toward medium-term support, emphasising access to services, housing, education, and long-term MHPSS support. This ensured continued relevance and impact in a changing humanitarian landscape in Poland.

Whilst Plan International and partners' humanitarian interventions mainly addressed immediate needs in ECE, they also enhanced participants'

well-being and social adaptation, leading to the integration of IDPs and refugees in their new communities. For instance, evidence from projects in **Ukraine** suggests that improved access to essential services, resources and more stable living conditions enhanced social cohesion and community engagement. Similarly, interventions integrated with education in **Poland** and in **Romania** have improved the integration and well-being of refugee families by proposing activities that facilitated the adoption of a lifestyle as close to normal as possible. Children's involvement in educational activities allowed parents to explore employment opportunities. Despite the disruptions brought on by relocation, families were able to restore a sense of continuity in their daily lives.



Mother and her daughter found support at the HumanDoc integration centre in Poland © Plan International



What have we learned through Plan International's research on humanitarian assistance?

Selected findings from Plan International's research

Although feedback mechanisms exist across all of Plan International's projects in ECE, understanding the potential barriers to reporting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is crucial, especially as the war in Ukraine has increased Ukrainian refugees' vulnerability to GBV and SEA in neighbouring countries.

According to a 2025 study by Plan International, CARE and the International Rescue Committee in **Poland**,^{iv} refugees from Ukraine often do not consider SEA reporting as a priority when receiving aid, as they instead **prioritise basic survival needs**. Findings demonstrate that **fear of losing access to services outweighs safety concerns**, partly due to social norms and taboos around abuse. According to the study, limited awareness of power imbalances during aid distribution further complicates the issue, underscoring the need for humanitarian workers to improve their understanding of these dynamics in ECE.

Because refugees from Ukraine are generally unaware of the SEA risks that could result from misconduct by humanitarian staff, **prevention** should be the primary focus for overcoming reporting barriers. Therefore, the study indicates that reporting can be facilitated through:

- Awareness-raising on rights, opportunities to report, and available mechanisms for aid recipients.
- Improving reporting mechanisms accessibility (i.e., simplification, language, multiple digital and physical entry-points) and confidentiality.
- Demonstrating accountability of mechanisms and processes in place.

Interested to learn more about about SEA underreporting in Poland?

See the following report:



Study Synthesis:
Research on Barriers
to SEA Reporting
(July 2025)




Plan staff visits an informal reception centre near the Polish border with Ukraine © Plan International

References

- OCHA (2025) Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) – Ukraine 2024 Response Analysis Snapshot (January to December 2024), Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ukraine/cash-and-voucher-assistance-cva-ukraine-2024-response-analysis-snapshot-january-december-2024>.
- Plan International (n.d.) Cash and voucher assistance in emergencies, Available at: <https://plan-international.org/emergencies/cash-voucher-assistance/>.
- UNHCR (2022) Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response
- Plan (March – December 2022). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/ukraine-situation-regional-refugee-response-plan-march-december-2022>.
- CARE, IRC and Plan International (2025) Study Synthesis: Research on Barriers to SEA Reporting. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/poland-en/publications/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-reporting/>.



About

Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.


Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.



 @plan-international

 @planinternational

 @planinternationaltv

 @plan.international

 @planinternational

 @planinternationalece

 @planglobal

 @planinternationalece