

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Ukraine: Humanitarian assistance, HC 891

Tuesday 29 November 2022

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 29 November 2022.

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Chris Law; Nigel Mills; David Mundell; Kate Osamor; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 1 - 43

Witnesses

I: Lesia Vasylenko, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament; Dr Natalia Tronenko, Co-Founder, British-Ukrainian Aid; Narmina Strishenets, Conflict and Humanitarian Policy, and Advocacy Adviser, Save the Children.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lesia Vasylenko, Dr Natalia Tronenko and Narmina Strishenets.

Q1 **Chair:** I would like to start this one-off session, which is looking at the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and surrounding countries. I am sure that everybody watching this and in the room is very well aware of the horrendous conflict that is happening. We are also very aware of the urgent and fast-moving situation when it comes to Ukrainian humanitarian aid and Ukrainian refugees. I think that it is the largest movement of refugees in Europe since the Second World War. We need assurances that UK and international aid is reaching people exactly where they are and with the sort of aid they need.

We are very lucky to have three strong women here in front of us. I will ask you to introduce yourselves individually. Thank you so much for being here. and for going on record about what is happening in your country. I can only imagine the stresses that you are all under, so I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. Could you introduce yourselves and say why you are here today?

Dr Tronenko: Hello. I am Natalia Tronenko. I am a linguist by profession. The reason I am here today is that eight years ago, along with two of my colleagues, I set up a charity called British-Ukrainian Aid because we wanted to do what we could to help Ukraine cope with the humanitarian crisis and the war.

Lesia Vasylenko: My name is Lesia Vasylenko. I am a Member of Parliament of Ukraine. I represent an opposition party called Holos, but these days—and for the last nine months—it is absolutely irrelevant whether you are a Member of Parliament from the majority or from the opposition. Parliament is united with the Government, the President and the people of Ukraine. We are all fighting the single evil, which is Russia and its aggression against our country.

Normally, I sit on the environmental committee, and I chair the sub-committee on climate change, an issue that is very close to my heart. These last nine months, all my efforts have been concentrated on international work, and on summoning and increasing the support that Ukraine can get and is getting from international partners.

Chair: Thank you. We will dig into all of that.

Narmina Strishenets: My name is Narmina Strishenets. I am conflict and humanitarian policy and advocacy adviser at Save the Children UK. At the same time, I am a Ukraine national and a beneficiary of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. It is a great honour to be here. Save the Children is a global organisation, and I am sure you are well aware of its operations globally. In Ukraine, we set up a presence back in 2014, which is quite a while ago. Since the escalation of the conflict in February this year, we expanded our operations to Poland, Lithuania, Romania and across Europe. Currently, we operate through three area offices in Kyiv, Dnipro



and Chernivtsi. We also work with 23 partners in Ukraine, reaching non-Government-controlled areas, but we do not have a presence there as an office, for obvious reasons.

To cover what we are doing in Ukraine, we are doing programming on nutrition, education, healthcare, WASH—water, sanitation and hygiene—and mental and psychosocial support. We are also running digital learning centres, and child-friendly spaces where children can learn to play and be children again in these circumstances.

Q2 Chair: You mentioned the UK scheme, Homes for Ukraine. Does Save the Children work in the UK on that scheme?

Narmina Strishenets: Save the Children used to support the first arrivals of Ukrainians at the very beginning when the scheme became available. It gave support with documentation and connecting with communities. There was a very good system of support in Wales. There was peer support with scout organisations, so the children who came to new schools and new environments could bond with their peers, feel at ease and learn the language. That was at the very beginning of this year. Right now, Homes for Ukraine and all immigration schemes still remain the focus of our attention, but less so.

We are a little alarmed about the information about some of the Ukrainian refugee families. We know that most of them are women and children: 70% of them are women and every third refugee is a child. We are aware that there are some issues with potential homelessness. The first six months of sponsor accommodation will expire soon, for some of them. A lot of families struggle with finding new homes for renting. Even if they have some funds and official employment, they struggle to get assurances from guarantors or any references that would enable them to rent private accommodation.

Q3 Chair: I will pause you there, because you are leading into another inquiry we are doing, looking at how we are supporting Ukrainians in the UK with ODA. Lesia, I have the first proper question, and it might seem a slightly odd one. What is an average day if you are living in a conflict zone in Ukraine? What does it look like? Do children go to school? Do you go to work?

Lesia Vasylenko: It depends on what part of Ukraine you live in. If you are living in the occupied areas, your day will be very different from the day of Ukrainians in western Ukraine, closer to the western borders. Let us take Ukraine in two zones.

The safest, of course, is closer to the western borders, where you still get the blackouts. When there are blackouts these days, starting from October, it is not just your internet that does not work. Your cellular coverage is down. You do not get to call your family or friends. You do not know what is going on in the apartment block that you are in. The blackout is total. Electricity comes back for a couple of hours, but the



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danger with winter temperatures dropping further is that the radiators will freeze.

In the older buildings, radiators will freeze within 24 to 48 hours. If they freeze, they cannot be reloaded again until spring. That means that the buildings remain cold. In the newer buildings, where the water system is in the basements, they can hold for maybe five to seven days, but after that, they freeze and cannot be reloaded again until springtime. That means living in minus 10 conditions. That means unliveable cities.

If you go further east and to the south-east, where there is the combat zone, these conditions that I have just described, where there is no electricity, no connectivity, seldom heat and no water, get even tougher. At the moment, we have 4.6 million people in Ukraine who have limited access to water and 1.4 million with no access to water. These are huge numbers. These are the official statistics from Ukraine.

You asked about the situation with schools. Schools cannot operate when there is no heating. Children in older classes still go to school, but they sit in classrooms that are 12° cold. For younger children, going to school stopped sometime in spring, when it became too dangerous because of the constant air raids, and the education was taken online. The online education is not available anymore because, again, the power grid and electricity are down. The situation in hospitals is that doctors are forced to operate with headlamps on, which raises the risk to outcomes for some basic procedures.

If we are talking about occupied territories, the situation is much worse. The problem is that information about what is going on there is very much lacking. It is haphazard as to when we can get a connection, because Russia does everything to cut off the connection, and the information connection between the Ukraine that is under the Ukrainian flag and the Ukraine that they hold under occupation. Once areas get de-occupied, we learn that the children were made to go to school, to learn Russian and to learn the Russian version of history from Russian books. They are essentially being turned into Russian propagandists.

It is dangerous to come out in the street when you have Ukrainian content on your phone. If you have a photo of you carrying a Ukrainian flag, if you have a text message with your family in Kyiv, west Ukraine or wherever they are, or even implying that you might be in support of Ukrainian armed forces, there is a risk that you will be abducted—this is the only word I can use—from the streets and taken into detention facilities, the torture centres they operate, or deportation or filtration facilities. All these words that we attribute back to the 1940s era of the Second World War and the atrocities there are a reality for Ukrainians living in occupied territories—areas occupied by Russia.

Q4 Chair: Narmina, I will bring you in at this point. Lesia, you have made the distinction between the situation in Russian-controlled Ukraine and Ukraine. Are the humanitarian situations the same? Are there particular



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hotspots? Is there a difference in the humanitarian needs in different areas?

Narmina Strishenets: There is in Ukraine, definitely. The humanitarian situation deteriorated with the continuous attacks on power infrastructure. Most of the schoolchildren in Ukraine relied on distance learning since the start of hostilities, but most of them now do not have access to distance learning and teaching. We ran a survey among parents and children, asking them how electricity cuts influenced their learning. It is so disruptive. Half of them cannot access learning right now. Either they need to sit in shelters when there is shelling, or they do not have electricity; and the daylight is so limited in winter. They cannot connect to their teachers.

When we were reading what children said, they articulated that they want to study, but they find it so difficult to cope with the material individually. Sometimes parents struggle to do it because they are themselves displaced and cannot provide proper training. We foresee a really great problem with education. Particularly, the number of schools that have been destroyed and reduced to rubble is appalling. It is estimated to be more than 2,500. Some of them are unrepairable. We are looking forward to the help of the UK Government to rehabilitate school infrastructure, because it may have a really lasting impact.

It is the same with mental health and the psychological status of children, because a lot of them are living through violence and hostilities. They are in displacement. A lot of them are separated from their parents and their immediate family members. Save the Children ran a study in Europe, asking Ukrainian refugee children how they feel and what their mental state is. More than 70% of children said that they are feeling more anxious. They are not sure about their future and are afraid. A lot of them want to come home to Ukraine once hostilities subside and there will be some sense of normality and safety in Ukraine.

It is the same with heating and supply of clean water. The humanitarian situation is absolutely devastating in the newly retaken areas. Once the Government of Ukraine entered Kherson oblast and Kharkiv oblast, Save the Children colleagues were distributing clean water and pumps, and supporting hospitals that had been looted. The country office director in Save the Children Ukraine says that there is no medical equipment in hospitals; it has been removed. We are supporting on the ground with clean water, cash and voucher distributions, and buying elementary, basic medical supplies that may help the population access healthcare on the ground.

It is the same with land contamination. Even before the escalation, the east of Ukraine was one of the most contaminated areas in the world, with explosive ordnance, essentially. Right now, the scale is immense. Even for humanitarian actors, it takes a bit of time to access this area, while law enforcement and the Government of Ukraine are cleaning at least some areas. We understand that this problem will last for years—for



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decades—and children are some of the most vulnerable, especially to cluster munitions; they pick them up. It is very hard to provide medical aid. That is why Save the Children has now started a partnership with Imperial College London, trying to train medics and deliver training to Ukrainian infrastructure on how to treat blast injuries.

Q5 Chair: Let me pause you there, not because we are not fascinated but because we have loads to get through. Natalia, from the humanitarian perspective specifically, are you seeing a difference between what is needed in the Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine and in Ukraine itself?

Dr Tronenko: It is quite hard to answer this question because, as Lesia has said, there is very little information coming from the occupied territories. There are very different needs in different parts of Ukraine on the one hand, but, on the other hand, there are very similar needs as well.

Q6 Chair: Give us some practical examples of what is needed.

Dr Tronenko: For example, in the recently de-occupied territory in Kherson, the 25 ambulances that that town had have been stolen by Russians. All hospitals were looted, so there is no equipment. The red zone territory is Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, Donetsk and Mykolaiv regions. They have an urgent and desperate need for supplies of hospital equipment and tactical medicine.

As to western Ukraine, as far as we understand, as a small charity, there is an oversupply of medical equipment and aid to this area, simply because, for geographical reasons, it is a relatively safe area of Ukraine, so it is the first point where the aid is received. On the other hand, there is an enormous load on this region because many of the orphanages—Mykolaiv, Mariupol, Volnovakha, Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk orphanages, and several orphanages from the Kharkiv region—have been relocated to the Lviv region and to western Ukraine. The needs of this region for medical supplies and humanitarian aid are higher than they used to be.

Q7 Chris Law: I will ask a little more about humanitarian aid and how it is dispersed throughout Ukraine. Hearing you just now, it sounds incredibly difficult to move anything around. Where are the places that need it most and how hard is it to get aid into those areas? What kind of aid is it that you really need right now? You have mentioned the winter, complete blackout and the cold. I would like to hear a little more about that.

Dr Tronenko: As I have already mentioned, the red zone areas are in desperate need of support. Getting there is tricky, but not impossible. I will very briefly describe to you how we operate and find ways of getting aid there. It is mainly medical aid. Sometimes it is humanitarian aid as well if we get donations of humanitarian aid.

We deliver the supplies to the Polish border. There is a hub in Lublin where the Ministry of Health accumulates deliveries of supplies. That is



one route for big organisations, and, to begin with, our organisation worked that way as well. Then we rethought our operation and decided that it will be more efficient to receive direct requests and address direct needs of individual organisations in need. We deliver our aid to Lviv, where the local volunteers collect it from us, unless our volunteers are available and willing to travel across Ukraine, and there are such volunteers. From that point onwards, local volunteers take the aid further and deliver to remote areas.

We also work in partnership with non-profits and charitable organisations in Ukraine. For example, Marlog is an international logistics centre. Another example is Mercy and Health, based in Kyiv. Another example is SMART Medical Aid, based in Lviv. We co-operate with them. We deliver aid to them and then they use their own resources to deliver aid. For example, Mercy and Health drives every week to one of the four red zones from Kyiv.

Q8 Chair: Are they international organisations or Ukrainian organisations?

Dr Tronenko: Marlog is called international, but they are Ukrainian-based organisations. It is international in the sense that it receives aid from abroad.

Q9 Chris Law: Narmina, to follow on from that, how quickly can you get aid to areas that have just recently been retaken by Ukrainian forces and, even more difficultly, places that are still in conflict right now? Can you get any aid into those areas? If so, how is it achieved?

Narmina Strishenets: The situation there is extremely hard and the need is even larger than across Ukraine. Most people we talk to expect humanitarian aid, primarily food. Even cash and voucher assistance sometimes can be delayed because the markets are not operating. They just get cash, but they cannot buy food because neither the grocery stores nor anything else have opened yet. There is this vacuum. Food, water and winter items such as heaters are essential.

We are also delivering coal and wood stock. It sounds really horrifying in the 21st century, but within these disruptions people just need to find an alternative way to heat their home. Right now, we are focusing on delivering in these areas where there is huge disruption to water intake in cities and towns, essentially no food, and it is really cold—so winter items, food and cash. We register people immediately and then, as soon as the markets start operating, we are delivering that. The need is immense.

As for medical facilities that are without proper equipment, it is really complicated to provide help immediately on the ground. Because of really severe weather conditions right now, even transporting patients and the people who need medical aid might take longer and is very hard. Our precise attention is on these areas right now.

Q10 Chris Law: I am beginning to understand the difficulty and logistical



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challenges in getting things to people, and the delays and all that that goes with them. Are you receiving sufficient humanitarian aid, even to the western borders where it can enter Ukraine, or is that still woefully inadequate? Are we in a position where the levels of aid are right, but we cannot get it through to more difficult parts of Ukraine? What is your assessment of that?

Lesia Vasylenko: It is true that logistics are increasingly difficult, in winter times especially. Again, it is what I started from: you need to look at Ukraine in zones, and the needs are very much zone-affected.

If you are looking at where to spend the money on humanitarian aid, I would probably go with the way that Natalia has described: supporting local Ukrainian charities that work on a needs basis, depending on the region where they operate. It is very easy to give to the Red Cross, UNHCR or the larger charities, which are all over the place wherever you look around the UK or any other countries. The problem is that these charities will still seek out the smaller ones and the money gets lost on the way. The donations are used on marketing. This is why these bigger charities are so well known. The donations are lost on the operation facilities of these charities.

Giving to smaller charities makes sure that the money reaches the needs of the people on the ground directly, and that this is done quickly and efficiently. Here, Narmina has spoken about the needs of the people in the occupied areas that have been liberated. These needs are immediate. They need to be served right here, right now, because such basic needs as food need to be covered. This food needs to be transported there quickly, efficiently and safely. The only way to do it safely is to do it in collaboration with Ukrainian armed forces or the national emergency services of Ukraine.

To understanding the level of mining of the territories of Ukraine, 30% of the territory of Ukraine is mined. The kilometre equivalent is 180,000 square kilometres. That is huge.

Q11 **Chair:** We were told that it is the size of the UK that has been mined in Ukraine.

Lesia Vasylenko: It is two-thirds of the size of the UK, I think.

Q12 **Chair:** That is stopping farmers going out. That is stopping children playing.

Lesia Vasylenko: That is stopping farmers, stopping children and stopping you just enjoying your leisurely walk in your local forest. The areas are especially heavily mined when the Russian forces are retreating. They leave behind explosive mines. Since they are trying to keep the warfare in urban areas, this is especially dangerous, because they mine high-rise buildings. They mine multi-storey buildings.



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It is crucial to have the equipment, the robotics, that can go and investigate the possible mined area. In Ukraine right now, the casualty levels of the personnel of the emergency services of Ukraine are on the rise, because we are forced to do it with bare hands. That is not the way that it should be done in modern urban warfare conditions. Robotic demining equipment is the basic need right here.

Coming back to the serving of the needs and the delivery of the aid, if the aid is being delivered to these areas that are newly recovered and being put under the flag of Ukraine, you need to do it with specialised convoys from the military that know where you are going, so that this aid is safe.

The expenses of transporting this aid are also higher in wintertime than summertime. For charities such as the ones Natalia has mentioned, it is not even about getting the aid. These donations need to cover the transportation costs. A 15 to 20-tonne truck will cost you something like \$1,500 to be transported from the border somewhere over to the east. You will be lucky if you find drivers who are willing to do that, because then they will be coming back empty. These transportation costs are something to take into account as well.

Q13 Chair: Have your Government done an audit of where all the Ukrainian humanitarian organisations are? A lot of the reason why people give to International Rescue Committee, for example, is that it is a verified, audited, well-known charity. Have you done an audit of where people could send money and support to?

Lesia Vasylenko: We have several very well-known Ukrainian foundations and organisations that are verified and trusted. For example, UNITED24 is an online platform that collects donations for Ukraine. You can see that, on the days when there are the hardest hits of missiles by Russia, the donations usually go sky high. After the last missile attack on 23 November, you can see the reaction of the Ukrainian people to that attack. It was not desperation or panic. It was actually a confidence to fight back stronger. That was the day when UNITED24 collected 6.8 million hryvnias, which is huge in a day, in donations.

We have other foundations that work on covering military aid, but also humanitarian aid. There is the Serhiy Prytula Foundation, which is a major one. There is Povernys Zhyvym, Come Back Alive, which is working with the military, but has a humanitarian department as well.

Q14 Chair: It would be very helpful if you could give us a list, so that we can get that in the public domain.

Lesia Vasylenko: A list will be provided, definitely. Can I just emphasise one thing? The foundations that were traditionally working with the military now all have a large humanitarian aid department. They know that, once the areas are de-occupied, the humanitarian needs are very high and need to be covered too.

Q15 Mr Bacon: You talked earlier about the impact on civilian lives and



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infrastructure. You mentioned heating, communications being down, cellular telephony not working and so on. When this happens and the power goes down, how long is a building without power for, typically? Do you know how many buildings and how many people are affected?

Lesia Vasylenko: It is millions of people. It is all over Ukraine. It depends on how soon the power comes back. It depends on the area we are talking about. For example, my parents' building in Kyiv was without power for two days. They had heating because it is a gas-provided building, but they were without power, essentially, for two days. The power comes back for four, six or eight hours depending on the area of Kyiv or Ukraine that you are in.

To give you an example of the difference, my building, which is in Kyiv as well, started being part of the power cut scheme only as of 23 November. Before that, it had water, heating and electricity. There were no power cuts. It really depends on the area you are in. Speaking in general terms, the whole country is in saving mode. Resources are being used very sparingly.

The left bank, the eastern part of Ukraine, is the one most affected by the blackouts. This is where Russia is hitting most at the power facilities. What is dangerous is that not only the power lines and usual power stations are being hit, but, during the last missile hit, going back to 23 November, where 70 missiles were launched in one single 24-hour period across the whole of Ukraine, 30 power stations were hit; 14 generation facilities were damaged. This was the first time when all of the 15 nuclear reactors were cut off from power at the same time.

This is a historic anti-record, in global terms. This has never happened, when even the nuclear reactors had to be cut off. This could lead to a nuclear catastrophe. This is why we Ukrainians, since the first day, have been so eager in calling for closure of our skies, enhancement of our air defence systems and the military capacity to do that. Our humanitarian aid today is actually the weapons that we get. This is the best humanitarian aid that we can have.

Q16 **Mr Bacon:** Have the aid organisations responded with alternative systems? You describe buildings where the pipes freeze and the building is essentially not usable until the spring. In those cases, do people vacate that building or do they have alternative heating systems? Do they set fires? What do the aid organisations do to help, either with heating or with communications?

Lesia Vasylenko: At the moment, this is a risk that could become an acute risk or something that is happening, but this has not happened yet. Buildings have not had to be vacated. We have managed to maintain the electricity and power supplies, and to get the power going for at least two or three hours, which is just enough for the water not to freeze in the radiators. We are assessing the risks and this is one of them that can become imminent.



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As for the heating inside the homes, people have started buying up power generators. Not all of the homes can have power generators installed and this is leading to a new kind of problem. Because of the lack of knowledge of how to use these power generators, people find themselves installing gas burners and power generators inside the apartments. We have already had some tragedies and casualties of this equipment exploding, because it is not meant to be used inside facilities. This is another problem that is coming in and another strain on our state emergency services.

Q17 Mr Bacon: You mentioned that 1.4 million Ukrainians do not have access to water. Did you mean water for washing or drinking? You do not live very long without water. What do they do?

Lesia Vasylenko: It is water for drinking. You have to understand that 14 million Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes. We are talking about 14 million displaced persons. Half of them are displaced within Ukraine. They are internally displaced persons—IDP—a term we have become very much accustomed to in Ukraine since 2014 when Russia's aggression first started. Around 7 million, maybe a little over, have been forced to flee abroad, whether they come back, whether they register in Ukraine or abroad. Not all of them register. These are the numbers that we estimate from different sources. These people, in their usual homes or abodes, would not have access to clean and safe drinking water for household needs and so on.

Q18 Mr Bacon: I know that the war is still raging, but people are already talking about the cost of reconstruction and who is going to pay for it. I know that our National Audit Office here is doing work with your audit institution on trying to get some roughly accurate estimate of the cost of reconstruction. Are you aware of how that is proceeding, what the likely total cost is going to be and who is going to pay for it?

Lesia Vasylenko: Our Ministry of Justice is working on the preparation of a consolidated claim to Russia, which would include whole lists of damages and harm done to Ukraine, putting these lists in monetary and financial equivalents. This is damage done to the environment, energy, business and residential housing, as well as moral damages. This consolidated claim is to be presented to Russia.

It is Russia, and Russia alone, that has caused all the damage, suffering, pain and harm to Ukraine. It is Russia, and Russia alone, that should pay. It is not up to the British taxpayers, French taxpayers, or anyone else. This must be very clear, and we in Ukraine are absolutely crystal clear about that. Reparations must be and are an imminent part of the guarantee of non-repetition of the crime of aggression. This is what we are working towards, our Government on their level, and we parliamentarians on our own level.

At the moment, the estimates range to over \$1 trillion of reparations that would need to be paid to Ukraine. Where does this money come from?



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Technically, it comes from Russia. How do we make Russia pay? That is a discussion that I would like to ask you to open in Parliament, with British society and on international platforms where you represent your country and hold dialogue with international partners.

For the time being, there is some \$350 billion in Russian money and assets in state and national banks all across the world, which not only can be arrested but must be seized to serve Ukraine's defence needs and possibly to serve short-term restoration and rebuilding needs in Ukraine. It should not be British taxpayers. There is Russian money readily available in the UK. We estimate that the equivalent in pounds to some \$16 billion to \$18 billion is located in the Bank of England. This money can be used already for the short-term rebuilding and defence needs of Ukraine. This is where, honourable Members, I ask you to put in a request to the Bank of England to find out the exact amount of Russian reserves and assets that are being held there, and to initiate, if possible, the seizure of this money and these assets, to be used to help Ukraine.

Q19 Chair: The sanctions that the UK Government have put in place I think are on individuals. Do we have any on Russia as a state?

Lesia Vasylenko: I understand that the UK was moving for sanctions on Russia as a state even back when you were members of the EU. You are still the champions behind imposing sanctions on Russia as a state. This means Russian businesses that used to operate in the UK on Russian state business, and partnerships and contracts that were made between the UK and Russia. My understanding is that all of this operates. How well it operates is probably my question to you.

Chair: That is a question that we will be following up after this session.

Q20 Mr Sharma: Hi. You have touched on the cold weather. I am sure that some of us are not very familiar with the Ukraine winter and what it looks like. Tell us what the winter looks like. At the same time, has the international community provided enough support to meet that challenge if it is too cold?

Lesia Vasylenko: I can respond on what the Governments have provided. In terms of charities, we have speakers here who can provide more information. In terms of Government provision, the need is to cover the most acutely affected areas, which are down through the front line, east, south-east and north-east of Ukraine. This is where we are told that most of what is being provided by foreign Governments goes.

The need is not just for generators, although this is the word that you all hear most on the news and everywhere. It is also for a whole range of specific equipment and parts that are needed to mend the destroyed and damaged power and energy infrastructure. We are talking about autotransformers, current transformers, circuit transformers, and other things. There is a whole list, which we can provide you with, which would include what has already been supplied to Ukraine and what is needed.



Also, there is what is needed from countries, so it is not just things that can be produced, manufactured and donated or delivered to Ukraine; it is also the things that can be produced and manufactured in other countries. This is where we would ask you, honourable colleagues, to have these dialogues and conversations on behalf of Ukraine with Germany, France and a whole lot of other countries that could be doing more. They are already doing a lot, but they could be doing more.

Narmina Strishenets: I would like to add a little bit about winter. Our humanitarian community has long been preparing for winter, even starting in summer. I guess the whole preparation was sufficient, but it could be better co-ordinated. For your understanding of the conditions, winter can be quite different in Ukraine. Due to climate change, it can be rather warm sometimes, but this year, unfortunately, that is not the case. The east of Ukraine, especially Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, has the most harsh winter conditions and sometimes temperatures of minus 20. It may be snowing and freezing. Sleet can be everywhere, so it is rather wet.

Generally speaking, the humanitarian community supports collective centres where people can come and get warmer, charge their phones, drink tea or eat something, just temporarily, until the situation is restored. For the non-Government-controlled areas and areas near the conflict line, the situation is completely different. This is something that the UK Government could do: expedite negotiations on access to the non-Government-controlled areas, and maybe engage parties that are perceived as neutral in these negotiations.

We are trying, through partners, to deliver some heaters, blankets, warm clothes and winter kits to populations in non-Government-controlled areas, but it is definitely not happening, because the level of disruption, especially on the line of active hostilities, is immense. OCHA and the UN have some safety assurances. International and local organisations are very severely restricted when accessing this area. Could the Government of the UK somehow support these negotiations and the sanctions regime for humanitarian actors? Right now, everybody working with de facto authorities on the ground can face criminal liability for doing so. For us, it is critical to have humanitarian exemptions, so that we could deliver winter items and support communities.

Dr Tronenko: As to the medical equipment, generators, UPS systems and all kinds of power stations, including solar, are critical to maintain and sustain the work of hospitals and medical care institutions. Medical items such as blood and fluid warming systems, irrigation systems that warm fluid as it is being delivered to the patient, Bair Huggers and Ready-Heat blankets are necessary, particularly for the winter period. The range of urgently needed items has grown, so we need to take that into account.

Q21 **Mr Sharma:** Lesia, how are you preparing for a potential escalation in



the conflict in terms of a humanitarian response?

Lesia Vasylenko: The short answer is: as best as we can under the circumstances. Seriously speaking, the situation can change and escalate at any moment. We understand that well enough. This is where our determination comes from to fight as hard as we can and get rid of Russia's aggression as quickly as we can. Until Russia is neutralised as an aggressor power, we will always be living at risk of escalation. For us in Ukraine, since 24 February, we have known well enough that, come what may, we will be fighting.

Our Government are preparing different scenario plans for the escalation of attacks on energy infrastructure. There are different contingency plans in the worst-case scenario for what to do, up to evacuation from urban areas, although we hope that this scenario never comes. We know well enough that this is part of Russia's strategy—to possibly vacate the cities, so that the cities are easier to take by force. We are keen for that not to happen.

This is why there are constant negotiations by different Government Ministers in different sectors with different countries as to all the forms of heating devices and equipment—in the medical and humanitarian spheres, as the experts here have mentioned, and, as I said, in the energy sphere. It is in our interests to ensure that, while we keep our population safe and sound, working and operational in the cities, our army can continue to progress and proceed on the front lines.

We cannot allow these next few months to be a standstill on the front lines, because this means that the Russian military will dig itself in, and it will be virtually impossible to dig it out come March and spring, when the conditions are more favourable to the counter-offensives. We are interested in having moves going there.

The situation is that we are summoning every single resource that is possible, within the country and beyond. Here, it is again crucial to have assistance, not just from the usual suspects—allies in the northern hemisphere—but to get the global south and the Arab countries involved and contributing with their resources. The kind of aggressor that Ukraine is fighting is the kind of aggressor that Europe and the world have not seen since World War II.

Q22 **Kate Osamor:** Welcome, everyone. Thank you so much for everything that you are doing, not only here but also abroad. I want to start by asking a few questions on how the invasion is affecting marginalised groups, especially women, girls and elderly people. Narmina, you spoke briefly about the lack of education because of the power cuts and blackouts, and the mental health effect on children. You also spoke about those who are here—abroad, we should say—and those who are displaced at home in Ukraine. Could you break it up and talk about the picture, so that we can get a better understanding of how it is affecting those who are in Ukraine and those who have been able to flee and go abroad?



Narmina Strishenets: For Ukrainian children in Ukraine, the situation is way harder. They need to struggle with the ongoing hostilities. They need to live through this violence, go to bunkers and shelters, and be in danger of immediate physical harm all the time. They are in huge emotional distress daily. If not addressed in terms of mental health, that can have a lasting, long-term impact. Children going through this continuous stress may develop certain conditions. We are doing a lot of work now, providing mental and psychosocial support, but this definitely needs more funding and programming inclusively for different ages. It is gender-specific. We have some statistics on children abroad whom we could survey. Girls and boys handle stress differently. Of course, that is individual and not gender-based in particular, but boys who have been displaced want to come back home more. Older children just feel less interested. It truly is gender and age specific. When we are looking at the whole community of children, we need to specifically understand their intentions and status.

Among all children in Ukraine and refugee children abroad, the most vulnerable are children from institutions and unaccompanied and separated children. They are not accounted for right now. We do not understand how many children have crossed the border. From the very beginning, early in March, we have some anecdotal data from countries. We know that about 4,000 unaccompanied children entered Italy. About 1,000 entered Spain. Some countries provide statistics; some countries, such as Poland, which is the biggest recipient now and host to Ukrainian refugees, do not have this data. That is why there is an immediate need for a case management system and the proper registration of children, so that we can track their journey and understand where they are.

The children in institutions are another question. Even before February 2022, Ukraine used to be the country in Europe with the biggest population of children in residential care and institutions. It was more than 100,000, and now those children are particularly vulnerable. Some of them crossed the border just with their legal guardians. How to track their route and their destiny is very complicated. We are now trying to collect some children who appeared in non-Government-controlled areas, but we do not have a mandate to investigate this. We are actively engaging in communication with the accountability sector to identify the destiny of children who have been transferred abroad.

Previously, about 70% of children in institutions had a living parent. They were just in institutional care because their parents found themselves in hardship and, essentially, needed some social support. About half of the children had some level of disability. That makes these children so much more vulnerable. It is essential to understand where they are. We are calling again for support from the UK Government to ensure additional programming and funding for this.

Then, of course, there is blackout and access to healthcare. Just last week, all the world was shocked by the attack on the maternity hospital.



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A two-day-old baby was killed. All the mothers who are pregnant right now face an increased risk. We have a family whom we support in a collective centre in Ukraine who, unfortunately, had a premature baby because of stress. Mothers have to face constant stress through their pregnancy. Some of them deliver babies prematurely and need additional medical care. In these circumstances, hospitals cannot provide this care, so this places an additional burden on an already stretched healthcare system.

Energy cuts and blackouts pose a really great risk to the mobility of elderly people and to parents with children. Especially in urban areas in Ukraine, where there are multistorey buildings, without lifts or electricity, you cannot properly move and access services.

Of course, gender-based violence and the risk of trafficking, abuse and exploitation is here. We understand that women and girls always used to be at more risk of abuse. Now, with a lot of them being displaced, internally displaced and sometimes forced to share their accommodation with strangers or those who are not immediate family members, that increases social tension and puts women and children at increased risk of abuse, possibly.

We are also urging multisectoral programming for child protection and mental health, and to ensure that all children are in safety and have access to learning. I mentioned education previously, but this is a huge problem and it is jeopardised with the continuous blackouts. Children are already in certain negative dynamics in learning due to the Covid pandemic. Some children, especially in primary education, have not even been to real school because of two years of quarantines. Now they are again forced into bunkers and cannot go to school normally. These are probably the most acute problems right now.

Q23 Kate Osamor: Narmina, you spoke briefly about the markets not always being open. When they are open, have you seen a hike in prices for food as well?

Narmina Strishenets: There is inflation everywhere in Ukraine currently. A lot of people lost their jobs, so they lack finances, and prices went up. Generally speaking in Ukraine, the private sector and society are very much mobilised. As soon as everything opens, it starts immediately operating and gives hope to people. That is why we are focusing on cash and voucher assistance in the most marginalised and vulnerable communities, so that they can immediately get some help. If they need any further assistance, we are registering them for programmes and providing help further on.

Lesia Vasylenko: Can I jump in on that with some numbers? At the moment, we expect that inflation will reach 30% by the end of the year. This gives you an idea of the rise in prices for basic needs and commodities. The unemployment rate stands at 17.5%. That is some 2.6 million people who have lost their jobs. This is huge because it also



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impacts a lot of small and medium businesses; 47% of the businesses in Ukraine have had to go bankrupt. This is huge. You can imagine the number in the territory that is under occupation. You can imagine the territory where people have had to relocate. You have the numbers of women, who were a large part of the workforce in Ukraine, who have left the country. Then you have the number of men and women who have joined the military to serve. This gives you an idea of what happened, especially to small and medium-sized businesses.

Despite that, it always warms my heart to see new places opening up in Kyiv, Lviv, Ternopil and other cities across Ukraine. People are still finding ways to go on living life.

In terms of the vulnerability numbers, Narmina mentioned the children. Another big issue that you must be aware of is the targeted deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. This is especially happening when Russian troops enter Ukrainian territories and establish control there. So far, according to our ombudsmen, we have 11,461 deported Ukrainian children illegally held in the territory of Russia. Some of these children have been abducted from their families. Some have been in orphanages, and it is whole facilities and institutions that have been deported to Russia.

The numbers that Russia presents us with are much higher. Russia is claiming that some 700,000 children have been provided with refuge in Russia, and they form part of the 4 million Ukrainian nationals who have also been given refuge, as Russia says, in its territory. It is one big lie, because people are made to move there. The only talks that are going on right now are about freeing these children and returning them home. In small groups, regularly, there are success stories—cases where children are returned home and reunited with their families. This is something to be aware of and to raise with international institutions such as the Red Cross, which is supposed to be doing much more than it is doing on this issue, and UN facilities.

Q24 Chair: Are the children you are talking about, who are being taken from occupied Ukraine, being taken to Russia?

Lesia Vasylenko: They largely are. There are two places where they are taken. It is either these kinds of sanatoriums, which are resort facilities or whatever, and they are being held there in children's camps or institutions; or they are put up for adoption. Since May or June this year, Russia has amended its legislation to facilitate the procedure for adopting Ukrainian children specifically.

Q25 Chair: I am not an expert on the Geneva convention, but that sounds like a clear breach of the Geneva convention.

Lesia Vasylenko: Russia has opened the Geneva convention like a book and used it as a list. It ticks every provision it can break, and I think that it has broken every single rule in the rulebook.



Q26 **Chair:** The international community needs to stand up in a united way and challenge. That is a very specific example of that.

Lesia Vasylenko: Absolutely, yes.

Q27 **Kate Osamor:** Thank you, Lesia, for what you have just said. Narmina, with regard to the people who have been displaced abroad, are you able to give us a picture of how the invasion has affected their lives?

Narmina Strishenets: The estimate is that more than 7 million refugees entered primarily European states, 70% of whom are women and children, so we understand that the scope of the most vulnerable populations entering Europe is huge. We have been talking to children in more than 1,600 households, asking them how they feel. As I mentioned, a lot of them feel unhappy. Children feel frustration. Half of them could not say even that they have a single friend.

Children struggle with assimilation, and part of the problem is that a lot of them do not enrol in formal education. Before the start of the school year this September, only one third of refugee children had been enrolled in school. After asking whether they will continue studying in September at the start of the school year, one quarter said that they do not intend to. On why this is happening, there are various reasons. It is partly because the expectation of parents and of the refugee community is to come back soon. They think that it is not a protracted crisis and that they will come back to their normal lives. Sometimes children struggle with a foreign language and it jeopardises their ability to learn new material.

As the Minister of Education of Ukraine advised children to enrol in distance learning to continue their education, many families prioritised Ukrainian distance learning. Now, starting in October and November, it is in danger. Teachers cannot connect and provide their lessons. Right now, children who prioritised Ukrainian school and have not enrolled in formal education in public schools in Europe may end up without any school at all. That is a problem.

In Europe, and the same can be said for the Homes for Ukraine scheme in the UK, there is a need for long-term planning and a longer strategy for how these families will continue to live where they are, if that is what they decide. If they are free to go, they may go to the country of their choice. Right now, the most recent data from the office of statistics was that half of Homes for Ukraine residents think that they will stay for three years or longer. That might be indicative that some of them will stay. It will require continuous support, including psychosocial educational support, and other types of benefits will be needed to support the Ukrainian refugee community.

At the same time, Save the Children would like to use this best practice, because the UK was such an excellent host to so many Ukrainian refugees, and expand it for other vulnerable communities from all over the world. The refugees from other crises need this support as much as



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Ukrainian refugees. If this support could be expanded, this practice used and lessons learned, that would be fantastic for supporting other people in need elsewhere.

Q28 Kate Osamor: Thank you for what you have just said. I think that a lot of people will appreciate that. Narmina, what humanitarian assistance is being provided to support women and girls? Do you think that this assistance is actually sufficient?

Narmina Strishenets: There is definitely a need for more inclusive programming on gender-based violence prevention. We are very supportive of the commitment by the UK Government to fight sexual violence in conflict, and commitments voiced yesterday during a PSVI conference. Funding, support and programming to support women facing gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence is definitely a priority.

Support for comprehensive auditing, and scenario planning for mental health support for children and women, would be much needed as well. Action is needed on employment displacement, and now on employment abroad, because a lot of families struggle to find jobs. If they find jobs, they are low paid. They face hardship renting private accommodation. This is echoing the previous conversation about homelessness. Proper support is needed from the Government and from councils on the ground. Families who have been employed and basically started over in a new place might need additional support to build a network of people who would be their references and guarantors in future, so they are not pushed to relocate.

We understand that the largest number of Ukrainian refugees came to England, among all four nations, especially southern England, where the cost of living is very challenging. That is why here women with children sometimes need to identify whether they need to prioritise their employment or finding accommodation. This kind of support and comprehensive strategy and programming on Ukrainian refugees would be very much appreciated.

Q29 Kate Osamor: Natalia, how has the war affected elderly people? Are aid agencies providing enough?

Dr Tronenko: I have some statistics. This is the group of people we had been helping before the full-scale invasion. Our partners in Ukraine helped us to cover the cost of medical care and treatment for the pensioners and the elderly. However, now we have refocused our operation and, unfortunately, we cannot dedicate our time. We do not have the human resources to focus on that, but I have some statistics.

The elderly account for 30% of those in need in Ukraine. That is the highest proportion of elderly people in the world who are in that situation. Half of those are food insecure. More specifically, 91% of the elderly population in the warzone do not have enough food and 79% do not have



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access to drinking water. Many of them are separated from their families. Their sons are serving in either the army or the territorial defence. The mothers with children have evacuated, so it is a serious, tragic situation that they find themselves in. They do not have access to wider emergency relief efforts. They are not mobile. They have developed chronic diseases that cannot be looked at, and they do not have the quality of life.

Q30 Kate Osamor: What is the message that you would like to get out to aid agencies, so that they can help this very needy demographic?

Dr Tronenko: The message is to find the routes to access the elderly. Perhaps the best way of doing that is to establish contacts with local Ukrainian charities and non-profits that can deliver aid directly. I can give you one example.

Chair: If you could you write to us with that one example, that would be lovely. We are getting really tight on time.

Q31 Nigel Mills: What is the situation like in the neighbouring countries that have taken lots of people in? I saw that Moldova had had power cuts because its grid was linked to Ukraine's. Are we expecting a challenging winter for people who have crossed the border as well?

Lesia Vasylenko: All our neighbouring countries are at risk until Russia is neutralised as an aggressor state. Moldova and other countries may have power cuts—all the countries with which we have links—and Ukraine is linked into the European power grid. There is the possibility of hits because Russia hits directly on the border and its missiles are not exactly very direct, as we know by now. These countries need to be ready to be affected.

If Russia is not pushed back, these countries are likely to be next. Moldova is at a huge risk because we all remember that there is Transnistria there, this part that is essentially occupied by Russia, even going back to the 1990s. It is one of the earliest parts where the Russian army has extended its occupying authority. The only solution ensuring safety and security for these countries is to push back on Russia militarily and neutralise it as soon as we can.

Poland remains the country with the largest number of displaced Ukrainians. There are likely to be more Ukrainians moving to Poland now. It was one thing to move away for a couple of months and spread out beyond Europe. Families are being separated because the husband, for example, has to stay in Ukraine. Men from 18 to 60 cannot leave, because they are eligible for military service. The men stay in the country and the women take the children out of the country.

It is easier when you are in Poland, because the route to reunite, even for a short while, is much shorter than travelling from the UK, Portugal or anywhere else in Europe. Many families now relocate to Poland. Also, for the winter, with the blackouts, people from Ukraine relocate to Poland,



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Hungary or Moldova, depending on where they live in Ukraine, to be closer to their family, but still keep their children safe and give them a chance of a normal childhood and an education.

This goes back to Kate's point on how to help Ukrainians who have been relocated. It is in the interests of Ukraine to have all our people, or at least the majority of those who have moved out, come back, especially when it comes to children and the youth. We want them back. We want them to remain Ukrainian. We want them to have the strong links with Ukraine. The longer this war lasts and the longer they stay in foreign countries and foreign education systems, the more this link will be lost.

We urge the British Government, as well as all other Governments, to allocate resources for Ukrainian cultural centres and Ukrainian Sunday schools here in the UK. The resources available to them so far are very limited. These are the facilities, the institutions, that would definitely be providing or maintaining this link with Ukraine to the children. This is probably a request from us.

Another request would also be to have Ukrainian elements integrated into the school curriculums here in the UK. As this war progresses and as Ukrainians have to stay longer here in the country, we will see hostilities. There are already alarm bells ringing in some of the schools, where Ukrainian children are being bullied in a way, where their peers are saying, "Ukrainians, you are not welcome here. We have all these prices that are going up because of the war," and so on. This reflects what is probably being said in households.

The only way to put a stop to these alarm bells that are starting to ring is probably to have school assemblies addressing the issue of what is going on in Ukraine, having you as Members of Parliament going out and speaking at your local schools in your constituencies, giving talks on why this is an existential war. This is a war between good and evil. This is a war about values and patriotism. This is something where all of us can learn from each other.

Q32 **Chair:** Nigel's question was about the countries immediately bordering Ukraine. Would those same lessons apply there?

Lesia Vasylenko: Absolutely, yes.

Q33 **Nigel Mills:** Narmina, do you have any thoughts on what the situation might be like on the ground in Poland, Moldova or Hungary?

Narmina Strishenets: We have a presence in Poland, Romania and Lithuania, as immediate neighbours. In Poland, we supported the establishment of a Ukrainian school, so the children could come and learn a Ukrainian curriculum with Ukrainian teachers—those who did not want to join Polish schools. Generally speaking, as I mentioned before, a lot of them do not want to study in the local schools. They want to continue with a Ukrainian curriculum.



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The number of refugees is huge and Poland does not really have estimates of how many. It does not have gender and age-disaggregated data. That is why it is hard to estimate. However, programming and social protection systems work to accommodate refugees, and all the neighbours of Ukraine have been supportive—the whole united Europe, I guess. I can echo what Lesia said—that this is about democracy and the fundamental values of Europeans.

The support has been huge, but we understand that the capacity and resources are stretched. Although a lot of refugees found jobs, started contributing and paying taxes, and started feeding into their local economies, it is still a challenge economically for a lot of European countries to hold millions, especially for tiny countries that sometimes had a number of refugees that was half their population. That is a real challenge that should be addressed and supported across the board. There should be more inclusive social protection, case management and registration on borders, so that the whole population of Ukrainian refugees would be counted, and we would have the clear understanding of who is crossing the border, what their permanent or temporary location is and how to address their social protection needs. Right now, it is like a big unknown for many countries, unfortunately.

Q34 David Mundell: We have heard from you already on the scale on which human rights and humanitarian laws are being violated during the conflict. Lesia, how do you feel that the international community has reacted to that?

Lesia Vasylenko: The international community has condemned it on various platforms, but that is hardly enough to have any effect. We are very keen on setting up a special tribunal on Russian aggression against Ukraine, which would condemn Russian officials and leadership for the crime of aggression that is being committed. We urge the UK Government to support this initiative from Ukraine, and to take up leadership on promoting it to other countries.

It is unrealistic for such a specialised tribunal to be set up within the UN system, as it normally would be, because Russia is essentially holding the UN hostage with its veto power over the Security Council. Imagine this: Russia has used the veto power in the UN Security Council 134 times. That is more than all of the other nations combined that have the right to this veto power. This raises another question. If the traditional international framework for preventing conflicts and aggression does not work, we possibly need to reform and change it. This is another discussion that I urge you to start having and thinking about. If not, because this is very complex and complicated, we at least need to go down the path of isolating Russia from the institutions of which it has zero right to be part. We are talking about the OSCE, the IPU and, finally, the UN. There needs to be suspension of Russia from the Security Council and a suspension of the veto power, at least.



Truth be told, Russia has zero right to be a member of the UN, procedurally and legally speaking. This is a very separate discussion that I also urge you to restart, because this discussion has been going on since the 1990s. Essentially, until Russia learns to behave like a member of the international community that abides by the principle of peaceful coexistence of states, it should be isolated and not allowed to be part of that international community.

- Q35 **David Mundell:** There are violations on a huge scale. How do you think the international community, and the UK specifically today, could do more to help monitor or record these violations, or at least record those that are central to any further action being taken?

Lesia Vasylenko: Monitoring missions need to be on the ground. We very much welcome it when international teams of prosecutors come into the de-occupied areas, as was organised when the Kyiv region was de-occupied. We very much welcome the missions that are already working within the ICC—International Criminal Court—proceedings. We would very much welcome your role in reactivating the UN institutions and especially the international Red Cross, which should be doing a much better job than it is. In Ukraine's eyes, it is absent from the scene.

- Q36 **David Mundell:** You have mentioned that a couple of times. Why do you think that is?

Lesia Vasylenko: They are not there. They are supposed to be providing aid in times of conflict and war, and they are simply not there. This situation in Ukraine, Russia's aggression, is like nothing that has been happening over previous decades. There is an ongoing war in the middle of Europe. There are casualties all the time. The party to the war that is the aggressor has one of the largest armies in the world, a lot of political influence and a lot of money in these very same organisations. There is a lot of political reluctance there. This needs to be taken up and investigated. The humanitarian international organisations need to be reset as much as the international organisations, in principle.

- Q37 **David Mundell:** The UK has pledged £220 million in humanitarian support so far in relation to the conflict. How does this compare to other donors?

Lesia Vasylenko: I would have to get back to you in writing on that one. I do not have the numbers in front of me.

- Q38 **David Mundell:** Do you think that that funding is being distributed quickly enough, coming back to some of the earlier questions, in terms of how quickly it is reaching those who are on the front line, so to speak?

Lesia Vasylenko: As far as I am aware, that funding goes to the front line. It does not go to the regions that are not directly on the combat line, on the front line. That means that the people considered to be in safe zones or the regions receiving the highest number of displaced persons do not get that assistance. They are not in the first line of



recipients of that assistance. Going back to the very beginning of discussions, their needs have to be accounted for also, because they are receiving the burden of displaced persons. The cities in west Ukraine are not nearly built to accommodate such a huge influx of people. They have their own challenges and issues, which are not being discussed or addressed because this is not where the artillery fire is being shot. This is not where there are complete blackouts and a complete lack of access to basic resources, such as water, as I mentioned.

Q39 David Mundell: Narmina, do you have any thoughts on the UK support and how it is being distributed?

Narmina Strishenets: The UK's support was incredible. It was very helpful, effective and prompt, especially if we are talking about the UK assistance through the DEC appeal. The availability of flexible and non-restricted funding was exceptionally useful for the humanitarian sector to start its operations and programming immediately without further delay. That would probably be the lesson learned—that flexible funding and programming allows a more prompt action from the humanitarian sector. It has been distributed at a large scale, but, due to the dynamic of the conflict, the level of disruption and destruction in Ukraine, and the growing humanitarian needs, there is an urgent need for further and more sustainable assistance to maintain society and address the coming needs with the situation deteriorating on the ground.

Dr Tronenko: As far as we understand, as a smaller charity operating here, anecdotally, not all aid that is sent gets to the places where it is needed on the ground. I am not suggesting that it is done by big organisations that are sending it in bad faith, or that there is any impropriety, but that is just the fact that needs to be addressed. That is just what we hear. We do not have the facilities and resources to investigate this.

Q40 David Mundell: How would it be addressed?

Dr Tronenko: It would be useful to speak to bigger organisations to analyse how the supply chains are working, and how they are collecting exact figures on where the aid is delivered. Is humanitarian aid distributed evenly across the country? Which hospital has received 50 anaesthetic machines, whereas others have not received any? It is that kind of information. How closely are these bigger charitable organisations co-operating with Ukrainian authorities, the Ministry of Health, local hospitals, et cetera? This aid needs to be data-based, not just appearing in figures: "300 tonnes have been sent to Ukraine". It has to be directed specifically, and there should be specific, direct links to the organisations and people who need the aid.

Q41 Chair: I am hearing your concern that the internally displaced people are not getting the support that they need. We need to find a way to verify that it is getting to the people who need it the most.

Dr Tronenko: Exactly, yes.



Q42 Mr Bacon: Lesia, you mentioned earlier that there needs to be some form of international reckoning for Russia. For obvious reasons, that will not happen in the UN quickly. I take it that you were referring earlier to the fact that it was the Soviet Union that joined the UN when it was created, not the Russian Federation. There are various other organisations. You mentioned the OSCE. The first time I saw you speak was in Strasbourg. As you will know, the Russian Federation is no longer a member of the Council of Europe. Do you see the Council of Europe being a possible route for some form of international tribunal and, if not, what else? What is the most likely route that you think practically stands a reasonable chance of getting enough international support to work?

Lesia Vasylenko: The Council of Europe has definitely been an example to follow for other international organisations as to how you can expel Russia. When that country, or any country, is not abiding by the rules and procedures, it cannot stay in an organisation. What is the point of having it in an organisation if it does not follow the rules to which everyone else agrees? That sends the wrong message to all the other members of the organisation.

This links into the question of appeasement of the aggressor. This route has been tried and tested by Ukraine, unfortunately, back in 2014 and 2015. This has led to further escalation in 2022. This message also needs to be very loud and clear: there can be no appeasement. The only way that we can ensure a stop to aggression and non-repetition is by reclaiming all Ukrainian territories, bringing them back to 1991 internationally recognised borders, and by making sure that there is payback, that reparations are paid by Russia, and that Russia is incapacitated from going further with or from starting any kind of aggression.

The way that an international tribunal should be done is through a coalition of like-minded states, just as there is a coalition around arming Ukraine now in the format of Ramstein, where 53 Ministers of Defence of different states meet on a regular basis. They sit down and agree the next batch of military assistance for Ukraine and the deliveries. In the same way, there should be an anti-Putin coalition, where like-minded states sit down with their Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Economy and Finance possibly, to discuss the way that this tribunal is going to operate and what Russia will need to pay back, based on this consolidated claim that Ukraine will be ready to present. We are hoping very much that the UK will lead, together with Ukraine, on this. We will have a team of Ukrainian Government officials, accompanied by Ukrainian parliamentarians who have been authorised as special envoys by the President of Ukraine, to lead on the issue of the setting up of a specialised tribunal on Russia's aggression against Ukraine. I think that they will be here in the coming weeks. I urge all of you to meet them and see where this can be taken.

Q43 Chris Law: Thank you so much for all the evidence you have given. I



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know that this is deeply personal and harrowing, and it is incredibly brave of you to share. We all want to know what more the UK can do, particularly in diplomatic international circles. We talked about the IPU, and Kate and I were with you at the IPU very recently. What more do we need to do collectively, here in the UK, diplomatically, internationally and multilaterally, in order to, on a humanitarian basis at least, move things forward much more progressively?

Narmina Strishenets: There are several asks related to justice and accountability. We understand that we are keeping an eye on violations, recording them, and collaborating with accountability actors. We see the role of the UK as a strong ally of Ukraine, and an advocate globally for justice that can collaborate with and establish dialogue between all justice sector mechanisms now set up in Ukraine, so that everyone would not be doing things individually, but there would be collaboration, and the victims would not be retraumatised through different investigations by different accountability actors.

From Save the Children's perspective, we are asking for child rights expertise, and for children to be a focus of attention for justice mechanisms. Sometimes, children are deprioritised or thought to be small and to not understand everything, or to forget. This is not true, because children grow up and become adults, and there is this lasting impact. All victims of this situation in Ukraine deserve justice. There is a strong role for the UK to play in securing this justice for children.

The second thing is access. I am repeating myself, but access to non-Government-controlled areas and those near the contact line is crucial. Negotiations must be engaged in to exempt the humanitarian actors from sanctions and ensure safe passage. UN agencies must be engaged throughout the NGO sector. Humanitarian assistance actors that join them should get assurances and guarantees of safe passage to deliver the aid and protect children on the move.

We understand that the refugee population is huge, and children with particular vulnerabilities, such as orphans and separated and unaccompanied children, are at risk. Case management, increased funding and child protection programming to support those on the move and those who access new territories are needed, as are renovations of schools and repairs on the ground, especially landmine programming. Inclusive child protection programming and additional funding would enable humanitarian actors to assist communities in recovering, and would help people to come back to a safe life in their community.

Dr Tronenko: In terms of the priorities and what kind of help we would like to see, I have already said it, but I will repeat it. It is to support the local Ukrainian volunteering movement and charitable non-profit organisations, and help them with operational costs. Support that is as simple as that would have a huge impact. Help Ukraine to get generators and power station supplies.



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Something that has not been talked about today is the training of paramedics and fire brigades. As far as we know, members of the fire brigade, who are involved on a daily basis in rescue operations across every region in Ukraine, apparently have only one hour of medical training each year, and it is only theoretical. They have no realistic scenario training. We have a project on which two of our volunteers are working in the Mykolaiv region. We supply them with technical medical equipment, and they are training members of the fire brigade, so that they can look after themselves and act as first responders. That is critical. If any help could be provided with that, that would be very much appreciated.

Lesia Vasylenko: I will continue this list. The robotics equipment for demining is very crucial. That will save lives, both of children and of the specialists who are working on the demining operations.

As for the training of specialists, I have to reinforce the point on psychologists and psychosocial assistance. This is a must, especially in the occupied territories. We need more women specialists who can talk to the women who have been or may have been sexually abused in those territories. It is crucial to reinforce organisations that help survivors.

Veterans is a big one. We have not touched on them. Military men and women are coming back, most with traumas that they and their families will need to deal with. This is something to prepare for, especially in the future. On treatment for Ukrainian wounded soldiers, the physical wound may be the same—we are all human—but the psychology behind it is very different. The UK has excellent facilities, and there is excellent experience in all those organisations of yours that I have had the pleasure to know personally. Please reactivate them into being there on the ground in Ukraine.

We need building and construction material. It is not so much about providing us with ready-made products manufactured here in the UK, although of course this will help the UK's economy. We have industries at a standstill because of the war. There are no orders coming in and there is no demand. Provide us with the textiles, and we will sew the uniform for our military, our paramedics, our emergency services, and ourselves, giving jobs to the people on the ground and allowing the economy not to collapse. This is crucial for us. Give us the raw materials, which we cannot produce right now in Ukraine, and we will restart whole industries. This is important for us. Bring in investments. Do not be scared. Now is the opportunity to invest in Ukraine. You will have a huge summit on the reconstruction of Ukraine in July here. I would urge you to have a parliamentary section there. I would urge you to have a section on small and medium business, where we can discuss all these needs and possible potential investment into Ukraine.

The best humanitarian assistance that we can get is money and weapons. You cannot shy away from that. We need weapons because, as soon as



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we finish this war, as soon as there is victory for Ukraine, it will also bring a victory for all the other countries, the Russian people included. This is in our utmost and highest interests. How do we do that? We do that by strengthening Ukraine and weakening Russia. We weaken Russia with sanctions—by taking away its money, which can be used or relied on to manufacture more weapons and order in more components to produce the missiles that kill Ukrainians and Ukrainian children, including Serhii, the two-day-old baby Narmina mentioned.

We all have a duty to democracy, to human lives and to prevent genocide. Russia is doing exactly that against Ukraine—committing a genocide. All the characteristics are there: the deportations, the direct targeting of civilians, of hospitals, of schools, of kindergartens. We cannot shy away from that as well. We have a duty to prevent that, under the convention, and it is high time that we acted on this duty.

Chair: Thank you. I want to start by saying, from parliamentarian to parliamentarian, and to your colleagues here, that the depth of duty you have shown to your country is extraordinary. I speak not just on behalf of this Committee but on behalf of this House. We have so much solidarity with you. You have given us lots of information, and we will take that back to fellow parliamentarians. You have given us very clear asks that we will put very clearly to those who have the authority to do those things.

Natalia, to set up what you have set up and keep on going is remarkable. I give you huge credit. Narmina, to go through what you have gone through and be there to try to help other people is fantastic. I do not know about other Committee members, but we are seeing so much about what is going on in Ukraine that there is a bit of a malaise towards it now. In this session, you have made it incredibly real for all of us. You have given us the evidence but, more importantly, you have given us the emotions and what is literally happening on the ground, so we can go and argue for continued support for your country.

As I get older, I understand evil less and less. I cannot understand the mindset of what is going on with the Russian state right now. We absolutely have to stand strong against it, because it does not end. It just keeps on expanding, as we have seen globally over the last few decades. Thank you all very much. Thank you, Committee members.