Providing Lifesaving Help in Conflict-Affected Zone

“The most important thing is that I was diagnosed on time, and my life was saved,” says pensioner Halyna. The woman is 68. She is one of many residents of the frontline Avdiivka, Donetsk region. Life almost on the “line of fire” in one of the hottest spots in Eastern Ukraine is filled with danger and constant challenges for local residents. This city has become one of the locations of the UNFPA mobile clinic work, supported by the UK Government. Although there is a hospital in Avdiivka, a significant shortage of specialised doctors is a grim reality. When in need of proper examination and treatment, patients are often referred to Kramatorsk city, located 100 kilometres on rural roads. Therefore, not everyone can get to the doctor. According to Halyna, it was very challenging for her – she had no money to travel that far and no relatives nearby to ask for help. Therefore, until the arrival of the mobile clinic, she had not been examined for almost seven years.

“I live alone in my small house and I have to do all the housework – bring the water, work in the garden and carry bags from the grocery – it is my life. My close relatives left the city in 2014; they rarely visit me, though we call each other often,” says Halyna.

Recently, the woman’s health has deteriorated sharply. Halyna suffered severe pain in the lower abdomen and lower back and experienced strong discomfort when walking. When she learned that doctors came to her hometown, she went for a check-up without hesitation. A specialist from the mobile clinic diagnosed Halyna with rather severe disease – uterine prolapse. The doctor conducted an urgent surgery, prescribed treatment and referred to the regional oncology dispensary in Kramatorsk, where surgeons performed full-scale surgery. According to doctors of UNFPA mobile clinics, such health issues are quite common among frontline area residents, the majority of whom are elderly. Constant stress and heavy household work significantly accelerate the development of the disease. Lack of regular medical examinations leads to fatal consequences. Halyna was very lucky.

Two weeks after the surgery, the woman returned to the mobile clinic doctors for a follow-up examination with words of sincere gratitude.
On 16 September, a shelter for GBV survivors was inaugurated in Rubizhne. Established with the support of the UK Government, the shelter is the first and only specialised safe solution for GBV survivors in Luhansk region. Modern, comfortable and inclusive, the shelter can accommodate 15 women with children, requiring comprehensive psychosocial support and legal counselling. 9 women and 6 children (including 5 IDPs) have already received quality survivor-oriented assistance at the shelter.

The shelter started its operation as a municipal entity which is an exemplary case of local ownership and commitment of city authorities to ensure sustainability of the service, in particular in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

“Through the partnership with UNFPA, we have finally filled the gap in local GBV referral system – created and institutionalised the much-needed service, strengthening the multisectoral GBV response system in our community and improving access of women and children to quality specialised support, helping them to start a new life,” – Anatoliy Busenkov, Secretary and acting Mayor of Rubizhne City.

HALFWAY POINT IS CROSSED IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNER-CITIES

Over the past two months, more than 30 training sessions were completed by representatives of fifteen partner-cities that aspire to eradicate domestic violence (Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kostiantynivka, Kramatorsk, Kremenchuk, Kyiv, Lviv, Melitopol, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Pokrovsk, Poltava, Sievierodonetsk, Vinnysia take part in Cities Free From Domestic Violence project).

Decision-makers, duty bearers and service providers improved their knowledge of effective GBV response mechanisms, multisectoral coordination and survivor-oriented service delivery. It has laid a strong foundation for designing municipal GBV response and prevention systems, including networks of specialised services for GBV survivors.

More capacity development sessions are planned for October-November alongside the provision of technical support to setting up shelters, daycare centres and crisis rooms and conducting awareness-raising work in partner-cities.

BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR 2021 HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE

On 24 September 2020, UNFPA convened an online joint national/sub-national GBV Sub-Cluster meeting. The meeting gathered nearly 30 representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk regional state institutions, UN agencies, NGOs and international organisations to discuss the 2021 humanitarian programme cycle and partner proposals for 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview. The participants also discussed needs in GBV response as well as opportunities for better cooperation in the provision of remote and outreach assistance to the affected population during the COVID-19 pandemic including in isolated areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

To support strengthening coordination efforts in GBV/SEA prevention and response systems in Ukraine, UNFPA initiated a call to complete its newly developed GBV/PSEA survey. Stay tuned for the survey results analysis.
On 17 September, a daycare centre for GBV survivors was opened in Mariupol. Established with UNFPA support, the centre is the first of its kind not only in the city but in Donetsk region. Comfortably furnished and inclusive, the centre creates a good ambience and supporting environment for the provision of free psychosocial and legal support to GBV survivors and people at risk. The centre also has a separate room for psychologist’s work with children, including via art-therapy.

Kseniya Sukhova, Deputy Mayor of Mariupol, notes that alongside the provision of assistance to survivors, the city focuses on prevention of GBV: “If we want to build a sustainable society, if we want to combat domestic violence, it is very important to have a comprehensive vision and approach to the problem”.

The daycare centre enhances the network of specialised GBV services in Mariupol, set up with UNFPA support, comprising shelter for GBV survivors, mobile team of psychosocial support and mobile groups of police on response to domestic violence.

**INTENSIVE TRAINING PATH OF FUTURE MUNICIPAL EXPERTS: STOP IN ODESA**

On 21-24 September, a cohort of future municipal experts from 15 partner-cities embarked on a second module of the comprehensive capacity building programme of UNFPA. At Odesa seaside, the participants dove into the rigorous study of effective multisectoral coordination of GBV response. Following the concept of the first module, the training blended lectures, individual assignments, group work and onsite learning from practitioners. Future specialists visited a shelter for GBV survivors, daycare centre and other specialised services in Odesa and met with municipal authorities and duty bearers to discuss Odesa’s experience in developing multisectoral coordination mechanisms.

The training not only enriched participants with valuable insights but motivated to apply the knowledge in their cities. “We saw how it is done in Odesa, how it is done in Kyiv, and we are looking forward to seeing Vinnytsia’s experience as well [city-host of an upcoming module]. And we want to implement the best of it in our city – applying effective methods of interaction of all actors of GBV response. We didn’t plan to do it before coming here, but the experience we’ve got helped us realise that it would be very good. If a person sees the entire system that operates in the city, they will understand better which organisation they should go to first when seeking help...” – says Ielyzaveta Morozova, a participant from Kharkiv.

The next two modules will be held in Kharkiv and Vinnytsia in October and November respectively.

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