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I joined the DRC Ukraine team very recently - in September – as the Head of Operations - and since then, I have had the chance to meet our teams and travel across the country to our offices.

While the situation is dire, I have been truly impressed by everyone's resilience and willingness to adapt to this new and harsh reality, and to ensure that DRC Ukraine can operate and respond to the immense needs for humanitarian aid. Over the past few weeks, our teams have faced new challenges as we are now frequently and for long periods of time cut off from internet, electricity and water. During all these somehow almost never-ending challenges, we continue our work.

My role and responsibility as DRC Ukraine Head of Operations, is to support our area teams

in facilitating the project implementation and act as problem solver between the different teams and areas.

My focus over the winter months, will be to support the scale up and positioning of teams in Hard-to-Reach areas, especially in newly accessible locations in the east and south of the country. However, while responding to urgent needs for access to basic services, we should as well capitalise on our long-standing institutional knowledge when it comes to durable solutions in order to best support the multitude of needs. This includes as well looking at recovery and durable solution in the west and northern part of the country.

I feel lucky to have joined our capable and passionate teams among whom many are themselves coping with their reality of being displaced within Ukraine. And I am looking forward to working together across all our areas to continue efforts to get people in need through a tough wintertime ahead of us.

Alix Françoise Marie Journoud
Head of Operations,
DRC Ukraine



Protection



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A shelter for 40 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Romankivtsi, Chernihiv Oblast in western Ukraine is the interim home to children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Svitlana is one of the residents there, and joyfully showed us around the renovated house supported by DRC: *“DRC contribution alongside the local authority’s support allowed us to improve living conditions that significantly impacted the well-being of those living here”*.

The shelter residents in Romankivtsi like the shelter, but worry about being isolated as the house is located hours away from the nearest town. The DRC Protection team based in Chernivtsi city is used to long travel distances.

“It’s usual for us to have to spend hours on the road to get to the places where we support activities, or for distributions and shelters like this. Ukraine is a vast country and traveling here is of course even more complicated now”, says Olha, DRC Protection Assistant.

Thanks to the Ukrainian Humanitarian Fund funding, DRC helped renovate baths, buy a water heater and install new heat-saving doors — the essential winterisation steps before the cold season.

By Olha Kotielnikova, DRC Protection Assistant, Chernivtsi



Protection: Legal Assistance



In October 2022, the Ukrainian Government allowed students, who are registered as internally displaced in conflict-affected locations to transfer to study at public expense. In practice, however, students often experience challenges with this opportunity.

Dmytro is originally from Lyman city, Donetsk Oblast, eastern Ukraine – one of the places that recently became accessible again, although there is still intense fighting nearby. At the time when war broke out in February 2022, Dmytro studied at the Law Academy in Kharkiv city, Kharkiv Oblast, which has been badly affected by hostilities since February. He was forced to leave his studies and relocate to Poltava, Poltava Oblast, due to heavy shelling.

Because of the repeated relocations, Dmitry's family has lost their livelihoods and is now in a difficult financial situation. That was why Dmitry wanted to make use of his right to study at the Poltava branch of the Academy at public expense. To make the transfer he needed a certificate of registration in Lyman, his place of origin, but this he could not get as the public administration institutions were still to resume their work in the city. In addition, the Poltava Academy gave him only three days to submit the necessary package of documents.

Dmytro turned to the local NGO 'Caritas Mariupol', a partner of DRC for legal assistance. Caritas' lawyer helped him to issue the necessary certificate online and explained to him that the academy's requirement to submit documents in three days does not correspond to the government's decree. Dmytro followed the lawyer's recommendations, submitted all the necessary documents, and soon he was transferred to study according to the offer from the Government of Ukraine.

DRC's partnership with Caritas Mariupol is made possible through funds from the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

By Andrii Fedorchenko, Caritas Mariupol lawyer



Capacity Building



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In mid-June 2022, DRC established five mobile teams of mediators and psychologists to cover more than 30 shelters in western Ukraine. The teams provide IDPs and host communities with conflict-related and psychological counselling, for example conflict mediation, awareness-raising sessions, social or legal counselling, and art therapy.

Considering possible tensions between internally displaced and host communities, mobile teams' work contributes to social cohesion and conflict prevention in the communities affected by the war and migration flows.

"It was a discovery for me, that by understanding my emotions I can manage the conflict. The techniques and tools I got during the training can be used both in my personal life and at work," says Pavlo after the training on managing emotions in a conflict that was conducted in Rivne city.

DRC mobile teams' activities will end in mid-December. The experience and lessons learnt from this pilot intervention will be reflected in an analytical paper and shared with the representatives of the peacebuilding community in Ukraine to improve the emergency response to the humanitarian crisis.

By Yuliia Demchuk, DRC Project Peacebuilding Coordinator, Kyiv



Economic Recovery



©DRC Ukraine, October 2022.

Like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, a printing house from Mariupol, a ruined city that is now a non-government-controlled area, relocated and resumed its activities in Lviv in western Ukraine.

"I was eager to resume work. Now, it feels like I've come home because I'm completely immersed in work. It's a challenge that I like to start the business all over," says Denis, owner of the printing house as shares his impressions.

His printing house in Mariupol was burned down due to the hostilities — he could not save the equipment. The DRC grant allowed Denys to restore the enterprise in another city.

"The grant made it possible for the enterprise to function. I bought the equipment and little by little I can restore the business," he says. Denys employed two people, both internally displaced like himself, and was able to reach 60 % of the profit, which the printing house had before. Now, he plans to invest in marketing and increase the number of customers.

Such support is possible thanks to the funding of Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), as well as the Government of the United Kingdom.

By Volodymyr Malynka, DRC Communications Officer, Kyiv



Humanitarian Disarmament & Peacebuilding



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DRC currently conducts Battle Area Clearance (BAC) near Rozvazhiv village in Kyiv Oblast. In the forest that neighbours the village, a warehouse filled with ammunition exploded in March 2022, scattering debris and unexploded ordnance several hundreds of meters in its vicinity.

Previously, this area was partially checked by the State Emergency Service (SES), but only along the side of the roads that lead through the forest to fields. DRC deminers search for Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in the forest, in order to safely remove and/or destroy them. In the first few days of work, deminers already found weapon igniters and handed them over to the SES for disposal.

"It's difficult because battles took place here, and every step is important. In addition, there is a forest and you have to make your way through the thickets which may be filled with ammunition" says Maksym, a deminer who takes part in the clearance process.

Before winter sets in, and if the weather conditions allow, the deminers plan to continue to check this area in a few weeks. Afterwards, the local community will be able to reuse this territory safely, both for cultivating the nearby agricultural lands or simply collecting to collect edible mushrooms.

"This kind of support is vital. Since fierce battles took place in our community, explosive ordnance was left behind and they now pose a threat to the lives of local residents. Some villages were littered with parts of cluster bombs. It may take years of clearing the territory before we can feel safe here," says Valentyna, the head of Rozvazhiv hromada.

Clearance in Rozvazhiv is possible thanks to funding from the Swedish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (Sida).

By Volodymyr Malynka, DRC Communications Officer, Kyiv

