In late December, several trucks arrived in Toretsk, 7 kilometres from the contact line. The trucks stopped at hospitals, schools, and residential buildings, delivering 174 much-needed water tanks of 500 litres and five 5,000-litre ones to assist the local population with their water storage needs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, equitable water access is more important than ever. The conflict has continued to affect basic services in the town of Toretsk and nearby settlements, with shelling often leaving the population of about 45,000 people without water. Regular shellings interrupt the work of the nearby Horlivka Water Filtration Station with water disruptions sometimes lasting up to two weeks, forcing the local population to reduce their water consumption and rely on water storage.

Just two weeks after the tanks were delivered, on 4 January, Horlivka—Toretsk water pipeline was again damaged by shelling. According to the WASH Cluster, repairs took nine days due to problems agreeing a window of silence and the restrictions that the winter season places on available daylight hours in which to work.

The tanks have proved to be very helpful in the days when running water was absent. The Central Hospital of Toretsk wrote to share pictures and express sincere gratitude for IOM recent intervention to help the facility store more water. Through a system of forty-two 500-litre tanks that provides contingency water reserve, the brave and hard-working hospital staff were able to access water to help meet the sanitary needs of the hospital during the entire period of water supply disruption.

The water tanks delivery was part of the IOM broad infection prevention and control programme funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.
It has been almost a year since COVID-19 first reached Ukraine. Since then, the pandemic has significantly added to the challenges that many medical and social institutions in Ukraine’s conflict-affected regions have had to deal with.

Set against a backdrop of an aging population, a general lack of funding and often outdated equipment and infrastructure, institutions have often struggled to meet the needs of their communities. Assessments have shown that this gap between capacities and needs has become wider than ever, especially with heightened disinfection standards and the need for personal protective gear that budgets could not stretch to.

"The use of disinfectants and hygiene items has substantially increased," confirms Olena Zababura, Head Nurse at Myrnohrad Central City Hospital. "We do our best to procure, but the quantity that we have is clearly not enough."

This hospital is one of 105 medical and social institutions in the government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which IOM was able to provide with COVID-19 related assistance thanks to the support of the German Government. This funding also allowed IOM to quickly deliver personal protective equipment (PPE) to 26 COVID-19 designated hospitals in the non-government-controlled areas to help meet the surging needs.

As well as the gap in critically required consumables highlighted by Olena, systematic problems have become more apparent with the pandemic.

"The disinfection of items is an infection prevention and control requirement for each inpatient facility, whether they are medical or social. Unfortunately, the equipment used in most of the institutions is very old and inefficient,” says Eleonora Polischuk, Head of the Regional Department of Social Protection of the Population in Luhansk oblast.

To meet this challenge, IOM, with the support from the German Government, provided disinfection cabinets, washing machines and dryers to 32 facilities in the government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. This much-needed equipment will allow reducing the risk of infection for the staff and the vulnerable groups they serve.

Eleonora confirms how useful this new equipment will be: "The disinfection cabinets provided by IOM are modern and of big capacity, which will allow us to disinfect more items, ensure high quality and ease the overall infection control."
IOM DELIVERS HYGIENE KITS FOR BEDRIDDEN PATIENTS IN EASTERN UKRAINE

Hospitals for children and adults, an oncology dispensary, care homes — in total over 50 inpatient facilities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions will receive hygiene kits for bedridden patients.

COVID-19 is still having a big impact on conflict-affected eastern areas. As in many parts of the world, it has taken away many families’ accessibility to loved ones in hospitals and social institutions and with growing patient numbers, has placed enormous strain on medical and social workers. The situation is especially difficult in the areas where water is scarce due to damaged and outdated water infrastructure.

The kits helping staff and patients meet their ever-growing hygiene needs include cleansing and protective cream, hair shampoo-foam, sponges, napkins, wet wipes and paper towels. The intervention was made possible with funding from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).

VIRAL CAMPAIGN COUNTERS VIRUS-RELATED STRESS

With the momentum of the New Year holidays, IOM unveiled a street installation in the cities of Kyiv and Kharkiv as part of its information campaign “WEAR YOUR MASK, DON’T MASK YOUR FEELINGS.” The campaign, promoted by the huge mask, continues to highlight the importance of mental health and psychosocial support in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and advertises the IOM-run toll-free emotional support hotline 0 800 211 444. The hotline and public campaign have been funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).

Passersby were taking photo and selfies, which helped the IOM installation to go viral on social media.

“I would like to thank all those Ukrainians who continue wearing a mask as an act of civic duty and love for other fellow citizens,” said IOM Ukraine’s Officer in Charge, doctor Risatul Islam, opening the installation in Kyiv. “I would also like to thank those in distress who will not fear to show their emotions in these difficult times and will reach out to the IOM hotline as an important way of supporting themselves, their family and their community,” he added.

“Mental health is as important as physical health in these difficult times. We support efforts to destigmatize mental health and increase access to care,” said Renee Lariviere, Regional Refugee Coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

In addition to the traditional campaign channels (billboards, posters in train carts, articles on traditional and social media, as well as TV and radio broadcasting), several
Ukrainian artists developed posters reminding about the need to wear a mask and providing the IOM emotional support hotline number. The posters were made available for download for retail enterprises, pharmacies and everyone interested to use to remind the public of our collective responsibility in these times of COVID 19.

The information campaign led to a four-fold increase in the number of calls to the hotline. In total, from September 2020 to January 2021, the hotline received over 750 calls.

### INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING BY TOPICS, September 2020 — January 2021

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Panic attacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems at/with work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleep disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of COVID-19 infection</td>
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<td>Lack of motivation</td>
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<td>Severe experience of loss</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>A state of anxiety, fear</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**CONTACTS:**

8 Mykhailivska St., Kyiv 01001, Ukraine
+38 044 568 5015

iomkiev@iom.int
ukraine.iom.int
IOMUkraine
iomukraine