

## **ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH: response to challenges caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine**

*(situational report as of 08.03.2022)*

### **Key approaches**

In the situation of an unprecedented Russian aggression, the Alliance for Public Health is, as always, at the frontlines, fighting for Ukraine and its people. We remain with the people of Ukraine in the struggle for the sovereignty of Ukraine.

The **main working approaches of the APH** in this time are the following:

- **Safety of project staff and clients** during the war are the key priority for programs conducted by the APH and partner NGOs.
- Feeling responsible for implementation of the programs and projects, the Alliance does not suspend them, but changes the programs and formats of activities to promptly response to the unprecedented emergency and **preserve key services**. Should the lives and health of staff be in threatened, client work shall be re-formatted or completely suspended until the situation is stabilized.
- Activities of the APH include those aimed at **responding to the aggression**, including procurement, organization and provision of humanitarian aid.
- **Supporting beneficiaries** of the programs through ensuring their access to life-saving treatment and other health-related services and defending their rights remains our priority activity.
- The APH provides **support to key partners**; first of all, to the Ministry of Health and healthcare facilities to enable them respond to the challenges produced by the current situation.

### **Problems, challenges and responses**

#### **HUMANITARIAN AID**



The APH has decided to provide its mobile ambulatories for humanitarian needs, incl. evacuation of vulnerable populations, women and children, and delivery of foods and medicines. In just one day, March 7, around 100 civilians were taken to safety from the heavily shelled town of Irpin! Mobile ambulatories continue their work every day!

## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES



A new service, #HELPnow, helps people in accessing ART, treatment of TB, hepatitis, and OAT.

Presently, #HELPnow service provides the following types of support:

- Support and coordination for accessing ART, opioid agonist treatment (OAT), TB and hepatitis treatment
- Support and coordination of accessing psychological aid
- Support of online access to lost prescriptions for HIV treatment

In the first week, 100 requests were received:

- 49 came from Ukraine
- 51 came from abroad (Moldova, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, etc.)

The requests concerned mostly:

- HIV/ART — 53 (33 from abroad, 20 from Ukraine)
- OAT — 40 (13 from abroad, 27 from Ukraine)
- Other (TB, hepatitis) — 8 (5 from abroad, 3 from Ukraine)

APH personnel track every case. Number of closed cases (help provided by us or our partners): 44

## HIV

### *Activities supported by the current grant of the Global Fund*

All NGOs implementing GF-funded projects operated based on the current situation in the specific region. To ensure safety of personnel, working hours have been shortened. Service provision is currently suspended in Kharkiv, Sumy, Mariupol, and Sievierodonetsk. From 24.02.2022 to 07.03.2022, the total of **993** clients (incl. 736 PWID, 84 SWs, and 93 MSM) in **12** regions of Ukraine were reached with various services.

To ensure continuity of services provision for project clients displaced to other regions of Ukraine, we have arranged referring such clients to local organizations that have focal points from among service providers who consult them on relevant services, addresses of services provision, etc.

Our partner organizations adapt their activities to the situation of warfare. CF "Avante" (Lviv) has organized a temporary IDP reception point at their office; CF «Mangust" (Kherson) keeps providing ART to clients using its mobile ambulatory; CF "Our Future" (Rivne) donated 1000 medical masks and 50 litres of disinfectants to the Armed Forces of Ukraine; CF "New Family" (Chernivtsi) started working at the IDP center where they screen people to identify those from at-risk populations to reach them with prevention services, and provide psychological aid.

### Stories from our beneficiaries

NGO "Synergy of Souls" (Dnipro) has a well-established algorithm for sending women with children from risk populations to Lviv and abroad. A pregnant PLWH from Dnipro, a mother of two, who is a client of the OAT program, has been sent to Lviv. She was given the OAT drug and escorted by a social worker.

Svitlana is one of sex workers who receive services from ICF "Convictus". They have known her there for eight years already. On the fifth day of the war, the woman had to leave Kyiv and take an evacuation train to the Western Ukraine. There she accidentally met a social worker of "Convictus" who provided her with advice and consultation, and helped her to find an accommodation — everything was done in just one day. Svitlana was linked to a local NGO, but she does not have plans to stay for long and pursue sex work yet... She only hopes to return home as soon as possible...

## CDC-supported activities

In most of the regions, the projects continue their work. In some, their working hours are shortened due to curfew.

**Testing for HIV:** From 24.02 to 07.03.2022, the three CDC-supported projects tested **722** clients, **32** of whom proved HIV-positive.

OSF project continues operations depending on the situation in the regions:

- The services are provided to full extent in **Kyiv, Poltava, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk and Cherkasy oblasts.**



Photo: delivering ART drugs to a patient, Odesa

- In **Zaporizhzhia and Kirovohrad** oblasts, the services are partially provided.
- **Mykolaiv oblast** — the services are not provided, the personnel hides in air-raid shelters.
- In **Odesa** oblast, some of the sites have been turned into humanitarian centers.
- In **Kyiv** oblast, additional services are provided (information about receiving ART in other regions of Ukraine and abroad (if a person leaves the country), consultations with doctors, consultations and support in evacuation, psychological support, consultations on activities in critical situations, issuing food certificates and food itself).

## USAID-supported HealthLink project

The activities vary depending on the region: in the cities located in the war zone, project activities have been suspended. E.g., the office in Chernihiv does not work; in Mykolaiv oblast, virtually no testing is conducted, and doctors work help wounded at hospitals, though in quieter places (Yuzhnoukrainsk, Bratske, Novyi Buh) the work goes on as before, and the same goes for Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Poltava and Kropyvnytskyi. The realities of the martial law influence the situation: demand for testing has dropped drastically, the office in Dnipro receives a lot of IDPs who need ART, there are many IDPs in Poltava as well and project personnel tries to help them. Whenever



Photo: Testing at CO 'Synergy of Souls' (Dnipro), March 2022

possible, partner NGOs support the Army and Territorial Defence Force (TDF). E.g., NGO "Alternativa" donated alcohol wipes, gloves, disinfectants and syringes to the volunteer center of Odesa city and Odesa oblast.

The situation in Kherson oblast is difficult: the project is active, but it is running out of test kits and ART drugs; moving around the oblast is dangerous. The phone connection is very poor. In Kyiv oblast, it is impossible to transport goods; connection with some hospitals (in Irpin) is lost. In Fastiv, servicemen have been tested. There is no connection with Mariupol.

**MSM project** are focusing on protecting and helping members of the community. In Kyiv and Dnipro, the offices work as shelters supporting the community. In Zaporizhzhia, they also support the community (financial aid, information about shelters, offers to help).

## OPIOID AGONIST THERAPY

One of the key lines of activities of the APH is joint (with public institutions, community-based organizations and patient organizations) coordination of efforts to ensure preserving patients' access to OAT.

### General situation:

- The MoH of Ukraine promptly issued orders to provide 15-day (and then 30-day) supply of the drugs to clients.
- A lot of clients, including those from occupied cities, were able to receive the drugs for maximum possible periods (depending on the stocks available at the time).
- The PHC of the MoH, together with partners, quickly collected information about the stocks and needs of all regions of Ukraine. The PHC of the MoH, '100% Life' and the APH have all taken part in emergency procurement of drugs in Odesa to deliver them to the sites as soon as possible and thus ensure uninterrupted treatment, including for IDPs and patients of private clinics.

**All OAT projects of the APH carry on their activities:** multidisciplinary aid to patients (humanitarian, social, psychological, physical escort/transportation of patients and medics wherever possible).

- **Coordination and prompt dealing with problems of patients** and health workers through the **National hot line for drug dependence and OAT**.
- **APH supports and informs** all PHC's activities (such as collection of information about demand for/stocks of drugs, etc.) through its communication channels in the regions
- APH case managers help patients leaving for other regions and abroad with **completing/obtaining documents** (to receive drugs, documents required for leaving, etc.)
- **Cooperation with international partners** — informing patients about receiving OAT abroad and providing maximum support to those who depart.
- It is planned to **deploy mobile ambulatories for providing OAT** in Dnipro and Kryvyi Rih.

### Problems:

- Patients have no or very limited access to the drugs on the occupied territories (Mariupol, Kherson, Nova Kakhovka).
- The drugs are out of stock in Kharkiv, the PHC is dealing with it.

**Success story.** A drug therapist from Kyiv called the hotline on drug dependence and OAT and explained that the OAT site cannot start operation because health workers cannot come to work because of problems with transportation. Operation of the site was restored thanks to pro-active attitude of the hotline consultant who transported health workers and some of the patients using his own car. But the problem required a systemic solution, and that is why hotline staff turned to the APH for help. After a discussion, it was established that CFO "Convictus Ukraine" could provide vehicles and organize transportation for health workers. Thanks to our colleagues, the site worked, and transportation was conducted through a 'green corridor' to ensure maximum possible safety of the health workers. As the results, patients could receive the life-saving treatment.

## TUBERCULOSIS

As a part of **active TB case finding in people in difficult life circumstances receiving social services at social care services/facilities**, information about actual humanitarian needs of project clients has been collected, and procurement of the necessary goods is being arranged. The aid targets clients with children coming to social services seeking help.



The city of Kherson and other rayons of the oblast involved in the project are now sieged/occupied, so it is currently impossible to send aid there. The same situation is in Mariupol. Humanitarian aid for Kharkiv (UAH 207 thousand), Dobropillia (UAH 50 thousand), Kramatorsk (UAH 20 thousand, baby food), Luhansk oblast (UAH 220 thousand) has been procured and is being delivered.

Services of **daily observed treatment of patients with TB/DR-TB and comprehensive psychosocial help to patients** are still provided depending on the specific situation in each region. **Common problems:**

mass discharge of patients from inpatient facilities, loss of contact with many clients, in future — possibly many cases of loss to observation and interrupted treatment. In many regions, movement in the oblast is restricted. For example, in Zakarpattia and Lviv oblasts, despite the flow of IDP, operations do not stop. In Volyn oblast, delivery of TB medications is possible only near Lutsk, while in Donetsk oblast operations near Kramatorsk have been uninterrupted, but connection with Mariupol and Volnovakha has been lost. In Odesa oblast, field work goes on despite air-raid warnings to ensure uninterrupted treatment and support of TB patients (the organization in charge is NGO 'Life+'). There is virtually no contact with the partner organization in Mykolaiv (Mykolaiv Oblast Organization of the Ukrainian Red Cross, OO URC). It is difficult to reach bed-bound patients in Kyiv oblast (Brovary, Uzyn).



*The photo shows the line of people, including MHPSS-TB project clients, receiving food and medicines at Kherson OO URC. People of Kherson rejected humanitarian aid from invaders, even though the situation with food is very difficult in the city. The project provides reasonable aid.*

## VIRAL HEPATITIS C

In most regions, DAA treatment of patients is threatened. In particular, there are no medications in Zhytomyr, Slovyansk, Lviv, Kryvyi Rih, Khmelnytskyi, in Kyiv oblast, at the Epidemiology and Infectious Disease Institute. Kyiv Oblast Dermatovenerologic Dispensary that used to provide the treatment for patients in Kyiv oblast, has stopped this activity and transferred all the drugs to Kyiv City Clinical Hospital no. 5. Access to drugs in Rivne, Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa and Kropyvnytskyi is limited. In Zaporizhzhia and Cherkasy, everything is as usual; they initiated HCV treatment of four new patients in the period from February 24 to March 1. No information on Mariupol, Mykolaiv has been available since 4 March 2022. Kherson started working in warzone conditions. Even in those few areas where the medication is accessible, patients struggle getting to hospitals because of checkpoints, lack of fuel or transport. Healthcare facilities as well as private laboratories have stopped routine HCV diagnosing. In Chernihiv oblast, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, social workers issued drugs risking their lives during shelling and air raids. As of February 24, there were almost 200 HIV/HCV and TB/HCV co-infected patients admitted at the end of 2021 and in January and February of 2022. Social workers of local NGOs, even those staying abroad with their children, do not leave their clients and provide remote psychological aid and support to patients receiving treatment, they track daily administration of drugs and inform them about prevention of HCV re-infection, and keep encouraging HCFs to issue medicines for the whole period of treatment.

## ADVOCACY

Regional consultants from among women who use drugs focus on ensuring access of WWUD to OAT and ART; they provide counseling to those who move from unsafe locations to safe ones, and disseminate information for WWUD community on the latest changes in terms and conditions of provision of harm reduction services (CO 'VONA' with the support from the APH).

In the first days of the Russian aggression, Andriy Klepikov, executive director of the APH and Alternate Member of Board of the Global Fund, addressed more than 200 donors and stakeholders of the GF with an urgent request for action. He has contacted leadership of the GF and more than 30 donors and stakeholders. The next step was joint address of three delegations of the Board of the GF — Communities, NGOs of developing countries and NGOs of developed countries. Moreover, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, the Board of the GF approved a decision to finance a special emergency fund with USD 30 million. Around USD 15 million from that amount is intended to use to help Ukraine. Presently, urgent preparation of an application for this amount is ongoing.

## INFORMATION

- Up-to-date information will be posted on the Facebook page of the APH ([AlliancePublicHealth](#)) with hashtag #ЗавждиНаПередовій / #AlwaysOnTheFrontline

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