

# ADRA UKRAINE NEWSLETTER



JANUARY 2024





## Interview

***"ADRA Ukraine psychologists are blessed to positively impact the lives of those in need"*** - Anna Matvienko, the coordinator of the psychosocial department shares information about the activities of the team of psychologists from the Adventist Relief and Development Agency in Ukraine.

— **What psychological challenges have Ukrainians experienced since the onset of the war?**

— People who have remained in Ukraine for almost two years, and some for almost ten years, have been living in a situation of severe psycho-emotional tension and constant stress. Despite the fact that most citizens have already managed to adapt to the new conditions, this has a detrimental effect on the psyche. According to the World Health Organization, a quarter of Ukrainians are at risk of mental disorders due to the war.

The loss of home, family, instability, threats to personal safety, economic instability, job loss, constant anxiety, witnessing destruction and loss of life, anxiety about relatives, and the loss of control over one's own life, can have a profound impact on the mental health of Ukrainians. The breakdown and deterioration of family relationships are additional factors. These challenges may result in depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress syndromes, loss of control, personality disorders, consequences of gender-based violence, and family problems. This list is not exhaustive, but these are among the most common psychological issues encountered by those seeking help from psychologists.

— Why do you need a psychologist to help you solve these problems?

— Unfortunately, Ukraine still lacks a "culture of psychological counseling," when most people avoid visiting a psychologist, even when they are in dire need. Most people hope to solve their psychological problems on their own, but they do not always have the internal resources to do so.

Seeing a psychologist in situations of psychological problems, especially in times of war, is essential, as it provides professional help, confidentiality, empathy and support, promotes the development of healthy coping strategies, and helps restore mental health and self-determination.

— Tell us about the team of psychologists that works at ADRA Ukraine. Who are these people and what services do they provide?

— In 2016, ADRA Ukraine first turned its attention to mental health issues. Until 2022, this area was one that was little used in the organization. However, the full-scale invasion and difficult psychological state of Ukrainian citizens caused the reversal in the organization's orientation.

As of January 2024, the organization is actively engaged in improving the mental health of war-affected people, IDPs, children and adolescents, the elderly, representatives of partner organizations of various forms of ownership, and is one of the most capable organizations in the field of MHPSS.

Today, the psychological service of ADRA Ukraine has 24 highly qualified specialists - psychologists. Among them are 10 psychotherapists and 1 psychiatrist. An important element of our service is the presence of a supervisor who also pays special attention to the mental health of employees.

— What methods of help are used by psychologists?

— Today, our highly professional team of psychologists employs a diverse set of methods to offer our beneficiaries the broadest range of assistance possible. Our specialists work with people of all ages and social groups without exception, utilizing a wide array of both diagnostic and therapeutic tools. It's important to note that methods involving deep influence on the subconscious mind, such as hypnosis and suggestion, are strictly prohibited due to internal organizational policies.

Our specialists provide the following types of assistance:

**Psychological education** focuses on providing information and training in stress management, enhancing interpersonal relationships, and fostering self-awareness. Counseling, offered by psychologists, provides specific advice and guidance for various issues, such as work-related stress, family conflicts, panic attacks, depression, and more.

**Psychotherapy involves** a systematic communication process with a psychotherapist to address problems and alter mental patterns. Different approaches, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychoanalysis, Gestalt therapy, art therapy, explanatory therapy, and others, are employed based on the people's needs.



**Psychiatric care**, conducted at a deeper, medical level, is aimed at treating various mental disorders and is often combined with other forms of psychotherapy. Group therapy involves beneficiaries working together, moderated by a psychologist, to share experiences and offer support.

**Family and couples therapy** concentrates on conflict resolution and relationship improvement within families or couples, aiming to enhance communication and understanding. Emotional support is one of the various forms of assistance for emotional well-being.

**Corporate support** involves psychologists working with colleagues, government officials, and partner organizations to address psychological aspects in a corporate context.

— **How many beneficiaries have ADRA Ukraine psychologists helped since the beginning of the war? Within which projects?**

— ADRA Ukraine's MHPSS component was integrated into three projects: **GFFO**, **LEAP**, and **DANIDA**. From February 2022 to the end of December 2023, psychologists from these projects assisted a total of 28,614 people. Notably, the majority of beneficiaries were in Kyiv (5,119), Zhytomyr (4,408), Vinnytsia (3,944), Dnipro (3,475), Poltava (2,981), Lviv (2,106), and Chernihiv (1,265) region, with hundreds of others receiving support in various regions.

— **What are the most common issues that Ukrainians seek assistance with from ADRA Ukraine psychologists?**

— As of the end of 2023, the predominant requests centered around issues related to stress, trauma, and challenging life circumstances. The most frequently addressed concerns included:

- Overcoming difficult emotions and memories
- Reducing anxiety and stress
- Identifying and alleviating symptoms of depression
- Managing anxiety and uncertainty about the future
- Overcoming fear and panic during military events
- Coping with a constant sense of threat
- Supporting family during military operations
- Dealing with family separation and loss of loved ones
- Adapting to new living conditions during the war
- Building a new rhythm of life and finding stability
- Helping children cope with stress and anxiety

— **Have the needs or psychological problems of Ukrainians changed from the beginning of the war to the present?**

— Undoubtedly, there have been noticeable changes in the requests we receive. In early 2022, the primary concern for most individuals was stabilizing their emotional state, with the expectation of a quick resolution to the conflict. Unfortunately, as events prolonged, people began adapting to these ongoing challenges. Consequently, our focus shifted towards resolving adaptive issues.



At the start of 2022, prevalent issues included post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression stemming from the war, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty about the future. As time progressed, there was an increased demand for developing strategies to adapt to new conditions and support families, especially those with individuals liable for military service.

Currently, there is a rise in inquiries regarding job losses, financial instability, and economic vulnerability. The growing need for psychological support across different population groups has led to an emphasis on improving social services. Additionally, there's an increasing demand for psychological training, seminars, and resources to enhance the competence of psychology professionals.

New needs, such as the development of psychological safety at work and assistance in working with children and adolescents, have emerged. These changes reflect the dynamic nature of social and psychological challenges, as well as the evolving everyday needs of Ukrainians in the context of the military conflict.

Therefore, our team is dedicated to providing essential psychological and social resources to support the population, facilitating their psychological rehabilitation and adaptation.

— **Is there a fundamental difference between online and offline assistance?**

— Yes, there are several fundamental distinctions between online and offline psychological assistance. Each form has its own set of advantages and limitations, and the choice between them often hinges on the individual needs and circumstances of a person.

Online assistance offers the flexibility of receiving help from any location with internet access, proving particularly beneficial for those residing in remote areas or facing difficulties visiting a psychologist in person. On the other hand, offline care necessitates in-person presence, which can be challenging for individuals with limited access to transportation or physical limitations.

For some, the comfort of receiving care at home is a significant advantage of online assistance. However, privacy concerns may arise, especially if a person is utilizing public networks or devices. Offline assistance, while requiring face-to-face meetings, allows for more effective control over privacy arrangements in a designated private space.

Online communication may feel distant due to the electronic nature of interactions, but many platforms offer video capabilities, enabling the perception of non-verbal cues. In contrast, offline meetings provide a more intense interaction between individuals and the ability to interpret various aspects of non-verbal communication.

Technical issues, such as slow internet speeds or audio-visual problems, can pose challenges for online assistance. Offline help, on the other hand, is free from such technical difficulties associated with computer or mobile device use.



— **Could you share some examples of how psychologists helped people overcome a crisis?**

— I have witnessed numerous examples during my tenure as a coordinator in this field, and I take immense pride in the achievements of my colleagues. They are our heroes, having saved and transformed hundreds of lives, bringing hope and support to tens of thousands of people. While there are countless stories worth sharing, a few have left a lasting imprint on me.

One such story involves M., a 32-year-old woman who endured abuse during the occupation. She approached a psychologist in a state of depression, devoid of any desire to live, fearful of people, and unemployed for almost a year. Our psychologist diligently worked with her for over three months. Fast forward seven months, and we share a collective achievement—M. secured a job as a nanny in a kindergarten, found love, and is preparing for her wedding. She found the strength to navigate through the grief that had befallen her.

Then, there's S., a 44-year-old man who lost his wife and daughter during one of his deployments. Overcoming the profound sense of emptiness, he sought the support of a psychologist. The therapy was lengthy, but one day he called to say he no longer needed ongoing support. S. became a chaplain, and in Kupiansk, he found solace with a grandmother raising her granddaughter alone. Now, they form a family, and he eagerly visits them after every trip.

These stories, among many others in the treasure trove of our psychologists, reaffirm that our team is blessed with the ability to positively change the lives of those in need.

— **How do you see the prospects for the development of psychological assistance in this time of war?**

— The ongoing war in Ukraine has created a pressing need for psychological assistance, with an increasing number of individuals requiring support every year, even after the war concludes. People currently rely on their own mobilization resources, but these are dwindling. As a result, the field of psychology is expected to experience rapid development, particularly in areas such as psychotherapy, psychosocial support, and psychological rehabilitation.

In the current landscape, psychological assistance is becoming a crucial element in organizing emotional states and preserving the mental health of those who have endured war and conflict. The constant psychological stress brought about by the war underscores the importance of providing quality assistance to overcome post-traumatic stress disorders, depression, anxiety, and other mental difficulties.

Psychologists are anticipated to actively study and implement effective methods and techniques for working with survivors of traumatic situations. This may involve individual and group psychotherapeutic approaches, the development of stress-resistance skills, and self-regulation methods.

Furthermore, there will be a focus on implementing psychological programs tailored to various population groups, including veterans, children, families, and internally displaced persons. Developing innovative methods and technologies to enhance the effectiveness of psychological support will be crucial.

Building a network of accessible psychological services in different regions will be an important task, ensuring broad access to professional psychological assistance and making it more effective and timely. Consequently, psychology, especially its branches related to the military conflict, is poised to be at the forefront of development, dedicated to solving difficulties and restoring the mental health of those who have experienced military events in Ukraine.

— **What categories of people can receive psychological assistance at ADRA Ukraine, and what is required for this?**

— At ADRA Ukraine, psychological assistance is available to all categories of the population living in the territory controlled by Ukraine, except for active military personnel. To access this support, individuals can either call our hotline or visit one of our protection centers.



# HIGHLIGHT

## Residents of the Sviatohirsk community received household items necessary for home improvement from ADRA Ukraine

On January 15, ADRA Ukraine delivered humanitarian aid to the village of Krestyshche, Kramatorsk district, Donetsk region. This shipment contained household items to support the basic needs of the residents of Sviatohirsk community affected by the war, namely: furniture, heating equipment, household appliances for the arrangement of temporary housing. The assistance was provided with the support of [SlovakAid](#), [ADRA Network](#), [ADRA Slovakia](#), [ADRA Japan](#) and [ADRA Czech Republic](#).

The items delivered to the village of Krestyshche include wood-burning stoves, microwave ovens, gas stoves, washing machines, wooden fuel briquettes and other items needed by the residents. In the near future, this aid will be distributed to low-income, lonely elderly individuals, disabled people, affected families, etc. The authorities expressed their gratitude to ADRA Ukraine and donor representatives for supporting the residents of Sviatohirsk community and providing them with charitable aid.

Due to the full-scale invasion, all settlements of the Sviatohirsk community suffered huge destruction in the residential sector: more than 1,500 community members were left homeless. However, today about 3,000 residents remain in the community, of which almost 500 are internally displaced persons. Therefore, one of the main needs of the community is to provide residents with the necessary household items to meet their basic needs.

19/01/2024

See on the web:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/residents-of-the-sviatohirsk-community-received-household-items-necessary-for-home-improvement-from-adra-ukraine>



## HIGHLIGHT

### Civil society organizations in Mykolaiv presented their humanitarian initiatives for the grant competition held by ADRA Ukraine

On January 18, an introductory meeting was held in Mykolaiv with representatives of communities and civil organizations willing to participate in the ADRA Ukraine project **“Support for Community Initiatives”** funded by **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (DANIDA)**. The meeting led by project facilitator Iryna Boyar, was attended by 19 people, including representatives of 16 NGOs, who got to know each other and presented their projects and initiatives.

Support for Community Initiatives project involves a grant competition, where NGOs may apply for grant funding aimed at implementing initiatives to improve the lives, well-being, and help residents of Mykolaiv. For example, the charitable organization “Shchedryk” is planning to apply for the grant to purchase of materials for children’s art therapy; people with disability club “Victoria” is applying for the purchase of furniture for the club’s premises; the State Emergency Service of Mykolaiv initiated an application to equip a safety classroom where children will be instructed on mine safety.

Applications for participation in the grant competition are accepted until February 9.

23/01/2024

See on the web:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/civil-society-organizations-in-mykolaiv-presented-their-humanitarian-initiatives-for-the-grant-competition-held-by-adra-ukraine>





## HIGHLIGHT

### **At the "Winter gatherings" held in the capital, lonely people recalled family traditions together with ADRA Ukraine's psychologists**

On 28 January, a group psychological support program called "Winter gatherings" was held in Kyiv, organized as part of the LEAP project with the support of [the Government of Canada](#). The event, focused on emotional support for lonely people, was attended by up to 15 individuals.

ADRA Ukraine psychologists Iryna Isakova and Olha Vashchynina conducted a training session called "Self-Care Palm", where the participants learned how to help themselves in anxious and stressful situations. The visitors also recalled family traditions from their childhood, which brought them positive emotions. The guests of the event drew their feelings during art therapy and took part in various competitions. There was also a photo zone, which also had a positive impact on the mood of the attendees.

29/01/2024

See on the web:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/at-the-winter-gatherings-held-in-the-capital-lonely-people-recalled-family-traditions-together-with-adra-ukraines-psychologists>



## Success Story

**Maryna Melnyk  
from Kyiv**

*"Today, not only me, but all the attendees and guests received a huge amount of psychological help from ADRA", says Marina, a resident of the capital.*

Many people living in Ukraine are struggling. Due to the martial law, constant shellfire and anxiety, people simply do not know how to cope with their emotions or even depression. Maryna Melnyk is also experiencing some difficulties. That's why she attended one of the psychological trainings organized by ADRA with the support of [the Government of Canada](#).

*"We all have recharged our batteries with energy and hope here", she says.*

Mental health is a very important aspect of life. Therefore, it is extremely important to provide people not only with material assistance, but also with psychological support.

*"We are sincerely grateful to the ADRA staff", says the beneficiary sincerely.*

Now, after psychological trainings and lectures, Maryna will be able to understand herself better and better manage her thoughts and feelings.



## Success Story

### **Volodymyr Rybalkin** from Svyatohirsk, Donetsk region

*"Today we have received microwave ovens, fuel briquettes, refrigerators and washing machines",* says Volodymyr Rybalkin, head of the Svyatohirsk military administration.

Under martial law, many people have been deprived of their everyday belongings due to constant shelling. Due to the constant drop in light, equipment is damaged, people lose their jobs and cannot replace them on their own. In addition, residents of small towns and villages heat their stoves in winter. However, due to lack of funds, they simply cannot buy firewood or briquettes. Therefore, Volodymyr Rybalkin is sincerely grateful for ADRA Ukraine's assistance in meeting these needs offered with the support of [ADRA Japan](#).

*"This humanitarian aid will go to people with children, who are socially vulnerable, who are in need of help on our territory".*

Of course, every person living in Ukraine needs support now. However, there are those people who need it the most.

*"This will not only improve the quality of life, but I hope it will bring us closer to other living conditions".*

Volodymyr Rybalkin hopes that such assistance will change and improve people's living conditions.



## Success Story

### Residents of Sydorove village Donetsk region

*"If not for ADRA, we would not have survived the winter. We would not have survived this winter at all",* say the residents of one of villages of the Sviatohirska community of the Donetsk region, who received humanitarian aid from a charitable organization.

With the onset of cold weather, many Ukrainians found themselves in a difficult situation. Many people have lost their jobs, and it is not easy to find a new one. Residents of villages are particularly challenged because they need to heat their stoves, and firewood and briquettes are expensive.

That is why the peasants do not stop giving thanks: *"We received the briquettes from ADRA, thank you very much".*

Thanks to the support of [ADRA International](#) and the charity's representative offices in countries such as [the Czech Republic](#), [Japan](#), [Germany](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Puerto Rico](#), [Norway](#), [Spain](#), [South Korea](#), [Belgium](#), [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Italy](#), [Portugal](#), people have been able to survive this winter in warmth.

Now the residents of Sydorove village have fuel briquettes to heat their stoves and keep their families warm. They are sincerely grateful for this support, because ADRA Ukraine and its partners are not just helping people survive this winter, they are helping them not to lose faith in people and goodness.



## More news

[Residents of Kostiantynivka have received food and hygiene kits with the support of our Japanese partners](#)  
03/01/2024

[ADRA Ukraine continues to support Ukrainians. 20 months of war.](#)  
05/01/2024

[Children with disabilities received New Year's gifts from ADRA Ukraine in Kryvyi Rih](#)  
12/01/2024

[Residents of two communities in Kharkiv Region received food kits from the UN World Food Programme](#)  
16/01/2024

[Volunteer center "Hostyna" in Dnipro receives financial assistance from ADRA Ukraine and our Canadian partners](#)  
17/01/2024

[ADRA Ukraine delivered 432 tons of fuel briquettes to residents of the frontline Sviatohirsk community](#)  
19/01/2024

[People in need from Ochakiv have receive food kits from the UN World Food Programme](#)  
24/01/2024

[Lviv shelter for IDPs provides people with everything they need thanks to financial assistance from ADRA Ukraine](#)  
26/01/2024

*Thank you for supporting Ukraine!*



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