



Ukraine. UNHCR supports families with house repairs so they can stay safe and warm at home, November 2022, © UNHCR/Victoria Andrievska

CONCEPT NOTE: A COMMON PLATFORM FOR INVESTMENTS IN EARLY RECOVERY HOUSING SOLUTIONS

WHAT IS IT?

Ukraine is Home will create a new collaborative platform, led by the Government of Ukraine's Ministry of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development in partnership with UNHCR, which aims to facilitate access to housing solutions for people whose homes have been damaged or destroyed during the war. The platform builds upon the Government's ongoing efforts to develop compensation mechanisms for people whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the war and UNHCR's longstanding leadership of the humanitarian shelter cluster in Ukraine and partnership with a range of local, national and international stakeholders. Aligned with the overall aims and vision of the Government's National Recovery Plan, *Ukraine is Home* will provide efficient tools to coordinate and channel support that will help people access vital information and assistance to repair, and recover their homes—using new technologies, innovations, and environmentally-sustainable methods.

For refugees and internally displaced people, the concept of 'home' represents far more than mere bricks and a roof over one's head. Family homes are indelibly linked to notions of identity and belonging, representing a link to the past and renewed hope for the future. The war on Ukraine continues, but signs of early recovery are increasingly evident—and people are cautiously but determinedly beginning to return. Their

courage and resilience should be matched with financial support, technical expertise, and the firm resolve of the Government and its humanitarian and development partners to support them. *Ukraine is Home* builds upon the core principles for housing and infrastructure recovery set out in the National Recovery Plan, namely to (1) promote reconstruction in environmentally sustainable and energy efficient ways, (2) equip communities with civil defense measures, and (3) to expand access to housing and services to people with specific vulnerabilities, personal mobility constraints, and those injured during the war, including veterans. The platform also seeks to incorporate and create 'space' for the creativity, expertise and vision of innovative local actors, such as the *RE:Ukraine Villages* project, and other similar ones — which seeks to link architects and technical experts with owners of damaged homes, so that self-help reconstruction is safe and sustainable over time.

A safe home is routinely cited as a top priority among refugees¹ and internally displaced people² longing to return—and a crucial pre-condition in ensuring that returnees are able to remain, recover and reintegrate. *Ukraine is Home* will provide a common platform to ensure that everyone displaced and affected by the war can access durable housing solutions in a fair, transparent and comprehensive way. This is a message

1 UNHCR report. Lives on Hold: Intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine: #2. September 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/95767>

2 Preliminary findings of UNHCR and World Bank report. Profiles, Needs & Intentions of IDPs - December 2022

that will also resonate far beyond Ukraine's borders and help refugees make informed decisions regarding eventual return—and what they can expect upon arrival.³

The scale of needs is enormous: there are currently some six million IDPs within Ukraine and nearly eight million Ukrainians who have sought protection and refuge abroad. Many millions more have been impacted by the war and are equally entitled to support with housing compensation, repairs, and recovery. This work has already commenced at small scale through a variety of initiatives involving local authorities, volunteer organizations and humanitarian partners, including UNHCR, which to date has supported the repair of some 6,000 houses in war-affected areas. These early and ongoing efforts provide a solid basis for moving forward and to expand efforts in an early recovery context.

Support for housing solutions can be rapidly upscaled and expanded to include more opportunities and options for people to access assistance to repair or reconstruct destroyed homes, including through pre-fabricated options. This will necessarily involve a range of actors—national and regional authorities, humanitarians, development agencies, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, private sector, and local suppliers. Built around six inter-related objectives, *Ukraine is Home* will provide a platform that will help link humanitarian emergency shelter and housing programmes with ongoing Government recovery plans and programmes, implemented with the support of international financial institutions, private sector and other actors.

1 Linking national recovery plans and local expertise with ongoing humanitarian action.

Building an agile, effective, fair and transparent platform to access support requires the engagement of multiple actors across Ukraine—and *Ukraine is Home* creates 'space' for joined up action and innovation. The ongoing recovery efforts have forged collaboration among humanitarian actors and relationships of trust with Oblast and Hromada administrations in regions where residential units and social infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed. This will be crucial in achieving the housing and infrastructure aims outlined in the National Recovery Plan, by facilitating the identification and targeting of needed support in an early recovery context. Integrating local know-how into the rolling development of the platform and creating space for local knowledge, capacities, ideas, innovations and emerging good practice, such as that of *RE:Ukraine Villages*, are central to the success and viability of *Ukraine is Home*.

2 Digital technology to promote access to information and services.

The development of a digital registry of damage is a critical element of *Ukraine is Home* and will facilitate the overview of damage to homes and the level of needed repair/recovery support, including cash and material for repairs, fostering high-quality information exchange. Ukraine's leadership in digital innovation and the high digital literacy of its population open limitless doors for innovation and expanding the reach of *Ukraine is Home*, including potential interoperability with the Diia Application.

3 Virtual and physical 'Reconstruction hubs'.

Will be established to link virtual registries and facilitate the rapid deployment and dispersal of needed materials and technical support and coordinated action among partners and local officials. UNHCR's existing warehouses for emergency shelter and repair material offer a viable model that can be transitioned and upscaled in an early recovery context.

4 Community economic recovery and regeneration.

Through national procurement and support for local markets and suppliers. As areas stabilize and people eventually return—early recovery reconstruction activities will be a key element in stimulating local economies and creating opportunities for employment. UNHCR is already procuring the majority of the material it uses for the repair of individual homes or social infrastructure from the local market and has initiated the procurement of locally produced pre-fabricated modular homes.

5 Addressing compensation, reparations and housing, land and property issues.

Return and reintegration in war-affected areas invariably raises a host of practical, administrative and legal issues related to reclaiming lost property, accessing compensation or reparations in accordance with the draft law on compensation for damage and destruction of housing,⁴ recovering property deeds and navigating bureaucratic systems. As coordinator of the humanitarian protection cluster, UNHCR will contribute with technical expertise and support to engage other actors with sound knowledge in HLP issues.

³ UNHCR is neither promoting nor assisting returns to Ukraine at this juncture, but advocates for refugees' right to freely decide when it is safe for them to return and seeks to ensure that people have access to accurate information to make well-informed decisions regarding their safety and ability to reintegrate in a fluid context. For those who decide to voluntary return, UNHCR supports these decisions and will work with partners to ensure that returns to areas of origin or other locations in Ukraine are safe, dignified, and sustainable.

⁴ Draft law 7198 on compensation of damage and destruction of some immovable property in the course of armed hostilities, terrorist acts, caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation.

6 Piloting innovation.

An effective, impactful platform to assist people with repairing or recovery homes will need to be both flexible and adaptable—and allow room for scale-able innovations and good practice to emerge. *Ukraine is Home* seeks to create a platform with room for creativity and the testing of new approaches in response to evolving needs in a fluid context. To date, such initiatives include:

- **Introducing ‘reconstruction vouchers’ or conditional ‘cash for repairs’** that would provide flexibility and agency to people with specific repair needs—and allow people to prioritize what they need to reestablish themselves in damaged or lost homes and encourage local suppliers to respond to market forces of supply and demand.
- **Providing pre-fabricated modular houses as one transitional housing solution for people whose homes are beyond repair.** UNHCR is currently piloting the procurement of locally-produced, pre-fabricated and fully functional modular homes to families whose houses have been extensively damaged or destroyed during the war. This approach allows families to re-establish themselves on their land and to rebuild homes over time as needed resources are regenerated. Not only is this a more dignified housing solution than long-term accommodation in collective centers or shared/host facilities, it can also be more cost-efficient in the medium and long term.



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