

Volunteers

Story

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Implementing durable solutions for refugees in Ukraine through volunteerism

Ukraine is a destination and transit country for persons with international protection needs, as well as economic migrants seeking to enter the European Union (EU) for an estimated number of over 8000 people. Representing around 50 different nationalities, most of them are registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and rely on its assistance. Liliia Huzeieva, aged 22, joined UNHCR as national UN Volunteer in the fall of 2018 to support its work in providing durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine.



Liliia Huzeieva, national UN Volunteer with UNHCR in Ukraine, in her role as Senior Social Counsellor at Desyate Kvitnya, UNHCR's implementing partner in Odessa, Ukraine.

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Born in Donetsk region in Ukraine, Liliia was forced to leave her hometown because of the armed conflict. This displacement catalyzed an urge to help those who were in a similar situation and less fortunate than her.

Liliia's first experience of working with refugees and asylum seekers was a short-term European Voluntary Service education project for refugees in Gaziantep, Turkey, and it led to an awakening within her of how her contribution could bring about a change for the better in both herself and society.

Since that starting point, Liliia has broadened the scope of her volunteering responsibilities through different roles: first, as an intern at the UNHCR, Ukraine, where she worked with internally displaced persons and helped in the implementation of the small grants program; second, as a European Voluntary Service Volunteer on a long-term project in Antakya, Turkey, where her work focused on needs assessment and empowerment events for refugee communities; and third, as a Senior Social Counsellor at Desyate Kvitnya, a UNHCR implementing partner in Odessa, Ukraine.

Last year Liliia joined UNHCR in her new role of National UN Volunteer. Liliia is now serving as Protection Assistant in Kyiv, supporting the identification, development, and implementation of durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine.

'Durable solutions' span voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement, which are some of the options available to the estimated 3,500 refugees and 5,000 asylum seekers in Ukraine.

Based on the UNHCR Ukraine Multi-Year, Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy, their local integration is one of the priorities of the agency's operations in the region.

To that end, there is a need for enhanced advocacy and innovative approaches to find short-time livelihood solutions. This is where the work of UN Volunteers, such as Liliia, has an impact.

One of the durable solutions we work on is local integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Integration means not only working with individuals and the refugee community, but also ensuring awareness among the local population. For example, as a UN Volunteer, I was assisting Peace Corps Volunteers in the implementation of Women Empowerment Conference and initiated the involvement of refugee community leaders for this event. --Liliia Huzeieva, national UN Volunteer, UNHCR, Ukraine

Liliia's day-to-day work involves counseling refugees and asylum seekers about durable solutions, supporting UNHCR implementing partners (local NGOs), aiding the documenting of agency persons of concern, and assisting with the implementation of voluntary repatriation of refugees and asylum seekers. Besides the satisfaction of helping to bring about change and providing support to those who need it, she enjoys working in a team of qualified professionals, whose members support each other both professionally and personally. This sentiment about the team is echoed by Olya Oliynyk, Refugee Status Determination Associate, UNHCR, Ukraine.

UNHCR in Ukraine has been working with UN Volunteers closely since 2004. The partnership between the UNV and UNHCR in Ukraine is of great value and has a significant impact on the activities implemented in the region. Hardworking, very professional and highly qualified colleagues who have been working under UNV contracts in different units of UNHCR – Protection, Programme, Public Information – continue to contribute significantly to overall UNHCR goals and activities in Ukraine. --Olya Oliynyk, Refugee Status Determination Associate, UNHCR, Ukraine

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