After a Year of War, Ukraine Gets Emergency HIV Funding

$10.32 million in new support from the Global Fund go toward prevention, treatment and care of HIV and tuberculosis in Ukraine.

February 23, 2023 By Trent Straube

This week marks the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. President Joe Biden paid a surprise visit to Kyiv to show solidarity with Ukrainians and support their fight for democracy. Ukrainians living with HIV and those with tuberculosis are also receiving a boost in support—an additional $10.32 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, known simply as the Global Fund.

The emergency funding will go toward prevention, treatment and care of HIV and tuberculosis, including among those who are displaced within Ukraine, according to a Global Fund press statement. The aid is in addition to previous funding.

As POZ reported last April, about 260,000 Ukrainians were living with HIV before the war broke out, and 152,000 of them were taking daily lifesaving meds to suppress their virus. At the time, it was presumed that half of Ukraine's pharmacies were shuttered.

The situation has only grown more dire. Since the Russian invasion, over 1,200 health care facilities have been attacked, according to the World Health Organization.

"If displaced people don't get the medicines they need, there is a high risk that they will actually die because of the lack of therapy," Dmytro Sherembei, head of 100% LIFE, said in the Global Fund statement. 100% Life is a Global Fund–supported nongovernmental organization that delivers HIV medications in war-affected Ukraine.

The United States has contributed $23.17 billion to the Global Fund since it launched in 2002, according to the Global Fund. Much of that funding comes from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is best known for its efforts to combat HIV in Africa.

Last month, PEPFAR celebrated its 20th anniversary, noting that it has saved 25 million lives and that 5.5 million babies have been born HIV-free because of the program. What's more, more than 20 million people living with HIV have access to lifesaving antiretrovirals through programs

supported byPEPFAR.

Last spring, the U.S. Department of State noted that PEPFAR was instrumental in getting HIV aid to Ukraine. “Over the past two months, PEPFAR has invested a total of $13 million in emergency funding to procure 51 million doses of antiretroviral medications (ARVs), enough to meet the urgent treatment needs of Ukrainians living with HIV for up to a year,” the State Department said in April 2022. “PEPFAR delivered an initial 18 million doses of the ARV tenofovir, lamivudine and dolutegravir (TLD) on April 7. These medications are already being rapidly distributed to people living with HIV across Ukraine. PEPFAR subsequently procured an additional tranche of more than 5 million courses of treatment of TLD and other ARVs that are expected to reach Lviv by the end of April. On April 13, PEPFAR authorized its third and largest procurement of ARVs to date, with more than 28 million more doses of treatment to meet Ukraine’s request for PEPFAR to provide a 12-month supply of lifesaving ARVs for the country.”

One year later, additional funding is required in Ukraine. “As the war rages on, the needs in the country are getting more severe and urgent,” Peter Sands, the Global Fund’s executive director, said in this week’s statement. “Damage and destruction to water, electricity and sanitation facilities, health facilities, as well as road and residential infrastructure continue to be reported across multiple areas throughout the country. The additional emergency funding that we are unlocking today is intended to support the government in filling the significant financing gaps across critical HIV and TB interventions. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.”

In related Ukrainian news, see “Putin Reportedly Recruits Prisoners With HIV and Hepatitis for Ukraine War” and “#WeStandWithUkraine and HIV-Affected Ukrainians.” And for more about HIV funding, check out “Guess Who’s the New No. 1 Philanthropic Funder of HIV Programs.”

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