

## Editorial

# From adversity to advancement: leveraging war-tested approaches for the post-conflict reformation of the Ukrainian healthcare landscape

### Abstract

The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict has had significant repercussions on Ukraine's healthcare system, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to healthcare institutions. The disruption of personnel, medical supplies, and patient transportation has created considerable challenges for healthcare services. However, there are successful approaches from comparable contexts that can serve as a catalyst for post-conflict healthcare reformation in Ukraine. Key strategies include improving healthcare accessibility for marginalized populations through standardized essential health and surgical care packages, rehabilitating damaged facilities, strengthening primary care provisions, and supporting war survivors with disabilities. By adopting these proven practices, Ukraine can strengthen its healthcare system and facilitate a sustainable recovery, contributing to the country's resilience and ensuring essential healthcare services for its population.

**Keywords:** war, healthcare rebuilding, healthcare delivery, healthcare models, Ukraine

### Background and the current implications of war on the delivery of healthcare in Ukraine

The socio-political landscape of Ukraine has undergone a significant transformation since the onset of the Russian invasion, prompting significant global concern due to the escalating casualties and their implications for peace and security. With an estimated 22 734 documented casualties from the frontline, including 8490 fatalities and 14 244 war-related injuries, the nation faces a challenge further compounded by an existing shortage of healthcare institutions and personnel [1].

This situation leaves healthcare establishments increasingly vulnerable to attacks, rendering them inoperable and dysfunctional. The World Health Organisation has reported over 1000 attacks on healthcare institutions since the beginning of the war, resulting in numerous injuries and fatalities among patients and healthcare staff. Consequently, Ukraine is confronting critical shortages of healthcare personnel and facilities, significantly impacting emergency response, care accessibility, and the well-being of civilians [2, 3].

The ongoing conflict has also given rise to numerous unmet healthcare needs and barriers to accessing essential services, with healthcare costs representing a significant impediment. A recent survey revealed that one in five Ukrainians cannot afford necessary healthcare services [3]. Moreover, occupied territories and active combat zones face even greater challenges in accessing healthcare [3].

As a complementary addition to the ongoing endeavours, this editorial seeks to explore successful models from other conflict-affected nations that could be adapted to fortify Ukraine's healthcare system.

### Proposed paradigms and models for the prolonged rehabilitation of Ukraine's healthcare services

To ensure a comprehensive healthcare framework during its recovery, Ukraine can learn valuable lessons from other conflict-affected nations.

First, Ukraine may consider implementing healthcare initiatives to improve accessibility to medical services in remote areas and among vulnerable demographics. For instance, adopting a programme akin to Sierra Leone's Free Healthcare Initiative, launched in 2010, could prove beneficial [4]. This initiative aimed to improve access to critical healthcare, reduce maternal and child mortality rates, and provide complimentary medical services to vulnerable groups, including expectant mothers, lactating women, and children below the age of 5 [4]. In addition to such innovative healthcare initiatives, the introduction of standardized essential healthcare packages and surgical care, comparable to Afghanistan's Basic Package of Health Services, may significantly impact vaccination coverage, maternal health services, and emergency care in rural and isolated regions of Ukraine [5]. By adopting these initiatives, the nation can ensure equitable access to essential healthcare for marginalized groups and populations residing in geographically isolated communities.

The importance of revitalizing Ukraine's healthcare infrastructure cannot be overstated, as it not only facilitates healthcare access but also plays a critical role in postwar recovery, elevates public health preparedness, and contributes to economic prosperity. To this end, the nation might draw inspiration from Iraq's Health Sector Support Programme, an initiative focussed on



- modalities [https://www.healthpolicyproject.com/pubs/245\\_ContractingModalitiesStudyFINALREPORT.pdf](https://www.healthpolicyproject.com/pubs/245_ContractingModalitiesStudyFINALREPORT.pdf) (21 July 2023, date last accessed).
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