Since 2014, around four million people have been affected by the armed conflict between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian military in Eastern Ukraine. Fighting continues to break out, and more than 1.5 million people have fled to other regions of Ukraine, including the port town of Mariupol and nearby municipalities. Like the 450,000 local residents, they live with the constant threat of renewed hostilities.

Every day life here is beset with challenges for those displaced people and the local community alike: the water supply situation is catastrophic, taking its toll on displaced persons and locals alike. Even before the conflict, up to 40 per cent of water was being lost through leaks in the dilapidated, poorly maintained and inefficient supply system. The conflict has exacerbated the situation: water mains running through combat areas have sustained repeated damage from artillery fire, for example.

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The poor water supply in Eastern Ukraine

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Repair works on water pipes in Mariupol
Access to drinking water has not only improved in the cities: in the villages, the project partners are rehabilitating local water sources, for example by repairing poorly maintained boreholes and wells and supplying kindergartens, schools and hospitals to ensure that children and young people have access to safe drinking water.

The measures benefit locals and displaced persons alike. They help to build peaceful relations between communities which would otherwise be competing for water, a scarce resource.

By the time the project ends in 2020, 720,000 people, including 162,000 children and teenagers, in and around Mariupol will have access to a reliable supply of safe water.

In smaller towns and villages, 120,000 residents whose homes are not connected to a water supply network are being provided with water deliveries. Many of them also need water to grow fruit and vegetables.

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Lubov Denisova: „We often can’t drink the water from the tap“
Lubov Denisova is 76 years old and, like many people in her neighbourhood, she is dependent on water deliveries:
„I use the water deliveries for cooking and drinking. I use it very sparingly as I can’t afford to buy in extra water. I don’t have the money for that. We often can’t drink the water from the tap.“

Anjela Yaroshyuk: „We are always happy about a water delivery“
Valentin and Anjela Yaroshyuk do not have the means to buy water for their family and report:
„We are always thrilled to get a water delivery. It makes such a difference to our lives. If we don’t have a delivery, we have to ask our friends from other villages to help us out. We can’t afford to buy clean water.“