Care4Ukraine
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The Winter Ahead

How communities are preparing for another difficult winter



Residents gather during an aid distribution in Ukraine. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

A Note from Care4Ukraine

Ukraine enters winter with a power system weakened by repeated attacks and an identified generation shortfall. National figures show the scale of the damage; conditions in the rural communities where Care4Ukraine works show its practical consequences.

During recent visits in eastern Ukraine, residents told our volunteers that humanitarian deliveries had become less frequent. Some were uncertain whether support would continue through the winter. Others were weighing whether they could remain in their homes if food, medicine, heating supplies, or local services became harder to obtain.

Our response combines transport, technical support, equipment maintenance, communications, and direct coordination with Ukrainian partners. We sometimes work alongside larger humanitarian organizations, whose scale and resources are essential. Care4Ukraine serves a different role: our smaller vehicles, flexible schedules, and long-standing local relationships allow us to reach communities where a large operation may be impractical. Large international organizations, small regional groups, universities, student volunteers, and local residents all have a role to play. Their size and methods may differ, but their purpose is the same: to help people caught in circumstances beyond their control regain some stability and get on with their lives.

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Ukraine's Power Grid Under Attack

Intensified attacks and the onset of cold weather are putting renewed strain on Ukraine's power system. Repairs continue, but Ukraine enters the 2026–2027 winter with a power shortfall.



An energy facility burns following an attack on Ukraine's power infrastructure. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

Ukraine entered the full-scale invasion with about 37.5 gigawatts of power-generating capacity available to the grid. Occupation, physical damage, and repeated attacks cut that capacity by roughly half during the first year. Repair campaigns restored part of the loss, but further attack waves repeatedly erased those gains.

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the major changes in available capacity since 2022. A single statement about "capacity lost" can be misleading because equipment is damaged, repaired, returned to service, or disconnected by damage elsewhere in the grid. Imports and smaller local generators can narrow a shortage, but they do not make every megawatt available in every region.

Table 1 Electricity generation capacity from 2022 to 2026

Period	Available capacity	What the figure represents
February 2022	**37.5 GW**	Power-generating capacity available to the grid before the full-scale invasion
After winter 2022–2023	**18.3 GW**	Available capacity after occupation, damage, and the first winter of attacks
March 2024	**21.2 GW**	Capacity restored before the March 2024 attack wave
End of spring 2024	**12.0 GW**	Available capacity after approximately 9.2 GW of new losses
Ahead of winter 2024–2025	**15.0 GW**	Capacity after the 2024 repair campaign
Ahead of winter 2025–2026	**16.7 GW**	Capacity after further repairs during late 2024 and 2025

Period	Available capacity	What the figure represents
January 2026	**About 11.5 GW**	Domestic capacity available during the winter crisis, against about 18 GW peak demand
August 2026	**About 15 GW**	Government figure for evening availability including cogeneration and imports; not directly comparable with the domestic-only series
November 2026 goal	**19.6 GW**	Government target announced in August; achievement not confirmed by published evidence

Note These figures are snapshots, not annual averages. The main series covers power sources that can be called on when needed. The August 2026 figure also includes imports and cogeneration, so it is shown separately.

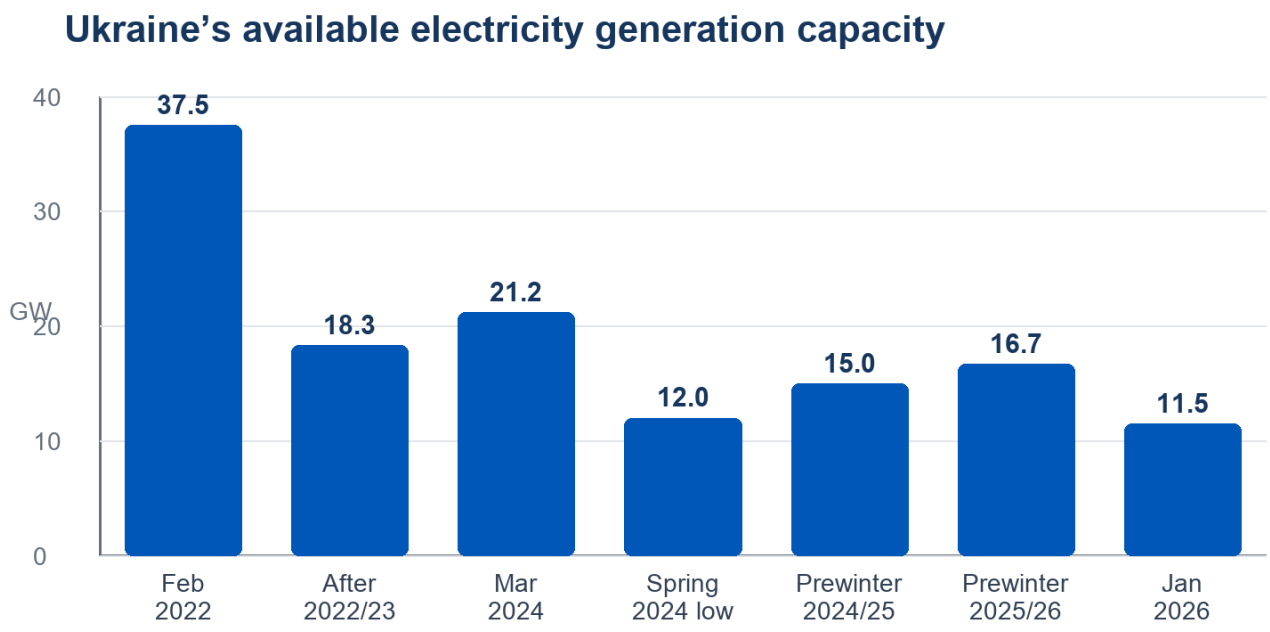

Figure 1 Available electricity generation capacity since February 2022

Source International Energy Agency pre-winter assessments for 2024, 2025, and 2026. Values are approximate and correspond to the dates shown.

Electricity Capacity Since 2022

2022 The occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant removed about 6 GW from electricity supply to the Ukrainian grid. Damage, occupation, and the first large campaign against energy infrastructure reduced power-generating capacity available to the grid from about 37.5 GW before the invasion to about 18.3 GW after the 2022–2023 heating season.

2023 Repairs restored about 3 GW. By March 2024, immediately before the next major wave of attacks, available capacity had recovered to roughly 21.2 GW.

2024 Attacks between March and May removed about 9.2 GW. Available capacity fell to about 12 GW by the end of spring. A further repair campaign brought the figure back to roughly 15 GW ahead of the 2024–2025 heating season.

2025 Continued repair work lifted power-generating capacity available to the grid to about 16.7 GW ahead of the 2025–2026 heating season. The government also reported that more than 1 GW of smaller local generating capacity entered service during 2025. These units improved local resilience, but large power plants and high-voltage substations remained vulnerable.

2026 During the January crisis, the International Energy Agency estimated about 11.5 GW of domestic generating capacity available against peak demand of around 18 GW. The government later reported about 15 GW available during the August evening peak, including cogeneration and imports, and set a goal of 19.6 GW by 1 November. Publicly available information does not confirm that the November target was achieved. The IEA's 4 November assessment identified a continuing winter power shortfall, with the extent dependent on attacks and weather.

Generation is only part of the problem

Damage to the grid is not confined to the place that was struck. When a major substation or transmission route is taken out of service, operators must redirect electricity through the lines and equipment that remain. Those routes operate closer to their limits, while the system has less ability to balance supply, move power between regions, or absorb another failure.

This strain can spread shortages and controlled outages across multiple regions. Repair crews may restore one connection while other parts of the network remain heavily burdened or vulnerable, and generating capacity elsewhere cannot be fully used if the remaining transmission routes cannot carry it. Each attack therefore reduces the margin available to the national system, not only the supply of the community nearest the damage.

The national system has become more decentralized, with new gas-fired generation, batteries, renewables, and smaller boilers. These resources reduce the effect of a single failure and can keep critical facilities operating locally. They do not immediately replace a large thermal plant or a major transmission substation.

When the Grid Fails

Care4Ukraine works in communities where damaged energy infrastructure and recurring outages affect daily life. Over several years, we have supplied generators, solar-powered battery systems, and other backup equipment to community facilities, administrative offices, medical services, and locations where residents can charge phones or maintain essential communications.

Installing equipment is only the first step. Generators require fuel, maintenance, and repairs. Battery systems and solar installations need inspections and replacement components. Care4Ukraine volunteers with technical experience keep equipment records, make service visits, and work with local contacts to keep these systems operating.

When mobile and internet services fail, emergency radio links powered by independent battery and solar systems provide another way to coordinate deliveries, medical needs, and other urgent requests.

Most of our work is organized through local contacts and partner organizations. They identify changing needs and know which residents and facilities require support. We combine that local knowledge with the equipment, transport, supplies, and people available at the time.

Some conditions cannot be made safe with another delivery or repair. A generator cannot replace a destroyed municipal heating plant, and emergency supplies cannot sustain a community indefinitely without dependable food, medical care, transport, and basic services.

We conduct evacuations with local contacts and partner organizations, dividing the work according to who has the vehicle, local access, receiving arrangements, and available personnel. The decision is whether additional support can make it safe for a resident to remain or whether conditions require that person to leave. Some residents are reluctant to go, so an evacuation can require repeated conversations, strong encouragement, and practical help with transport, medical needs, belongings, and a destination.

When Essential Services Fail

Konotop, a city in Sumy Oblast, spent five days without stable electricity after attacks damaged local infrastructure.



A community-owned generator provides backup electricity during winter conditions. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

Konotop's five-day power disruption

On the night of 24 October, Russian attacks damaged civilian infrastructure in Konotop and its surrounding community, including energy facilities and gas networks. Konotop, a city in Sumy Oblast, then spent five days without stable electricity. Water service was restricted, trams stopped running, and municipal facilities relied on backup power.

By 27 October, water was being supplied from 6:00 to 9:00 in the morning and from 18:00 to 21:00 in the evening when the water utility had to operate on generators. The city's hospital was operating on backup generation, and educational facilities had also been damaged. On 28 October, the Ukrainian government announced diesel support for the boiler house and water utility.

Power was restored to all consumers on 29 October, although supply continued on a rotating basis and temporary emergency outages remained necessary during repairs. The damaged facilities could not simply be returned to service; operators used alternative routes to provide a basic supply.

Hospitals under pressure

Konotop's hospital remained on backup power during the outage, but the available supply could not support every load at once. The mayor reported that charging the hospital's storage system initially reduced the power available for equipment, including elevators. Engineers adjusted the arrangement after seeing how the systems performed together during the blackout.

A prolonged outage forces hospitals to prioritize equipment and services while protecting refrigerated medicines and laboratory materials. Repeated transfers between grid and backup power also increase the risk to sensitive equipment. Water, sanitation, and heat can become separate constraints even when generation is available.

Rural clinics usually have less backup capacity and fewer technicians on site. If a service is suspended, the nearest alternative may be far away, especially for residents who rely on local transport or need regular treatment.

Schools and residential buildings

UNICEF reported that air-raid alarms affected 65.9 percent of school days during September and October 2026, compared with 37.4 percent during the same period in 2025. Electricity, heating, water, and communications failures further reduce teaching time in schools already operating around frequent alarms.

Remote instruction provides limited continuity when households lack dependable power or internet service. Some cities have built underground classrooms, but that option requires major construction and is unavailable to most communities.

More than 30 percent of Ukrainian households rely on district heating. A power or heating-network failure can therefore affect entire apartment buildings at once. If a network freezes, burst pipes and drained systems require repair before heat can return, even after electricity is restored.

Rural communities face different risks

Rural households are more likely to rely on gas boilers, wood-burning stoves, or other local heating. Gas systems may still stop when pumps or electronic controls lose power, while wood heat depends on an adequate fuel supply and the physical ability to prepare it. These constraints weigh most heavily on older residents.

Villages also have fewer substitutes when a clinic, pharmacy, shop, or transport connection closes. Problems that might be manageable in a larger town can leave rural residents without nearby medical care, supplies, or transport.

The larger consequence

The World Health Organization's September winter assessment warned that attacks on energy infrastructure threaten uninterrupted electricity, heating, water, and essential health services. The IEA reached a similar conclusion in November: Ukraine has added distributed generation and reserves, but attacks and cold-weather demand leave a continuing power shortfall.

For communities in eastern Ukraine, winter will depend on the national grid and on local services, emergency fuel, backup equipment, functioning vehicles, and continuing humanitarian assistance. That last element is becoming less certain in some of the places Care4Ukraine visits.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

As Humanitarian Assistance Declines

Residents in rural eastern Ukraine report that deliveries have become less frequent, leaving some households uncertain whether they can remain through another winter.

During visits in late October, Care4Ukraine volunteers met residents and local organizations in rural eastern Ukraine. People who had previously received relatively dependable assistance said deliveries had become less frequent, particularly during the preceding six months.

For some households, the immediate concern was food, medicine, or heating supplies. Others did not know whether organizations that had supported their communities would return during winter. Several residents raised the possibility of leaving. Others intended to remain but were less certain that they could manage if assistance continued to decline.

These conversations reflect the communities where Care4Ukraine works, not conditions throughout Ukraine. They show how less frequent assistance is affecting household decisions in the areas we visit.



A portable generator provides temporary household power in rural Ukraine. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

Why deliveries are becoming less frequent

The emergency response that began in 2022 now depends on sustained funding for transport, storage, fuel, supply routes, and coordination with local communities. At the same time, repeated infrastructure damage, displacement, and worsening household finances continue to create new demands.

Reduced operating capacity appears first in the delivery schedule: visits become less frequent, fewer types of supplies are available, and organizations concentrate their remaining resources on fewer locations. A village previously served by several groups may become dependent on one or two.

Local volunteers may remain active even after a supply route or funding source has ended. A missed delivery often reflects a shortage of goods, fuel, or serviceable vehicles rather than a decline in local need.

Staying or leaving

Leaving home is neither easy nor obvious for many rural residents. Older people may have lived in the same village for decades. Their homes, neighbors, and local relationships provide support that cannot be reproduced easily elsewhere. Many live on modest pensions and cannot readily absorb the cost of transport, rent, and basic household expenses in another region.

Remaining also carries costs. Medical care may require a journey to a larger town. Fuel and firewood can become expensive. Shops may carry fewer products. Damaged infrastructure can interrupt electricity, heat, water, and communications. For people with limited mobility or chronic medical needs, a small service failure can become an urgent problem.

Winter makes those decisions more immediate. One household may be most concerned about food and heating fuel. Another may depend on a clinic, pharmacy, or transport route. There is no single explanation for why people stay and no simple solution for those who would prefer to leave. What volunteers are hearing is growing uncertainty about whether the resources needed to remain will continue to be available.

How local partners organize the work

Care4Ukraine plans its work with Ukrainian volunteers, healthcare workers, community administrators, and partner organizations. Their local knowledge directs deliveries and service visits toward residents with limited mobility, people who need regular medical support, and facilities running short of supplies or fuel.

Partners contribute different parts of an operation: supplies, transport, volunteers, operating funds, local access, or information about current needs. Care4Ukraine combines those resources according to the circumstances of each delivery or evacuation.

When an organization reduces its activity or leaves an area, the remaining groups may face demand beyond their personnel, vehicles, or budgets. Small organizations must then balance regular contact with established communities against new emergencies elsewhere.

Regular visits and operating support

Regular visits allow our volunteers and local contacts to identify medicine and heating shortages, inspect backup equipment, and adjust the next delivery before a problem becomes urgent.

Maintaining that presence requires dependable operating support. Fuel, vehicle maintenance, storage, transport, and coordination all cost money even when the goods being delivered are donated. When residents begin to question whether assistance will continue, that uncertainty can influence whether they stay, seek help elsewhere, or leave altogether.

Care4Ukraine's immediate priority is to remain in contact with the communities it serves and to direct available resources toward needs identified with Ukrainian partners. The broader problem requires sustained cooperation among local groups, larger international organizations, suppliers, and donors. The continuity of those relationships may determine whether some rural communities continue receiving the support on which they have come to depend.



A volunteer meets with residents during a household aid visit in Ukraine. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

Keeping Assistance Moving Through Winter

Care4Ukraine uses smaller vehicles and established local relationships to serve communities that large operations may not reach regularly.

This winter, Care4Ukraine is maintaining established delivery routes and backup systems while responding to new damage and changing local needs. Transport, maintenance, and regular contact determine whether donated supplies and equipment remain useful after they arrive.

Complementary roles in rural areas

Ukraine's humanitarian response includes large international organizations with substantial funding, specialized personnel, and extensive logistics. Their ability to move large quantities of supplies, operate major medical programs, and support whole regions is essential.

Care4Ukraine operates at a different scale. We sometimes coordinate with larger organizations, but our work generally does not overlap. In some places, the logistics of a large operation are impractical or the needs of one settlement do not justify deploying substantial personnel and equipment.

Smaller vehicles can travel rural roads that are unsuitable for heavy trucks. Volunteers can adjust a schedule, combine several categories of aid in one journey, and respond to changing circumstances without the requirements of a large distribution system. Long-standing relationships also matter. Our volunteers often know local administrators, healthcare workers, and residents personally, allowing them to identify needs that may not appear in a broad assessment.

The roles are complementary. Large organizations provide resources and services beyond our capacity. Care4Ukraine can extend assistance into communities that are difficult to reach, make practical decisions locally, and maintain contact where a large operation may visit only occasionally.



Winter aid distribution in Ukraine. Photo: Care4Ukraine.

Food supplies for six communities

Two semitrailer loads of donated food for six communities have reached Lviv and remain en route to their final destinations. Grocery stores and suppliers in Germany and Poland provided the food. Donors help cover collection, sorting, commercial transport, storage, and local distribution.

In Lviv, the shipment will again be divided into smaller loads and transferred to vans. Each van can carry food with hygiene products, medicine, and replacement parts requested by the six communities.

Our December newsletter will look more closely at this program: the partners who provide the goods, how the shipments are collected and transported, and how they are divided into smaller loads for delivery to rural communities in eastern Ukraine. We will also explain why donor support for sorting, storage, fuel, vehicles, and final delivery is as important as the donated food, baby formula, medical supplies, and hygiene products themselves.

Medical supplies and local clinics

Care4Ukraine coordinates medicines, supplies, and equipment with local healthcare providers. Deliveries can include temperature-controlled transport and checks of refrigeration, backup power, and other equipment already at the clinic.

Backup power and maintenance

Care4Ukraine's internal operating record states that more than 50 generators and solar-based backup systems have been supplied since 2023. Some support administrative offices and community facilities; others provide power for communications, phone charging, and selected medical uses.

Care4Ukraine volunteers with technical experience record each installation and return several times a year. They inspect fuel supplies, batteries, electrical connections, and charging equipment, and repair or replace components as needed.

Maintaining communications

Care4Ukraine's internal reporting describes six emergency radio arrays with multiple stations and independent battery and solar power for use when mobile and internet services fail.

Our volunteers and local contacts use the network to coordinate assistance. They maintain batteries and charging equipment and test the stations regularly.

When residents must leave

Continuing attacks, reduced medical care, and transport difficulties sometimes require residents to leave, particularly older people and those who need ongoing treatment.

We conduct evacuations with local contacts and partner organizations, dividing the work according to access, vehicles, personnel, and receiving arrangements. Residents may need repeated encouragement as well as help with medical requirements, essential belongings, and a safe destination.

We support residents who can remain safely. When conditions require them to leave, we work with local contacts and partner organizations to arrange the evacuation and reception.

Operating support for winter work

Care4Ukraine's winter operations depend on fuel, vehicle maintenance, storage, transport, replacement parts, equipment inspections, and support for volunteers in the field. These costs keep deliveries, technical visits, and locally coordinated responses operating through winter.



Photo: Care4Ukraine.

HELP CARE4UKRAINE REACH RURAL COMMUNITIES

Care4Ukraine works through local relationships to deliver essential supplies, maintain backup equipment and communications, and help coordinate evacuations when residents must leave.

Donor support not only provides essential supplies and equipment; it also helps cover the transport, fuel, storage, maintenance, and field coordination that keep this work moving.

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