



# Ukraine: Surviving Winter Without Power

Obereg of Your Hope — Local volunteer initiative

*During winter 2025-2026, Russia systematically attacked Ukraine's energy infrastructure, leaving millions without heat or electricity in sub-zero temperatures. Obereg a local volunteer initiative that produces and distributes trench candles and portable wood- and coal-fuelled stoves to communities affected by shelling and infrastructure damage, including in the Kharkiv region.*

## The Crisis

Weaponizing winter became a key Russian strategy. Missile strikes deliberately targeted power plants, substations, and heating systems across Ukraine. By December 2025, rolling blackouts affected virtually the entire country. Some areas went days or weeks without electricity. With temperatures below -10°C, this became life-threatening, especially for elderly people, families with children, and those with medical conditions.



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## Local volunteer initiative

The intervention overview focuses on Obereg of Your Hope, a local volunteer initiative that produces and distributes trench candles and portable wood- and coal-fuelled stoves to communities affected by shelling and infrastructure damage, including in the Kharkiv region. These simple devices provide households with a practical means to cook, heat water and maintain a minimum level of warmth when centralised systems fail.

## Innovation Under Pressure

The best practices highlighted are, first, the decentralised community production and delivery of low-cost heating tools that preserve dignity and continuity of daily life during prolonged outages, and second, the strengthening of horizontal solidarity through direct, bottom-up support that connects practical assistance with trust-building inside affected communities.

## Broader Impact

The case shows that in conflict conditions, community-led recovery may depend as much on modest, rapidly deployable solutions as on large-scale infrastructure repair. Its results include access to warm food and basic domestic functionality in conditions otherwise considered unliveable, while its wider impact lies in reinforcing community ties, mutual aid and a sense of hope.

### Key Lesson

When critical infrastructure becomes a war target, community initiatives provide essential services and maintain social cohesion. Simple solutions - backup power, warm spaces, community kitchens - become lifesaving when implemented at scale. The key is mobilizing local volunteers and resources rather than waiting for external aid.