



PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

UKRAINE 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on participatory assessments conducted with communities in Ukraine affected by the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Focus group discussions and interviews were held with internally displaced persons, returnees and other people affected by the war, as well as key informants among civil society organizations, local and oblast authorities. UNHCR thanks all of the participants in these consultations for their time and for sharing their views and experiences openly. UNHCR is also very grateful to its partners for their support in organizing and participating in the consultations and interviews.

UNHCR would like to thank the following donors who made the Participatory Assessment possible:



Contact us

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) REPRESENTATION IN UKRAINE

Eurasia BC, 75 Zhylyanska St., Kyiv 01032, Ukraine

Tel: +38(044) 288 9710

Email: ukrki@unhcr.org

<https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/>

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION.....	9
1. ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING AND UTILITIES	10
2. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND MEDICINES	12
3. ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, INFORMATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY	13
4. NEED FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE.....	17
5. NEED FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT	20
6. LOCAL INTEGRATION	22
7. LIVELIHOODS	24
8. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN	26
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Methodology

At the end of October 2022, over 6.5 million people were estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine. The massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, with the energy sector being particularly targeted in the fall of 2022, has disrupted the lives of millions of people who have lost their homes and livelihoods, and has resulted in interrupted access to electricity, water, heating as well as critical services, including healthcare, education and social protection services. School-age children find their routines disrupted and continue online learning as some schools remain closed due to insecurity. Significant numbers of people are expected to remain internally displaced in 2023 and will need alternative housing solutions, jobs, assistance and social, educational and health services in their areas of displacement.

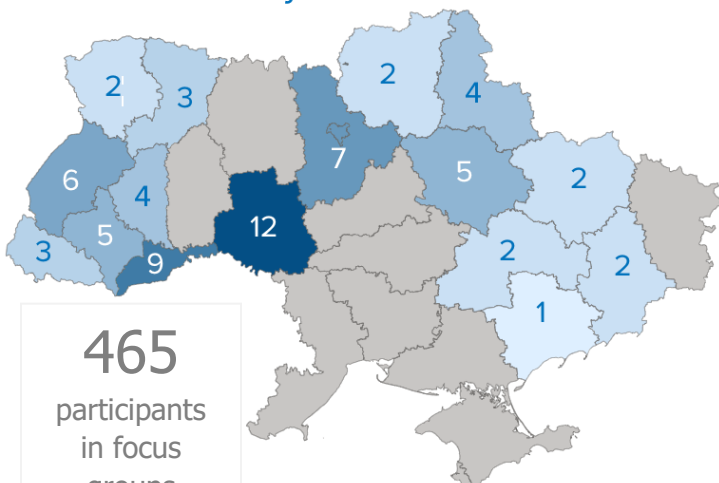
In line with UNHCR's *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy* (2018) and the *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (2005), UNHCR, with the support of its partners Crimea SOS, INTERSOS, NEEKA, NEEMIA, Proliska, Right to Protection, Rokada, Tenth of April and TGH, undertook a participatory assessment with people of concern in Ukraine in November 2022 with a view to reviewing its programme and to inform the planning and design of its activities in 2023. Focus group discussions (FGDs) led by UNHCR staff members with the support of partners were the primary means of data collection. A questionnaire with the following components was developed to structure the consultations:

- Priority concerns
- Concerns relating to information, participation in decisions and accountability for humanitarian assistance
- Legal assistance and psychosocial support needs
- Concerns relating to local integration and livelihoods
- Child protection concerns

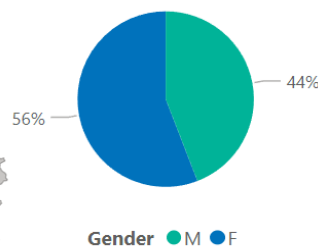
In addition, a small number of interviews (9) were held with key informants (staff members of local social services, heads of local councils, members of local associations).

Demographics of the Focus Group Discussions & Interviews:

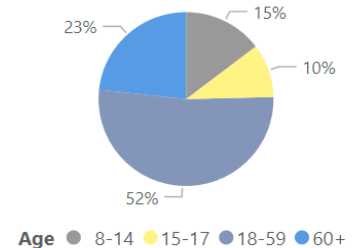
By location



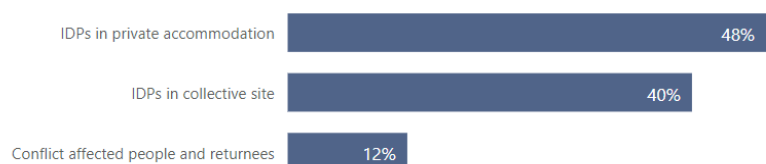
By gender



By age



By profile





Access to Adequate Housing and Utilities

Most focus groups raised housing conditions as a key concern, in particular for IDPs living in collective sites. Lack of income hampers access to private accommodation. Housing conditions have consequences on people's wellbeing, access to jobs and education.

Top housing and utility challenges:

- High rent and low income
- Electricity cuts, which impact upon water and connectivity
- Insufficient heating, and no access to alternatives
- Lack of privacy
- Risk of eviction and limited knowledge of rights in collective sites
- Distance to jobs and services and lack of transportation
- Insufficient access to social housing

Key recommendations from communities:

- Develop tenure agreements in collective sites and modular settlements
- Continue to sponsor social housing and facilitate access to credit for housing
- Improve information and transparency on access to social housing
- Procure generators and strengthen internet connection in collective sites
- Include adequate private spaces for families in collective sites



Access to Healthcare and Medicines


This priority concern was raised in a number of focus groups. With inflation and the loss of income, the purchase of medicines has become difficult, while many IDPs or returnees reported they needed to travel long distances to access health care services.

Top healthcare challenges:

- Difficulty to find doctors available to sign a "declaration"
- Lack of healthcare services in areas of return
- Distance to pharmacies and health services for people with reduced mobility

Key recommendations from communities:

- Allocate budgetary resources to health services in geographical areas in accordance with the presence of IDPs
- Support the purchase of medicines for vulnerable people
- Improve referrals for people with disabilities or people with medical conditions
- Organise medical consultations in collective sites



Access to Humanitarian Assistance, Information and Accountability

People reported they lack information about the aid and services available to them, that criteria for aid provision is not clear, and do not feel that their needs are considered. Limited coordination among humanitarian partners and insufficient information sharing were cited as issues to be addressed.

Top challenges regarding access to humanitarian assistance, information and accountability:

- IDPs in private accommodation, living in remote areas, or from minorities are excluded from assistance
- Inadequate information on aid for affected people, with attention given to disability, age, and sexual orientation
- Gaps or duplication because of insufficient coordination among humanitarian partners
- Limited trust in complaint mechanisms

Key recommendations from communities:

- Establish centralized and accessible spaces for information
- Ensure inclusive approaches to information and communication, accessible to persons with disabilities
- Disseminate printed and up-to-date material in addition to online channels
- Provide face-to-face information about humanitarian assistance, through community meetings, mobile teams, or networks of focal persons
- Increase visibility of complaints and feedback channels and ensure sufficient capacity to respond in a timely manner



Need for Legal Assistance

Loss of documentation, including birth certificates, passports, rehabilitation cards (for people with disabilities) hamper access to IDP registration, health care, education, and other social services. People are also concerned about procedures for compensation and reparation, in particular regarding housing, as well as the transfer of social benefits to areas of displacement.

Key areas for legal aid:



Personal documentation



Housing, land and property



IDP certificate



Social entitlements

Top challenges regarding legal assistance:

- Digitalized procedures not accessible because of poor internet connection, or limited e-literacy
- Cost of legal procedures (in particular regarding land and property)
- Insufficient access to free legal aid
- Lack of information on administrative or other legal procedures or requirements

Key recommendations from communities:

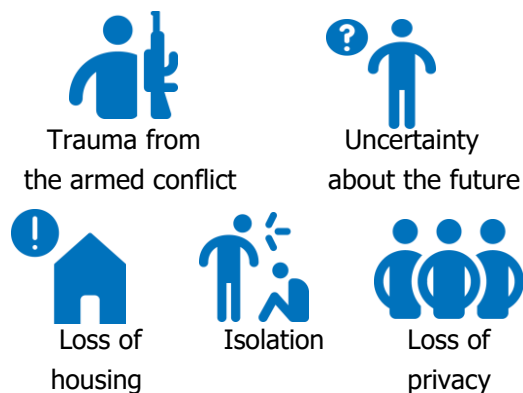
- Disseminate information on administrative procedures and documentation, including through sessions at community level
- Support vulnerable people to cover costs in administrative or judicial proceedings
- Create a status for civilian victims of the armed conflict
- Support smoother transfer of social benefits to areas of displacement
- Support FLACs and deploy additional free legal aid services in areas with gaps



Need for Psychosocial Support (PSS)

The experience of the war and displacement has placed considerable stress on the wellbeing of all those affected. The need for psychosocial support is not universally acknowledged, and many people lack understanding of how PSS services can help.

Some factors of stress:



Key recommendations from communities:

- Deliver training on psychological first aid (PFA), stress alleviation or interpersonal conflict resolution within communities
- Plan visits by psychosocial teams to ensure adequate follow up
- Strengthen public awareness on psychosocial support and its relevance
- Support the refurbishment and equipment of spaces for community activities, including in return areas



Local Integration

The majority of displaced participants reported they did not intend to return home in the near future or that they might be unable to return in the coming months due to the ongoing conflict, insecurity and destroyed and damaged infrastructure and housing. In the short and medium term, most displaced persons seek to locally integrate where they are now, but face challenges to do so.

Top integration challenges:

- Residing in collective sites
- Lack of (self) employment
- Lack of connection with the host community
- Displaced people seen as competitors by local population
- Stigmatization of Russian speakers

Key recommendations from communities:

- Support opportunities / events for interaction between host and displaced communities
- Sensitize the host community on the situation of displaced people and their desire for local integration
- Support access to Ukrainian language classes for adults and children
- Support medium and long-term housing solutions for IDPs in collective sites (social housing)



Livelihoods

The majority of participants that their sources of income had decreased or completely disappeared. Access to (self) employment was highlighted as one of the main challenges for all populations. The majority of unemployed IDPs are willing to work and are actively searching for employment. However, the economic downturn and unemployment have led to increased competition for jobs and lower salaries.

Top challenges to accessing livelihoods:

- Mismatch between the profile of displaced persons and skills demanded in labour market
- Lack of childcare is an obstacle to employment, mostly for women and single parents
- People lack information on job opportunities and the skills in demand
- Reluctance of employers to recruit IDPs, assuming they will soon return home

Key recommendations from communities:

- Ensure vocational training for IDPs focuses on skills required in the local labour market
- Strengthen support to IDPs by employment centres
- Increase support child and day care services
- Disseminate information on support available to displaced entrepreneurs and business owners
- Simplify procedures for the termination of job contracts in areas of origin
- Strengthen awareness of employers on employability of displaced persons and subsidies that support their recruitment



Protection of Children

The predominant concern raised by displaced children in both collective sites and private accommodation was the many challenges they faced in accessing education. A significant number of children interviewed were out of school or were unable to meaningfully access online or offline education.

Top challenges for the protection of children:

- Difficult conditions to access online education (IT devices, internet connection, lack of privacy)
- Isolation and exclusion from other children
- Limited opportunities for recreational and self-development activities
- Separation from families
- Lack of support to children with special needs (medical conditions, disability)

Key recommendations from communities:

- Support purchase of devices required for online education
- Improve internet connection, in particular within collective sites or community centres
- Refurbish spaces for child protection activities and online education
- Support access to recreational activities
- Promote interaction between children in displaced and host communities
- Improve referral of children with special needs to relevant services

INTRODUCTION

The war against Ukraine has caused death and suffering on a dramatic scale and left at least 17.6 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection. At the end of October 2022, over 6.5 million people were estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine. The massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, with the energy sector being particularly targeted in the fall of 2022, has disrupted the life of millions of people who have lost their homes and livelihoods, and has severed access to electricity, water, heating as well as critical services, including healthcare, education and social protection services. School-age children find their routines disrupted and continue on-line learning as schools remain closed due to insecurity. Significant numbers of people are expected to remain internally displaced in 2023 and will need alternative housing solutions, jobs, assistance and social, educational and health services in their areas of displacement.

In line with UNHCR's *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy* (2018) and the *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (2005), UNHCR and its partners Crimea SOS, INTERSOS, NEEKA, NEEMIA, Proliska, Right to Protection, Rokada, Tenth of April and TGH undertook a participatory assessment with people of concern in Ukraine in November 2022, to support a review of its response and inform the planning and design of its activities in 2023.

The consultations focused on sectors where UNHCR implemented activities in 2022 (protection, CCCM, shelter, cash and in-kind assistance), with a view to confirming their relevance and responsiveness to people's needs and to improving modalities of delivery. The consultations also provided space for people to share their priority concerns.

The consultations included the following groups:

- Internally displaced persons (IDPs), whether in collective sites or in private accommodation
- People who returned to areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine
- Other people affected by the war (primarily in eastern oblasts)

Focus group discussions, led by UNHCR staff members with the support of partners, were the primary means of data collection. A questionnaire with the following components was developed to structure the consultations:

- Priority concerns
- Concerns relating to participation in decisions and accountability for humanitarian assistance
- Legal assistance needs
- Psychosocial support needs
- Concerns relating to local integration and livelihoods
- Child protection concerns

For each topic, participants were also asked to discuss the causes and impact of the concerns raised, the capacity of communities themselves to address these concerns, and recommendations to be made to stakeholders.

The assessments were conducted in 16 oblasts¹ and Kyiv City. A total of 50 FGDs were held with 465 people. The participants included 237 adults aged 18 to 59 (98 men and 138 women) and 113 older people, aged 59+ (36 men and 77 women). At least 8 participants were people with disabilities. 400 IDPs participated in FGDs, including 184 living in collective sites, and 216 living in private accommodation. A total of 50 participants were people affected by the conflict, but not displaced, living in eastern oblasts. UNHCR and its partners facilitated a total of 13 FGDs with displaced children across the country. The focus groups included a balance of girls and boys between the ages of 9 and 17 and included children with disabilities. Some of the children interviewed lived in collective sites, while others lived in private accommodation. In addition, a small number of interviews (11) were held with key informants (staff members of local social services, heads of local councils, members of local associations). Interviews (8) were also conducted with individual persons of concern (people of various gender and age groups (4), people with disabilities (2), and children (2)). These interviews aimed to create opportunities for people to raise concerns which could not be shared in a group.

This report reviews the main findings from the assessments, including people's recommendations for how to address challenges, organized thematically. Findings relating to children are presented in the final section.

UNHCR thanks all of the participants in the FGDs and interviews for their time and for sharing their views and experiences openly, and its partners for their support in organizing and participating in the consultations and interviews.

1. ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING AND UTILITIES

When asked about their main priorities, the vast majority of FGD participants highlighted their living conditions, including access to affordable and quality housing.

IDPs struggle to find affordable private accommodation, as rental prices have steeply increased, and displaced persons often rent accommodation without a formal rental contract. There are reports of brokers and landlords demanding high commissions to arrange accommodation and unannounced evictions when the landlords find individuals who are willing to pay higher rent. For most families, rent is the main monthly expenditure. Participants recommended that local authorities should regulate rent and commissions. Support is also requested for affordable bank loans and to increase the overall housing stock.

IDPs in Boryspil, Kyivska oblast, mentioned that they have found accommodation lacking basic furniture or essential equipment (such as toilet or sinks). It was also reported that landlords restrict the use of electricity or gas. Several groups mentioned that landlords refuse to rent to people with pets, or families with children. Large families, with ten members or more, often live in small spaces in private accommodation. Men, including students, face difficulties to find a place to rent on their own. Due to housing shortages, people who were in foster care as unaccompanied children have been denied social housing when turning 18, although they are legally entitled to it (Kyiv oblast).

¹ Chernihivska, Chernivetska, Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, Ivano-Frankivska, Kyivska and Kyiv City, Lvivska, Poltavska, Rivnenska, Sumska, Ternopiiska, Vinnytska, Volynska, Zakarpatska, Zaporizka.

Land speculation was also mentioned, with cases of IDPs reportedly being approached by housing developers who offered to buy their land at low prices that would not enable them to find an adequate alternative housing solution.

For some IDPs, their financial ability to pay rent is further complicated by the requirement to continue to pay for utilities in their homes in areas of origin. Some IDPs mentioned that they were eligible to social assistance in their home areas, but have been unable to receive this assistance in displacement. For many IDPs, their limited income obliges them to choose between paying the rent and purchasing essential items, including medicines. IDPs in Boryspil mentioned that very few landlords agreed to apply to the "Prykhystok" programme, through which the Government of Ukraine subsidizes landlords hosting IDPs. Insufficient income and lack of access to livelihoods is one of the main reasons for which IDPs cannot access adequate housing conditions (see also section on "Livelihoods"). The level of social allowances provided by the Government of Ukraine is also deemed insufficient to help people meet their essential needs.

Access to utilities is a problem for IDPs, mostly for those living in collective sites. People experience extensive electricity cuts (which can also interrupt water supply and communications/internet connectivity) or lack gas as a result of the damage inflicted on energy infrastructure. People live in poorly insulated houses or collective sites (with old window frames) or that are insufficiently heated. Some collective sites were created in summer camps, which were not meant to provide shelter during winter conditions, and cannot host large families (as reported, for instance, by women in Ivano-Frankivska oblast). Residents have to share obsolete equipment, including in kitchen facilities.

The issue of solid fuel (firewood) was raised in a number of collective sites where central heating systems are not operational, and electrical heating devices cannot be used as a result of frequent power cuts or outdated electrical wiring. For many IDPs, firewood is not affordable, while territorial communities lack resources to procure firewood for collective sites, or to fund the transportation of firewood which can be purchased at lower prices in other areas. The collection of firewood is also hampered by the presence of unexploded ordnance or mines in forests.

The lack of privacy in collective sites was raised in many FGDs, mostly with women. One room may be shared by people from different households. Conflicts between residents were reported. IDPs face violence, for instance due to alcohol abuse of other residents. Theft within collective sites was also mentioned. IDPs in collective sites lack access to bomb shelters or have been denied access to these shelters by the site management. As a result, during air raid alerts, residents stay in the basement, under a staircase, or in spaces protected by several walls.

The loss of mobile and internet connection was highlighted as having a critical impact on the search for a job, access to information on assistance, services and entitlements, to maintain communication with family members and friends, and to access online education. Access to communication facilities may also be limited in collective sites located too far away from telecommunications towers (see section on "Protection of Children").

In communities where houses were damaged during hostilities, people acknowledged the support provided by volunteers or humanitarian organizations. However, in many areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine, people remain unable to return to their homes, where minimum conditions are not available (for instance in Chernihiv oblast), including due to the lack of access to utilities

(electricity or gas). People with damaged houses claimed that the shelter assistance provided is insufficient. Some organizations provide building materials but do not support the repair work itself. Others reported that light and medium repair provided by humanitarian partners is insufficient in cases of more serious damage or for multistorey apartment buildings.

Several groups mentioned that people want information on access to compensation provided by the State (see also section on “Need for Legal Assistance”). In Chernihiv, people with destroyed or heavily damaged houses raised questions regarding modular housing solutions in areas of return. IDPs living in modular settlements in Irpin, Kyivska oblast, reported that they do not have security of tenure, which makes them feel insecure and at risk of arbitrary eviction.

The risk of eviction was also mentioned by those living in collective sites, particularly educational facilities. IDPs also fear being evicted if they complain to the site management on housing conditions. In Vinnytska oblast, IDPs in a collective site mentioned that there were not aware of their rights as residents in the site. In some cases, IDPs have been told that they can be evicted if they do not comply with instructions from the site management. Older IDPs, or people with disabilities are particularly concerned about their limited financial ability to pay rent in private accommodation should they have to leave the collective site where they currently reside. In Lviv, one IDP with disability was denied a social housing solution on account of his living in a collective site already.

Displaced people from Roma communities (in Uzhgorod, Zakarpatska oblasts) reported their lack of access to social housing. Cities where there are job opportunities often lack sufficient social housing capacity. Many displaced Roma lack residence registration in their areas of origin or other necessary documents, meaning they are unable to receive humanitarian cash or social payments which could help them to pay rent and utilities. For the most destitute displaced Roma, churches provide accommodation within their premises.

Distance and lack of accessible transport to city centers where services and jobs are available has been raised as a concern in many FGDs, in particular those held with IDPs living in collective sites. Women with disabilities reported the lack of accessible transport had a significant impact on their independence, as they had to wait for a volunteer to accompany them to the city center. IDPs in Vinnytska oblast mentioned the end of free access to public transportation for IDPs during the first six months of the war as negatively impacting their quality of life.

2. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND MEDICINES

Access to medicines was raised as a priority concern, in particular in FGDs with older IDPs who lack the financial means to pay for medicines or medical examinations or the specialized services critical to their health. With inflation, pensions have become insufficient to enable older IDPs to cover the cost of medication. While a few collective sites are located near hospitals where medicines are available for free, IDPs or other conflict-affected people with reduced mobility or living in remote areas are often unable to reach pharmacies due to the lack of transportation. People reported that the “Affordable Medicines” nation-wide program does not cover all medicines that people need. People with disability are often unable to access public social or health services, due to expired ‘rehabilitation cards’, distances to health facilities or additional costs associated with accessing

health, rehabilitation and assistive device service provision by Government. The referral of people with specific needs (prosthesis, hearing aids, glasses, wheelchairs, blood tests for specific conditions) may not be done efficiently, and people are left without adequate follow up. Due to a lack of doctors in areas of displacement, IDPs can face difficulties finding a family doctor with whom to sign the required "declaration" to access free healthcare. The lack of healthcare services was also highlighted in return areas (for instance, in Sumy oblast), as a result of the displacement of health personnel to safer areas and attrition of staff.

IDPs in collective sites (Uzhgorod oblast) suggested that the community could coordinate visits to pharmacies and organize the collection of medicines needed by residents, in particular with the support of families owning a car. FGD participants also noted that residents of collective sites may include health workers, who could be requested to provide support to residents. Other participants recommended that IDP volunteers can support health organizations to disseminate information on available services.

3. ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, INFORMATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1. CONCERNS ON CRITERIA AND MODALITIES OF AID

Participants in a number of FGDs reported that they lack information about the aid and services available to them, feel that aid is provided unfairly or that eligibility criteria is not clear, and do not feel that their needs are considered in the design of assistance programmes. Questions were raised about the provision of multi-purpose cash assistance, in particular why some people received assistance for 3 months while others received assistance for 6 months (winter top-up).

Participants highlighted a number of situations where groups of IDPs were neglected or particular needs insufficiently addressed. For instance:

- Male IDPs or older displaced women in Vinnytska oblast reported that IDPs living in private accommodation tended to be excluded from distributions and needs assessments, with humanitarian organizations targeting primarily IDPs living in collective sites. They noted IDPs in private accommodation were less visible than IDPs in collective sites, and that they struggle to access information on available assistance or other opportunities for help.
- In western oblasts, IDPs living in remote areas or small villages indicated that humanitarian organizations seem to prioritize large cities. They report that displaced populations living in remote or rural areas are not included in distribution plans and have little access to information on humanitarian assistance, and that the high cost of transportation hampers their access to humanitarian assistance when they become aware of distributions or other assistance.
- Older displaced women in Ivano-Frankivska oblast reported that they had become dependent upon humanitarian assistance due to the loss of financial support they received from family members before the war.
- Members of the Roma community reported that they were not informed of distribution of humanitarian assistance due to stigma. They recommended that there was a need for specific outreach to marginalized communities, in addition to targeted assistance.

Displaced women (in Ivano-Frankivska oblast) confirmed their preference for cash assistance, as in-kind distributions limit their freedom of choice and do not meet the particular needs of families (e.g. wrong sized clothing, hygiene products which result in allergic reactions). Overall, IDPs highlighted their preference for livelihood support, including online work or business grants (see also section on “Livelihoods”).

3.2. CAUSES AND IMPACT

Participants cited a lack of up-to-date information regarding “who is doing what, where” resulting in confusion about how to access assistance and what support is available. Gaps in coordination around humanitarian assistance can lead to local authorities not being adequately informed and can lead to affected people – in particular the most vulnerable – being left out of humanitarian assistance. In western oblasts, IDPs reported challenges in accessing humanitarian assistance provided in centers or locations far from collective sites, as they must pay for private transportation. This was a challenge particularly for older persons, those with disabilities or women with many children.

Many participants had no awareness of or information about complaint or referral mechanisms. Lack of insufficient knowledge about the source, content, quantity, schedule and eligibility criteria of humanitarian assistance being provided was also highlighted as a reason for displaced persons not being able to provide feedback.

The over-reliance of humanitarian actors on technology-based means to communicate with affected people has led to the exclusion of those who do not have access to smart phones or the internet, are not comfortable with technology, or those with certain disabilities. Some participants reported lack of trust in online and in-person channels of complaints, and that because of this, they are not utilized. Some participants noted that they were aware of complaint hotlines. Many participants noted that there was generally limited information about complaint and feedback mechanisms and

“When IDPs receive something, they don’t know what the content is supposed to be. So people don’t know what to complain about.”

A 30-40 year old displaced man in a collective site in Vinnytsia

that they had difficulty in reaching hotlines. Many participants had no awareness of or information about referral mechanisms. Not all affected people have smart phones, and a single smart phone in a household is insufficient to ensure access to information and education.

In areas experiencing active hostilities in eastern oblasts, participants highlighted that there was a lack of coordination around the provision of humanitarian assistance as well as information about assistance and humanitarian actors. Participants from territories recently retaken by the Government of Ukraine noted that they are isolated and do not receive information about humanitarian assistance. People who do not receive timely information about distributions can get left behind.

Age and disability are significant factors influencing differences in information needs and preferences among affected people. While younger people are more comfortable with social media and other online tools such as chatbots to receive information about humanitarian assistance and provide feedback and complaints, older people and people with disabilities require more inclusive forms of communication and information provision through a variety of channels. Older people and people who do not have access to smartphones, cellular networks, or have limited electricity report that a centralized place to access information in printed form would be useful. Older women in Chernivtsi shared a preference for feedback and idea boxes to be placed on floors accessible to all residents in collective sites. Printed materials as well as information conveyed in regular meetings/announcements were also cited as solutions to their difficulty with information that is only conveyed through smartphones and the internet. People in collective centers said that information posted in common gathering spaces, conveyed at regular meetings, and the identification of focal persons (such as staff at collective centers) would also mitigate this challenge. People with disability do not receive adapted information if they are, for example visually or hearing impaired. Organizations of people with disabilities can support with adapting relevant information.

"We are afraid we will be excluded from the lists if we complain about anything."

A displaced older woman in private accommodation in Vinnytsia

No concerns were raised about misconduct of aid workers, including sexual misconduct. Although some groups were aware of hotlines, there were many participants who reported they would not know where to go to make a complaint if they experienced or witnessed an incident. Many also confirmed that the lack of information from aid organizations makes it harder for them to make them accountable for their services/actions. Many residents of collective centers indicated they would rely on the site manager in case of any misuse, abuse or violations, but some also indicated fear of retaliation in case they raised an issue (particularly if the problem is related to the site administration).

3.3. CAPACITIES IN THE COMMUNITIES

Communities have formed 'street committees' in some areas (mentioned by local authorities in Sviatohirsk, Donetsk oblast), which inform community members about aid distributions. Participants highlighted the capacity of various volunteer networks to participate in the dissemination of information about humanitarian assistance – in particular in areas recently retaken by the Government of Ukraine. Local volunteers or social workers can also help people with limited mobility to access aid and, and these volunteer/social worker networks can be harnessed for information provision as well. Community members can disseminate information (through various groups in social networks such as Viber, Telegram, or Facebook).

Local gathering places, such as cultural centers, can be used as spaces to hold meetings between community members and humanitarian actors, in addition to being a centralized space where up-to-date information is posted.

Participants also indicated that IDP communities would be willing to nominate volunteers among themselves to participate in the planning, distribution, information dissemination and monitoring of aid being provided. In some communities where language barriers remain a challenge (e.g. Roma

or those coming from eastern oblasts), community members with higher education could bridge the communication with aid organizations.

3.4. TOWARDS IMPROVED INFORMATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants consistently cited a need for cohesive and centralized spaces and mechanisms where information about humanitarian assistance can be accessed: both online and in person. Participants also highlighted that the means of information provision needs to be more inclusive, with access to information regarding humanitarian assistance provided through low-tech means such as printed materials and announcements in gatherings. Participants also suggested to include members of the community in the planning, reception and distribution of humanitarian items, allowing for improved trust and dissemination of information on the assistance available. Other suggestions included weekly meetings in community centers or other gathering places with a digest of relevant news, as well as identifying local facilitators/focal persons to be responsible for communicating with humanitarian actors. Mobile teams giving information and raising awareness about issues of concern was also suggested by participants. Face-to-face communication regarding information about humanitarian assistance and registration is strongly preferred by older people.

Participants underscored the need for better coordination among humanitarian actors with local authorities and including local organizations and local authorities in coordination. Volunteer networks need to be better harnessed for information provision and included in coordination so that they can support efforts from other humanitarian actors. Participants suggested organizing “get to know you” meetings in which the humanitarian community can talk about their activities with the community.

In newly retaken areas, mobile brigades can support with humanitarian assistance and provision of information. Participants suggested a “one stop shop” in newly recovered areas so that residents can obtain information from a centralized location. This suggestion was also made by IDPs living in private accommodation or in remote areas.

In many collective sites in western oblasts, delivery of material humanitarian assistance is reportedly centralized by site managers, with limited (if any) consultations with, information to and/or participation of IDP residents. Participants highlighted the need to conduct more direct consultations and more monitoring of humanitarian aid in order to capture the needs and feedback of beneficiaries and ensure that aid is not duplicative and is appropriate and responsive to needs. Some participants expressed frustration about instances in which they were interviewed extensively regarding their needs but were not informed about the outcome of the data collection exercise. There was some awareness of hotlines, but participants noted that there was a need to increase the capacity of hotlines, as there was a perception that long waiting times were linked to lack of staffing. Some IDPs suggested the creation of a forum in which they could represent themselves and take on an active role in the planning and monitoring of the provision of humanitarian assistance.

The need to ensure that communication and information materials are available in local languages was also highlighted by participants. IDPs who were displaced from areas experiencing active fighting in the eastern part of Ukraine noted that they are more comfortable with information in Russian and at times have difficulty understanding materials if they are only published in Ukrainian.

Members of the LGBTQI+ community mentioned the lack of consolidated information on service providers as a general concern, and recommended compiling a list of LGBTQI+ friendly service

providers that could be shared with collective sites and organizations that serve LGBTQI+ people. Young people noted that “old methods of information dissemination are not relevant to youth” and said that chatbots are effective for information as well as for referral/complaints mechanisms. QR codes in public places are also effective for youth who do not require information in accessible formats, in addition to linking up humanitarian service provision with well-known figures (bloggers/influencers).

4. NEED FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE

4.1. PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION

The majority of participants reported the need to either obtain documents for the first time or to replace documents, which were destroyed, damaged or lost. The lack of personal documents (birth certificates, passports, IDs, etc.) poses a serious issue, as it impedes access to registration for the IDP certificate, social protection benefits, accommodation in collective centers, employment, healthcare, education and a wide range of administrative and other services.

The impacts of the conflict and displacement were identified as the main reasons for the loss or damage of personal documentation, although other reasons emerged from discussions. Among the Roma community, their nomadic lifestyle and limited literacy may be the primary cause of non-documentation of their children, but many also cited lack of awareness of the importance of having documentation before 24 February 2022.

In some cases, FGD participants (who had reached the statutory requirement of 25 or 45 years of age) had submitted their applications for the internal Ukrainian passport to the SMS for the photo update (normally, completed within a month), but their passports were blocked within the branch offices of the SMS in occupied districts of Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhanska and Zaporizka oblasts that were closed due to active hostilities.

In one focus group discussion (Rubtsy, Donetsk oblasts), participants identified the loss of personal labour books² as a problem requiring legal assistance. During the occupation, some people submitted their labour books to the so-called “Department of the Pension Fund” of entities in areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine in order to be registered for pensions upon reaching the age of 55 (both women and men). The loss of labour books hampers the registration for pensions under Ukrainian law.

Problems are also encountered by displaced people with disability, whose rehabilitation card (issued for two years through the MSEC (Medical Socio-Expertise Commission) has expired. As a result, people cannot receive the necessary assistive devices free of charge from the Government.

² Document that for many Ukrainians contains an official record of all their employment.

Participants recommended awareness raising activities with communities on deadlines and procedures for obtaining birth and death certificates and IDs. Additionally, as expenses for obtaining/restoration of lost documents may be unaffordable for low-income families, participants recommended that support be provided to cover these costs for vulnerable persons. It was also proposed that fees for issuance of the external Ukrainian passport for unemployed Roma be covered by charitable donations sensitive to the situation of the Roma communities.

"I did not know that it was possible to get an ID at the age of 14. My parents did not tell me, but they work in Kyiv and they are not nearby. I used a birth certificate. And how do I get a passport now? What documents are needed?"

A 14 year-old child in a collective site in Chernivetska oblast

"I went to the social security department. They said the issue with rehabilitation cards had not been resolved. We started making requests for electric carts by ourselves, but everything stalled. We are IDPs, we are nobody."

A displaced man with a disability in a collective center in Chernivetska oblast

"We don't know who to ask or where to go for a legal aid!"

An older displaced man in a collective center in Vinnytska oblast

4.2. HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY

In most focus group discussions, the loss or damage of housing or real estate objects caused by the war was raised as a concern with practical and legal challenges. In principle, victims should send a notification of damaged and destroyed real estate objects to the State. However, many participants were unaware of the procedure for the notification via a web portal, to an administrative center or a public notary. Many victims, especially older people, are not digitally literate and do not have smartphones/computers. Lack of electricity and internet in some localities further complicates access to the procedure.

Participants complained about the lack of an effective programme/mechanism for compensation of destroyed/damaged housing by the state, which they want the Government to develop. Concerns were also raised about inheritance rights for properties in territories under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation.

Often, participants were unaware that free legal aid can provide useful support on these matters and did not know where to turn for help. As a result, people may fail to collect the evidence needed to support future claims. However, participants realize that they need to consult lawyers regarding damaged/lost housing.

Recommendations were made to strengthen the awareness of displaced and conflict-affected people regarding solutions and procedures available, and to strengthen the referral to free legal aid partners. Additionally, participants report that obtaining documents on lost property is costly and that not everyone can pay the fees. The total costs depend on the individual case and may range from UAH 2,000, for

"Different lawyers advise us different things on one issue – we don't know who to trust and listen to or which course of actions to choose and follow."

A displaced woman in a modular town in Irpin, Kyivska oblast

issuing a new technical passport for a house, to UAH 10,000 or even higher in more complex cases (for example, for overdue/pending inheritance cases, or properties comprising multiple land plots). It was suggested that support could be provided to cover these costs for vulnerable categories of beneficiaries, and that advocacy for the partial or total exemption of vulnerable people from the relevant fees could be conducted.

4.3. IDP CERTIFICATE AND STATUS OF VICTIM OF THE CONFLICT

Participants noted challenges in obtaining an IDP certificate, in particular for persons whose place of registration and place of actual residence prior to displacement are not the same, or who were displaced from one settlement to another within the same territorial community/raion/oblast (e.g. within Sumska oblast), which is not included in the governmental list of territorial communities permitting IDP registration and linked payments. While people have obtained support with IDP registration from humanitarian legal aid partners or Free Legal Aid Centers, it was suggested that advocacy with the Government is required to address gaps.

Participants also called for the establishment of a special status for civilians who were injured as a result of hostilities. In the absence of a specific legal framework for compensation or reparations, participants recommended that legal aid partners or Free Legal Aid Centers should provide support on securing appropriate documentary evidence, should this be required in the future.

4.4. SOCIAL BENEFITS

Participants suggested that social benefits and other subsidies should be transferred from the territorial communities of permanent registration to the places of current temporary residence. Participants informed UNHCR about delays in social payments to IDPs in various regions in summer and fall 2022. To accelerate the payments, participants had to submit written complaints to Departments of Social Protection, and in certain cases, seek legal advice from free legal aid providers.

4.5. QUALITY OF LEGAL AID SERVICES

Several participants highlighted the lack of, or poor access to, administrative services, and the insufficient legal information provided to support access to administrative services. Some IDPs using legal aid helplines found it difficult to discuss legal issues with a stranger on the phone. They also questioned the quality of the free legal aid provided on helplines due to the departure or the turnover of qualified staff (displaced to safer areas within Ukraine or abroad). Others noted that while free legal aid was helpful, the real problem in accessing administrative services was their lack of funds to commute to areas where administrative services are available. Participants recommended that legal aid partners could support the mapping of gaps in access to administrative services with a view to making improvements.

Participants recommended the creation of IDP committees for the provision of legal assistance or referral to relevant state bodies or humanitarian actors providing legal support. They noted that communities themselves can conduct information sessions on the most relevant issues and share contact information of quality legal aid service providers.

5. NEED FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

5.1. IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING

Although not all groups shared views about the need for psychosocial support, when articulated, groups pointed to situations of distress or trauma caused by the conflict and the displacement, mostly among IDPs. Major causes of stress reported include: the unstable situation faced by IDPs, the loss of housing, “permanent anxiety” about the future, the risk of more attacks, and the uncertain prospects for return. Painful flashbacks from the exposure to attacks were also reported. Participants mentioned the prevalence of stress, depression, lack of rest and tiredness, as well as irritability. The lack of jobs was also seen as a cause of distress, where work would not only help people support their families, but also help them to focus on things beyond their family’s challenging situation. Among youth, drugs and alcohol were reported as negative coping mechanisms.

For IDPs living in collective sites, the difficulty to adapt to their new environment, the lack of privacy, and the tensions with other people living in the same space are additional challenges. In contrast to the collective life to which people are now exposed, the feeling of loneliness and isolation was also mentioned. The difficult communication with other relatives who stayed behind in conflict-affected areas or who fled abroad, as well as the remote location of the collective sites, also add to the feeling of isolation. Factors of stress also include the hostility which Russian speakers, including children, sometime experience from the local population.

IDPs living in collective sites report difficulties in adapting to their new environment, the lack of privacy, and tensions with other people living in the same space. In contrast to the collective living conditions to which some people are now exposed, participants reported feeling lonely and isolated. Difficult communication with relatives who stayed behind in areas of active conflict or who fled abroad, as well as the remote location of some of the collective sites, added to feelings of isolation. Some participants reported that stress was also caused by hostility experienced by Russian speakers, including children, in certain locations.

Some individuals highlighted their lack of motivation to participate in public life and to actively engage in activities. Participants suggested creating spaces for communal gathering and to strengthen the involvement of displaced persons with humanitarian work and NGOs providing assistance.

5.2. PERCEIVED RELEVANCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Not all focus group participants considered that external support by psychologists would help them or their friends or family members. Some groups (such as older women living in a collective site in Uzhgorod) reported that people could support one another without the intervention of an expert, while other groups noted that they preferred to speak to people that had similar experiences. Some participants highlighted the important contribution of communities themselves to the wellbeing of their members, noting that in common spaces within collective sites, residents often make a conscious effort to talk and listen to each other, or to try to cheer up others.

While the need for expert psychosocial support was questioned, people admitted their lack of understanding of how psychologists can help or of the value of the various forms of psychosocial support. While some participants welcomed collective activities as a means of dealing with painful thoughts, others questioned the relevance of group activities for adults and thought only individual consultations were meaningful.

"We think that psychosocial support is useful. But we are so frozen that people cannot open their souls. Some are crying, some are dumbfounded."

A displaced person in Chernihivska oblast

"I don't see any future, don't know what to say. I'm living by the day..."

A displaced person in Kyiv City

"Mentally, we got used to everything by now. And therefore, we can survive everything."

A displaced woman in a collective site in Lviv City

"We are all homesick. PSS assistance helps deal with sad thoughts and emotions."

A displaced man in a collective site in Ternopil'ska oblast

However, other groups acknowledged that the provision of psychosocial support is important and beneficial. When provided, psychosocial support has been appreciated. It was observed that psychosocial support may be available to certain groups (e.g. members of the armed forces, children) while adult civilians may face challenges in accessing these services. As such, some recommended that there be more psychosocial support targeting adults and that adults should be made aware of where and how these services can be accessed.

5.3. TOWARDS IMPROVED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Recommendations to improve the psychological wellbeing of people and to strengthen the impact of psychosocial support services include: improve access to individual consultations (including longer-term support), increase provision of support that focuses on stress alleviation and managing inter-personal conflict, and carrying out regular visits of psychosocial support teams to build trust with displaced populations. Both group activities and individual consultations are valued.

Participants noted the need for spaces for social activities, including in return settlements where collective premises like sport facilities or nursery schools were destroyed. A modular city in Irpin, Kyiv'ska oblast, has collective spaces for children, but these lack the needed equipment (laptops, books for children) to make the space functional. Participants in collective sites recommended to create spaces in collective sites where people can access a good connection and some privacy to communicate with their relatives on the phone or over the internet. Adults also recommended that displaced children should have more access to external recreational opportunities (cinema, theater, circus, sport events, etc), which would also reduce stress on parents (see also section on "Protection of Children").

Groups of younger adults (18-22 years old), mostly displaced students (Sumy oblast) shared their lack of trust in public psychological services available in educational institutions, which may employ outdated approaches, and welcomed the psychosocial support provided by specialized organizations, which are perceived as being better adapted to the age, gender and specific circumstances of each

individual. Key informants from local authorities or social services (Sumska and Kharkivska oblasts) referred to the trauma experienced by communities along the front line or in temporarily occupied territories, and acknowledged the need for more psychosocial support in order to complement existing social services, as well as the need for improved awareness raising on the availability of services.

6. LOCAL INTEGRATION

The majority of displaced persons participating in FGDs had no intention to return to their places of origin in the near future or stated that they might not be able to return in the next couple of months due to insecurity, active fighting in their areas of origin and destroyed and damaged infrastructure and housing.³ In the short and medium term, most displaced persons are seeking to integrate in their areas of displacement, but face challenges to do so.

6.1. HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

Due to the lack of affordable housing on the private market, many displaced persons participating in FGDs still reside in collective sites and are unable to find sustainable alternatives. The majority of participants highlighted that the fact of residing in a collective center is itself an obstacle to local integration. They noted that in addition to the need to address private housing market issues, there will be an increased need for social housing options for vulnerable groups. Without an increase in social housing, participants noted that a significant number of vulnerable persons will continue to reside in collective centers (see also section on “Access to Adequate Housing and Utilities”).

“We were very lucky to find a house with affordable rent in one of Lviv’s suburbs. Now that we have a place to live in, we feel much safer, and it is now much easier to cope with everything else.”
A displaced man in Lviv

In areas heavily impacted by the war, the main obstacle for return and (re)integration reported was damaged and destroyed housing. Many displaced participants noted that housing was in fact the only obstacle to their return. They noted that support for repair and reconstruction of housing in areas of origin is a priority as well as legal aid to support replacement of lost or damaged housing and property documentation. Many expressed concern about the lack of clarity on compensation mechanisms for destroyed housing (see also section on “Need for Legal Assistance”).

“Housing is the most painful and (still) unresolved issue for all IDPs.”

A displaced woman from Boryspil, Kyivska oblast

Lack of (self) employment opportunities was the second most-mentioned obstacle to local integration. Not having a job or a source of income also stopped people from being an active citizen and participating in the community (see also section on

“Livelihoods”).

³ In UNHCR’s IDP Intention Survey (December 2022), respondents provided the following responses to the question about whether they intended to return home permanently **in the next 3 months**: 29% undecided; 59% will not return; 12% will return permanently.

6.2. SENSE OF BELONGING AND SOCIAL COHESION

One of the main obstacles to local integration raised by displaced persons is the feeling of not belonging and a sense of alienation. Many displaced persons reported that they come from towns which are extremely different from the places where they now reside. The feeling of social disruption seems to be stronger among displaced persons who used to live in big urban centers and now live in small towns or villages, but was also strong among older people and among children who study remotely/online, as they have less interaction with local communities or other displaced persons (see also section on “Need for Psychosocial Support”).

Due to this lack of connection with host communities, many displaced persons feel lost and do not know where to obtain the information they need to integrate locally. Displaced participants also cited an absence of information on events where people can discuss their issues and share their experiences or on sport opportunities or other free of charge social activities.

"As an older person from Kharkiv, where I had a social network, it is very hard for me to feel at home in a small town without community support. I feel less active and motivated to go outside, which makes it hard to feel like I belong."
 An older displaced person

Overall, most displaced participants did not report facing major social cohesion or peaceful coexistence issues with the local population. Some participants noted that they perceived discrimination in the labour and housing markets (where they may be seen as competitors by local residents), but most acknowledged that this is the result of the overall challenges in the housing and labour markets rather than targeted discrimination. In western oblasts in particular, participants reported feeling welcomed and safe, but still recommended increasing the number of cultural and social activities that bring together displaced and hosting communities. In some areas, people stated that there were more problems between families residing in collective sites than with the local population.

"We feel welcome and safe in the community where we live and in Lviv overall. We are not planning to move anywhere in the near future. IDPs have good relations with locals, but they have conflicts among each other in collective centres."

A displaced man of working age in Lviv oblast

Russian-speaking displaced persons from Donetsk or Luhansk were more likely to report frictions with the local population in areas of displacement (IDPs living in private accommodation in Vinnytska oblast). Russian-speaking children also reported this concern (see also section on “Protection of Children”). Members of Roma communities reported incidents where they felt excluded as some individuals do not understand Ukrainian and cannot read or write. Displaced women from the Roma community in Poltava oblast complained about challenges in communicating with and stigmatization by

local authorities, while displaced Roma women in Uzhgorod reported no issues in their local integration.

In areas recently retaken by the Government of Ukraine, some participants reported social cohesion issues between residents who remained during the period of temporary military occupation and those who have returned more recently. Participants noted that this problem is of a political nature, as some people are perceived to have supported the occupational authorities. Participants also

reported instances of looting, and of a lack of criminal investigations or follow-up into allegations of looting.

7. LIVELIHOODS

The majority of displaced participants indicated that their sources of income had decreased or completely disappeared. Access to employment was one of the main challenges reported by all participants in FGDs, regardless of displacement status. Many IDPs reported that they were from large cities and had jobs and income from the industrial sector, while in areas of displacement, especially in the western oblasts, the economy is more focused on the service sector or on agriculture in rural areas. Participants also noted that prior to February 2022, many male residents of western oblasts were commuting to the EU for work, but were now forced to find work in Ukraine.

The overall decline in the economy and saturation of the labour market has reportedly led to increased competition and lower salaries, but it was acknowledged that the changes in the labour market also offer opportunities, particularly in the service sector in western oblasts.

7.1. MISMATCH BETWEEN LABOUR FORCE AND MARKET

Participants in FGDs noted that there is a mismatch between the skills profile of displaced persons and the job profiles sought in areas of displacement. Displaced participants recommended that employment and vocational training centres should revise training curriculums and customize them to the profile of displaced persons so that they can retrain to meet labour market demands.

"The service sector has increased up due to the influx of funds (for instance, cafes, bars and restaurants opened, which had never existed in Volynska oblast before). Accordingly, the number of job offers has increased, also for IDPs, albeit with the lower salary level than most would expect."

A displaced female student in Volynska oblast

Participants reported that local and relocated businesses were interested to retrain and hire displaced persons, but often lacked the space, infrastructure, material, or capacity needed to do so. Participants suggested that local authorities and humanitarian actors should support local and relocated businesses to organize reskilling and training opportunities since they were best placed to understand needs and had a commercial interest in having a skilled workforce

available.

While acknowledging challenges linked to stable power and internet, participants recommended to increase opportunities through online employment, including support to development of online businesses.

7.2. LACK OF INFORMATION

Participants also reported a lack of information on where to find jobs or what type of jobs are available. They acknowledged that resources are available online or through government services, but noted that these services do not reflect the changed circumstances and are not suited to the needs of displaced persons. Participants recommended that government services be provided with additional resources to support IDPs, and that community spaces or one-stop-shops with job matching and counseling services be established.

7.3. LACK OF CHILDCARE

Lack of childcare was one of the main obstacles to obtaining employment, especially among women and single parents. This was cited as a problem not only for families with very young children, but also for families with children in primary school, who require care and supervision in the early afternoon when school is over. Displaced families did not always have the needed family or community support to care for children, and were therefore unable to seek employment. Participants recommended increased child and day care options through community alternatives and child-friendly spaces and the provision of child and day care services by businesses and local authorities.

"I want to work, and I have the skills to do so. I know that there are vacancies I can apply to, but my personal situation does not allow it as I have no support or cannot afford childcare. I need to stay home with the children."

A displaced woman in Uzhgorod, Zakarpatska oblast

7.4. WILINGNESS TO WORK

Participants in FGDs reported that the majority of unemployed IDPs wanted to work and were actively seeking employment. They also noted that a small minority of IDPs were unable or unwilling to seek employment or to locally integrate due to mental health issues or dependency on humanitarian aid or government benefits. Some individuals mentioned that they feared finding work while they were in displacement would feel like giving up on returning home. Participants noted that these persons needed psychosocial and mental health support to locally integrate and support themselves and their families (see also section on "Need for Psychosocial Support").

7.5. ACCESS TO SELF-EMPLOYMENT

"I want to re-establish my business, but I do not have the resources to do so. I need the materials and physical space and then I am ready to recruit 100 individuals of which at least 50% would be IDPs."

A relocated business owner

Participants noted that there are a significant number of relocated businesses and entrepreneurs within displaced communities, but that they face challenges in restarting their business activities due to a lack of physical space, infrastructure, and the needed materials. They noted that relocated businesses do not always meet the requirements to access government support, and recommended increased support through business grants, affordable loans, and other forms of material support. They also noted that in areas close to the front line and in areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine, business infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, and dedicated

programmes and financial incentives are needed to encourage business owners to re-establish their facilities and infrastructure.

7.6. DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

While discrimination was not mentioned as a major obstacle to obtaining employment, some participants mentioned the reluctance of employers in areas of displacement to invest in the training or hiring of displaced persons, as there is a perception that IDPs will soon return to their areas of origin and that hiring them will be a wasted investment.

"Why would I hire displaced persons? I did it before, but she left in a month. I don't want to do it again".

A displaced person in Sumska oblast, recounting a conversation with a potential employer

Members of the Roma community and Russian-speakers were more likely to report stigmatization and discrimination in the labour market than other FGD participants. Russian-speakers recommended that language courses and information campaigns or job fairs that brought together IDPs and employers together could help them to obtain employment.

Some participants noted that IDPs who had a job in their areas of origin could not access new jobs in displacement because they

should, in principle, officially terminate their original employment before accepting a new position. This was particularly a problem for people whose employer remained in their area of origin.

Members of the Roma and LGBTQI+ communities both cited documentation as an obstacle to employment. For the Roma community, the lack of birth certificates, residency registration and passports was an obstacle to employment, whereas transgender and non-binary persons felt uncomfortable seeking employment due to the inconsistency between their identity documents and their appearance.

8. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Through two interactive activities, children were given the opportunity to 1) vocalize the different risks, challenges, and safety threats facing children in their communities, and 2) identify possible solutions to the different concerns – including actions UNHCR, partners, and government could take to help address the needs of displaced children. The findings are presented thematically below.

8.1. CHALLENGES ACCESSING EDUCATION

The predominant concern raised by displaced children in both collective sites and private accommodation was the many challenges they faced in accessing education. A significant number of children interviewed were out of school or were unable to meaningful access online or offline education.

With respect to children enrolled in online education, it was consistently reported that chronic and persistent power cuts and an absence of mobile networks/internet make digital learning nearly impossible. Those living in rural and remote areas, including those in collective sites, report poor internet connection even when there is power due to the distance of cellphone towers. A significant number of children reported not having the ITC equipment (tablets, computers, power banks, etc.) to participate in digital learning, and as such, were falling behind.

Children reported that families often have only one tablet/computer which is shared by all members of the household, making it difficult to study and do their homework – and families do not have the financial means to buy devices for each child. Children often resort to using a smart phone to attend online classes, which is inadequate for learning. Children commonly expressed that online education was not effective or interesting, citing that teachers needed training to facilitate online training more effectively, and as such, they do not attend. Linked to the issue of 'lack of privacy' cited by many FGD participants, children living in collective sites and crowded private accommodation expressed that they do not have a quiet, dedicated space for online studies, as often there is one table, which

is shared with relatives, siblings and parents. Children living in collective sites expressed a preference for offline education.

The children who reported participating in offline or hybrid education also expressed challenges to obtaining quality education as frequent power cuts and air raid sirens disrupt learning. Children report that their schools do not have generators, and bomb shelters lack basic supplies and educational materials. Also, as school is taught in Ukrainian, children whose native language is Russian feel they are falling behind their peers as they do not understand as much.

Children with disabilities and their parents report that they are not receiving adequate and specialized support from teachers for children with disabilities to meaningfully participate in education.

While the barriers to accessing meaningful education are complex, children expressed a need for digital learning devices for those children whose parents cannot afford to purchase them. They also requested solutions to address the frequent power cuts and absence of mobile networks/internet (i.e. generators, solar batteries, power banks, etc.). For those children residing in collective sites, they cited the need for a dedicated space for online learning, to include tables, chairs, tablets, a good router, and generator. There were also reports of children unable to enroll in offline education without documentation, and the need for support arranging delivery of documentation required for enrolment. For those children who would like to attend offline education, children expressed the need for schools to better protect displaced children from discrimination and provide opportunities for free Ukrainian language courses.

"I have no separate studying space at home. My mom is a teacher, she needs to prepare for her lessons, so we share the same table for her work and my studies."

A 12-year-old displaced child in Lutsk, Volynska oblast

8.2. SOCIAL COHESION / ISOLATION

Displaced children commonly reported feelings of isolation and depression as a result of separation from their friends, family, and communities back home. For those children relocating from eastern parts of Ukraine to western oblasts, children commonly reported difficulties integrating, socializing and making new friends and connections within host communities. They reported frequent instances of tension, pressure, discrimination and bullying from classmates, community members and even

"I prefer to participate in online education as I get bullied by local children."

A 13 year-old displaced child in Dnipropetrovksa oblast

from teachers for those children who are native Russian speakers and do not speak Ukrainian fluently. Similarly, children reported that their parents had difficulty finding employment in areas of displacement, as it is difficult for people to find work if they do not speak Ukrainian.

While some children expressed a willingness and desire to learn Ukrainian, they wished for their peers and teachers to be more sensitive to and understanding of those children who speak Russian, with many noting that it takes time to learn a new language. They expressed the need for engagement of communities (as well as teachers) to reduce intolerance towards the Russian speaking population, as well as increased initiatives and opportunities for displaced children to make friends and build relationships with children in host communities – navigating the language sensitivities. The idea of free Ukrainian language learning opportunities for displaced children was also suggested.

"When people heard us speaking Russian at the local market in Rivne, we were told to go back to where we had come from."

A 15 year-old displaced child in Rivne City

8.3. LEISURE, RECREATIONAL AND SELF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (PSYCHOSOCIAL ACTIVITIES)

Displaced children residing in collective sites and private accommodation across the country expressed limited opportunities to engage in leisure, recreational, and self-development activities outside of formal education. Children, especially those residing in collective sites, expressed a desire to engage in activities and build social relationships with peers from within host communities. Barriers raised by children included the inability of communities to organize activities on their own, a lack of material resources for activities, an absence of a dedicated safe space for children to play (especially in winter when children spend much of their time indoors), and limited transportation from rural regions to city centers for social activities. Children also expressed that since the war started, their parents do not have the time, resources or income to enroll children in these types of extracurricular activities.

Children welcomed the idea of NGOs and charitable foundations facilitating group recreational and psychosocial activities/events with children, and supported the formation of various forms of sport, dance, learning and art groups/clubs (with coaches/instructors) that could benefit and be inclusive of children residing in collective sites and host communities.⁴ Children residing in rural areas and collective sites also requested support in organizing transportation to participate in social activities in local cities.

8.4. FAMILY SEPARATION

Some of the displaced children participating in FGDs reported being separated from their parents for a variety of reasons. Multiple children reported that their parents left them in a collective site with a relative, and then moved away due to an absence of livelihoods and to pursue work opportunities in other areas of Ukraine, including in areas under the temporary military occupation of the Russian Federation, areas of active combat or abroad. Russian speaking families from eastern oblasts, reported difficulties finding work in western oblasts, resulting in family separation. Children noted that if there were job opportunities for their parents in areas of displacement, this would prevent their parents from having to leave.

⁴ As mentioned above, due to issues of social cohesion and stigmatization facing some children who primarily speak Russian, it will be critical for such activities be facilitated in a way to safely address issues of discrimination and bullying.

Displaced children commonly reported feeling stress/anxiety about their future, and a lack of stability because they are unsure if they will stay where they are, return home, or relocate somewhere else – noting that all decisions lie with their parents.

A separated child also reported that due to his parents' absence, he needed support and guidance in getting his passport.

"I miss my mother, stepfather and brothers. They are in Spain. I'm here alone. I won't go there. At the moment, they can't come back. They signed a contract (for work) and now they won't be able to come".

A 17 year-old displaced child in Lukavtsi, Chernivetska oblast

8.5. ABSENCE OF SPECIALISED SERVICES

Displaced children and their parents reported an absence of specialized services and support to address the specialized needs of children. In the case of children with cancer, it was reported that while medical treatment fees are free, parents/caregivers must pay for costs related to transportation to and from medical appointments, food, and medications, which have all increased since the start of the war. Parents highlighted the need for legal reforms allowing free medication for children receiving chemotherapy. It was also reported that there were limited services and support for children with speech impairments and specialized mental health needs, and that there was a need for information on available assistance for children more widely and easily accessible in all locations visited by children – schools, collective sites, humanitarian hubs, streets, and on the internet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are based on the suggestions made by participants in FGDs and interviews.



Access to Adequate Housing and Utilities

- Identify unused housing and allocate funding to organizations refurbishing them
- Develop tenure agreements for residents in collective sites or modular settlements that highlight rights and responsibilities, and ensure allocation of private space per family
- Allocate land to IDPs who can build their homes
- Improve information and transparency on access to social housing and eligibility criteria
- Introduce legislation limiting the commission of real estate agents to 50 percent of the monthly rent when supporting the housing searches of IDPs
- Review the state programme for social housing and ensure adequate budget resources, including programmes that facilitate access to credit for housing
- Review management and allocation of rooms among IDPs in collective sites while ensuring safety and voluntariness in the sharing of rooms
- Ensure the refurbishment of collective sites strengthens privacy and accessibility
- Procure generators for collective sites, with priority for sites with larger numbers of IDPs
- Procure systems to ensure internet connectivity in collective sites, and proactively ensure information on assistance and services can be accessed by people who do not use smartphones.



Access to Healthcare and Medicines

- Adjust resources of territorial communities to reflect the number of IDPs in their location
- Provide subsidies to private clinics providing healthcare to IDPs
- Support the creation of hubs with specialized services for healthcare of children
- Create vouchers for medicines for IDPs or create a discount scheme for medicines for IDPs
- Improve information on medicines provided by humanitarian organizations
- Organize free medical consultations for IDPs in collective sites or in remote IDP settlements, or encourage young doctors to work in rural areas hosting IDPs
- Strengthen the referral of people in need of specialized care to existing services and specialized humanitarian organizations
- Explore feasibility of cash assistance to people with medical conditions
- Include transportation support in referral systems



Access to Humanitarian Assistance, Information and Accountability

- Establish centralized and accessible spaces for information about humanitarian assistance, in person and online
- Adopt collective approaches to providing information and communicating to affected communities about humanitarian assistance, including about criteria for accessing aid
- Strengthen coordination of humanitarian actors, including local volunteer organizations and local authorities, in the planning, delivery, and communication regarding humanitarian assistance
- Coordinate effective assessments so that the humanitarian assistance provided meets the needs of affected people and communicate back to those surveyed about the outcome of their participation in data collection exercises
- Harness the reach and relationships that volunteer groups and local authorities have within communities to ensure that affected communities are aware of available assistance and can access humanitarian aid
- Ensure inclusive approaches to information and communication, accessible to persons with disabilities (hearing, vision, or intellectual impairment)
- Provide face-to-face information about humanitarian assistance and disseminate printed and up-to-date material in addition to online channels. This can include regular community meetings, mobile teams, or establishing networks of focal persons within communities
- Communicate with affected people regarding their right to complain and provide feedback, and increase the visibility of complaints and feedback channels, and ensure these channels have sufficient capacity to respond in a timely manner
- Actors should also ensure that respective feedback and complaint mechanisms are adequately staffed, and that the information provided is relevant and up to date



Need for Legal Assistance

- Disseminate information on key administrative procedures and access to essential documents
- Consider funding costs for legal and administrative procedures for vulnerable people
- Explain key steps for people with damaged properties in preparation of possible compensation programmes
- Establish a status for civilian civilians injured as a result of the armed conflict
- Facilitate the transfer of social benefits and entitlements to areas of displacement
- Increase support to the existing network of free legal aid centers (FLACs) and deploy additional free humanitarian legal aid services in areas where existing services are insufficient
- Conduct information sessions on legal matters among affected communities



Need for Psychosocial Support

- Deliver training of community-based focal points and volunteers on psychological first aid (PFA), stress alleviation and conflict resolution
- Ensure regular visits by psychosocial teams to communities and individuals is meaningful and provides adequate follow up
- Strengthen public awareness on psychological support and its relevance and develop messages adapted to gender, age and specific needs
- Review methodologies and tools used by psychologists related to stress alleviation and solving interpersonal conflicts, and ensure dissemination of recommended approaches among psychologists
- Support the refurbishment and equipment of spaces for community activities, within collective sites, in community centers and in return areas



Local Integration

- Support community-based initiatives or projects which create bridges between displaced and host communities and contribute to an improved acceptance of displaced communities by the local population
- Support public awareness campaigns that sensitize host communities on the situation of displaced people and their desire for integration and employment in areas of displacement
- Support access to Ukrainian language classes for adults and children
- Support medium and long-term housing solutions for IDPs in collective sites (social housing)



Livelihoods

- Increase vocational training for displaced people that helps them to gain the skills required in the labour markets in areas of displacement
- Strengthen the capacity of employment centres to support displaced job seekers
- Increase support to communities and institutions to establish child and day care programmes that support parents and other caregivers to find jobs
- Disseminate information on support available to displaced entrepreneurs and business owners to help them restart their activities in areas of displacement or return
- Simplify procedures to enable displaced persons to change employers and terminate job contracts in areas of origin
- Strengthen awareness of employers on employability of displaced persons and the subsidies available to support their recruitment



Protection of Children

- Procure devices required for children to access online education
- Improve internet connection for displaced communities, in particular within collective sites or community centers
- Refurbish and equip spaces suitable for child protection activities and online education
- Support access to recreational activities among displaced children. Activities should also create opportunities for positive interaction with children and youth in local communities
- Ensure universal access to education, whether in-person or online, and remove obstacles linked to personal documentation
- Strengthen guidance to protection teams regarding the situation of children separated from their parents and left to the care of relatives
- Strengthen guidance for appropriate referral of children with special needs (medical conditions, disability)

**PARTICIPATORY
ASSESSMENT
UKRAINE
November 2022**