

Transitions Assessment

Exploring transitions away from humanitarian assistance in Western Ukraine:

Case study of Volodymyrska and Chortkivska hromadas

February 2025 | Ukraine

Context & Rationale

As the needs of conflict-affected populations in Western and Central Ukraine became increasingly protracted and less acute, the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) has refocused its efforts on providing life-saving assistance in the South and East¹. Consequently, humanitarian actors have begun scaling down aid programmes in the West and Centre. At the same time, initial discussions around transitioning away from humanitarian assistance underscored the importance of coordinating this process responsibly, ensuring that non-humanitarian systems and resources are equipped to address ongoing and often complex needs. As of January 2025 additional issues emerged due to a sudden and potentially long-term decline in funding for both humanitarian and development activities which further strengthens the need for sustainable transition to other forms of assistance. The HNRP 2025 aims to assist 6 million people out of the 12.7 million people in need (down from 8.5 million out of 14.6 million in 2024). It prioritises those with extreme and catastrophic needs, primarily living near the frontlines, as well as individuals with severe needs in areas experiencing pockets of crisis in Western and Central Ukraine. Additionally, the plan emphasises sustainable, long-term solutions by linking humanitarian activities with national mechanisms, complementing Ukraine's social protection system, and prioritising the provision of essential services through governmental institutions where possible².

Nonetheless, conflict-affected populations in Western and Central Ukraine continue to face chronic and often complex challenges that jeopardise their immediate well-being, longer-term resilience, and the country's prospects for sustainable recovery. Although the pace of internal displacement has slowed down, as of October 2024, 3.6 million people remained internally displaced. Government-mandated evacuations from the Eastern and Northern regions further contribute to ongoing displacement³. As of December 2024, an estimated 591,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) resided in Western Ukraine⁴ (4% of whom were accommodated in collective sites⁵), adding to the region's population needs, despite it being less directly affected by hostilities. Other vulnerable groups, such as older people, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, and households with children (particularly single-caregiver households), face compounded challenges, including health, psychosocial and livelihoods issues. The war has also brought significant damage to civilian and critical infrastructure⁶ and despite some recovery in 2023–2024, the Ukrainian economy and livelihoods remain deeply impacted by the war⁷. Amid these challenges, addressing the needs of conflict-affected populations poses challenges to local governments, NGOs, and service providers, many of whom are operating beyond their capacity.

Relying on a case study of Volodymyrska (Volynska oblast) and Chortkivska (Ternopil'ska oblast) hromadas, this assessment aims to inform humanitarian and transitional policy discussions by exploring how and to what extent the ongoing protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and shelter-related needs of conflict-affected people are being met at the local level, in the context of the humanitarian assistance scale-down. Additionally, the assessment evaluates the process of transition, examining whether it is systematic, coordinated and sustainable.

Key Messages

- The primary barrier to effective service provision is insufficient funding, amid the withdrawal of humanitarian actors from the West and strained local economy. This gap, combined with workforce shortages due to displacement and mobilisation, has reduced the capacity of local governments to deliver services.
- Effective cross-stakeholder cooperation is crucial for service provision, but it requires strong coordination and transparent information sharing among stakeholders and with the affected population.
- The transition process could benefit from greater transparency and improved communication at the local level, while efforts have been focused on the regional level. NGOs and IOs have primarily informed their beneficiaries and partners directly, often passing only the most severe cases to local providers as they scale down activities.
- The transition has disproportionately affected those with war-related needs, particularly IDPs, while other vulnerable groups (e.g., older people, single caregivers, and individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses) also face worsening conditions as humanitarian aid diminishes.

Methodology Overview

Preceding data collection, secondary data review and consultations with the representatives of humanitarian clusters were held to provide a contextual understanding of the situation and feed into research design. As a result, the assessment focused on the sectors of protection, shelter and CCCM, covering two hromadas in Western Ukraine* where humanitarian assistance is being scaled down: Chortkivska hromada (Ternopilska oblast) and Volodymyrska hromada (Volynska oblast) (see Map 1). Data was collected in November-December 2024. It is important to note that this is a case study, providing indications of the transition process, rather than its overview in Western Ukraine.

This assessment relied on qualitative data, including Key Informant Interviews with local service providers (12 in Volodymyrska and 11 in Chortkivska), as well as international organisations (IOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (2 in Volodymyrska and 3 in Chortkivska) which operate or operated in the chosen hromadas within the spheres of protection, shelter and CCCM. Key informant interviews allowed to gain an understanding of the transition process and responsibility structure, along with barriers, opportunities and risks involved.

Focus Group Discussions (4 in each hromada) were conducted with local vulnerable population groups, including: households with older members, households with children, IDPs in collective sites and IDPs residing outside of collective sites. Additionally, Household Interviews (5 in Volodymyrska and 3 in Chortkivska) were conducted with households with people with disability or chronic illness. Data collection with vulnerable population groups allowed to explore their unaddressed needs and gain their perspectives of the transition process.

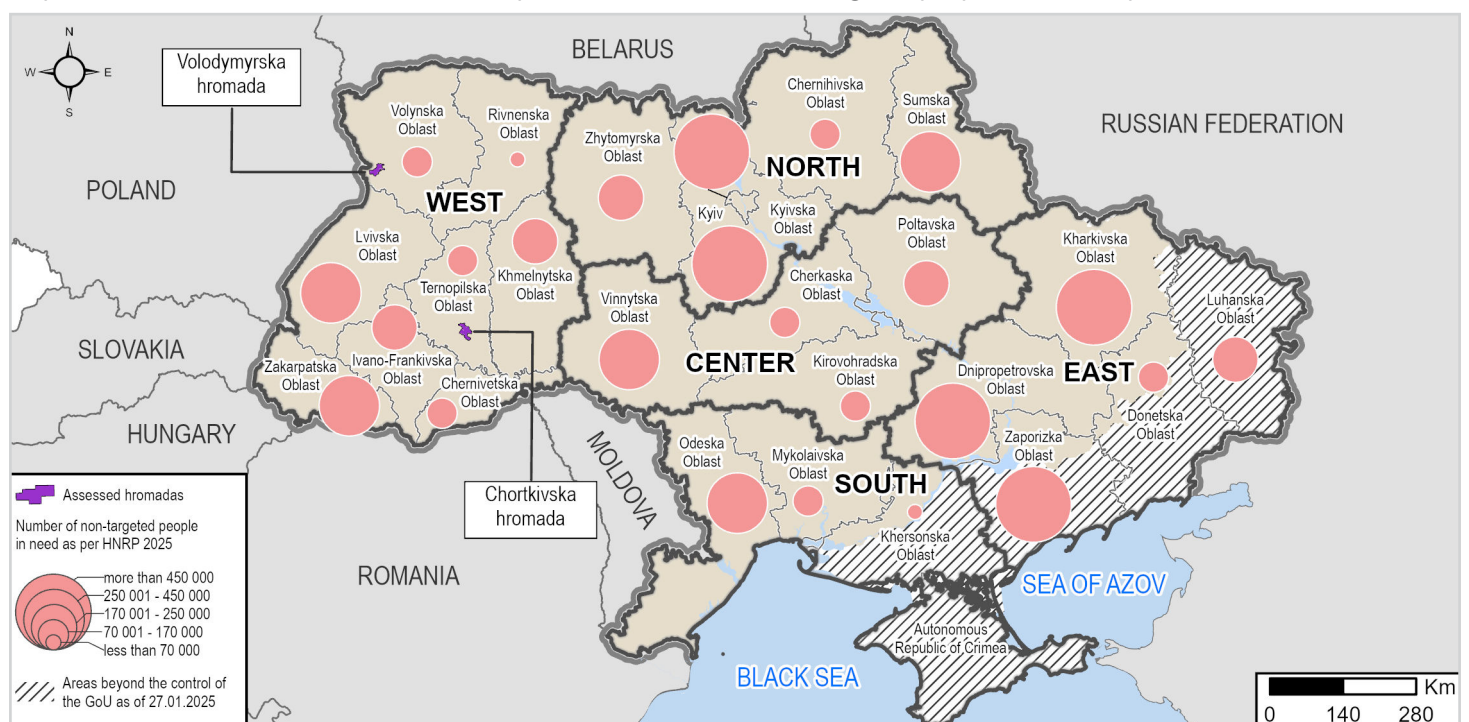
Detailed description of methodology can be found in the [Terms of Reference](#).

Limitations

- Some informants and respondents may not have knowledge of all programmes or stakeholders operating in the hromadas, therefore if they did not mention a certain activity in the given location, it does not denote a lack of such activity in the hromada.
- Persons with certain types of disability or chronic illness, such as those with hearing loss or undergoing complex medical treatment were more difficult to reach and thus to include in the sample.
- Key Informant Interviews allowed to evaluate the transition process and locally provided services. However, answers might be biased, as respondents might be inclined to present their organisations and institutions in a favourable light, or on the contrary – present the situation as more dire than in reality in a hope for attracting more funding.

* Western Ukraine or Western areas cited in this report include the following oblasts: Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Khmelnytska, Lvivska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska, Volynska, Zakarpatska.

Map 1: Locations where data collection took place and number of non-targeted people in need as per HNRP 2025



Landscape of activities and collaboration in local services' provision

Governmental and locally-led activities

In Ukraine, the central government is responsible for drafting policies and legal frameworks regarding social policy, shelter and CCCM activities. The state also allocates funds to national-level social protection programmes (e.g., pensions, subsidies, and specialised aid programmes for veterans, IDPs, etc.), large-scale shelter and infrastructure repairs (financed, e.g., through the State Emergency Fund, Special Fund, or foreign-funded initiatives). Since the beginning of the war, the government has launched specific shelter programmes, allowing citizens to apply, e.g., for shelter repairs refunds (eVidnovlennya⁸) or state-supported mortgages (eOselya⁹).

Local authorities (hromada authorities) are responsible for implementing policies developed by the state through managing relevant institutions that provide or distribute assistance locally, processing applications for social support (including various state benefits), and managing collective sites. Hromadas can also cover smaller-scale shelter repairs or introduce additional support programmes (including financial support) to vulnerable groups, on top of the assistance provided by the state¹⁰.

In this case study, informants highlighted local authorities' role in implementing protection activities, including social protection of various vulnerable groups, child protection, distributing in-kind aid, providing employment services and healthcare (including physical and psychosocial healthcare). Furthermore, local authorities reportedly handled shelter-related activities (including support with repairs and provision of social housing), and maintained collective sites. It was also noted that there was some free legal aid provided by hromadas, although larger free legal

aid centres operate at the regional level. Additionally, a few informants highlighted the role of local authorities in gathering data on the population's needs and disseminating information about available services.

Local NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) reportedly handled protection activities (including financial and in-kind assistance, support to IDPs, children and people with disabilities, mental health and psychosocial support, and legal assistance) and shelter activities (including repairs and provision of non-food items). Some informants noted that local NGOs and CBOs were able to conduct their activities owing to their base of volunteers, some of whom joined the humanitarian effort ad hoc, when the need appeared.

Other key services addressing humanitarian needs included collective sites funded by local authorities or NGOs; and IDP councils, which serve as platforms for dialogue and problem-solving between internally displaced persons and local authorities. Religious organisations, including NGOs established by religious entities or church-led initiatives, were particularly active in the Volodymyrska hromada, focusing primarily on in-kind assistance. Additionally, some humanitarian efforts were reportedly funded by philanthropists.

Among all interviewed vulnerable groups, respondents reported having accessed (between the beginning of the war and time of data collection) services or benefits provided by the local authorities and the state, covering a wide range of protection (notably social benefits, including pensions and subsidies), CCCM and shelter services. Some also noted free-of-charge services, including transportation (e.g., social taxi) or subsidised services at the Territorial Centre (reported in Volodymyrska). Other received assistance included food packages, social housing and healthcare services, as well as learning and cultural activities organised by the local institutions.

Figure 1: The main responsibilities of the central government, ministries and Parliament (state) and hromada authorities within protection, shelter and CCCM⁷.

	State	Hromada
Protection	Enacting social policy (incl. social protection programmes) and ensuring its implementation	Managing local social services centres
	Drafting legal frameworks for protection activities	Processing applications for national-level social protection programmes
	Allocating funds to national-level social protection programmes (e.g., pensions, subsidies)	Providing additional support (beyond national programmes), addressing local needs (e.g., aid for IDPs, care for older people)
	Financing specialised institutions and services (e.g., for veterans, orphans)	Funding and maintaining shelters, day-care centres, and community support facilities
Shelter and CCCM	Enacting policies and legal frameworks for shelter and housing assistance	Planning and implementing urban development initiatives
	Defining standards for shelter provision (incl. collective centres)	Ensuring local shelter services (incl. collective centres) meet national standards (incl. ensuring access to utilities)
	Funding large-scale shelter projects (incl. collective centres)	Funding maintenance and shelter repairs of temporary housing (may be co-financed with national funding)
	Funding housing compensation schemes for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the war (eVidnovlennya programme)	Managing and maintaining temporary shelters (incl. collective centres)

Legal assistance was accessed by several groups: local population primarily reached for state or local authority-provided services, while IDPs more frequently relied on legal support from IOs or (I)NGOs.

Overall, IDPs were more likely than the local population to participate in social, cultural, or educational events and access mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Many of them were or had been accommodated at collective sites, where some of these services were delivered.

Non-local initiatives and humanitarian aid

National NGOs conducting humanitarian activity in the two hromadas reportedly focused on protection, including notably MHPSS (in particular in Chortkivska), in-kind aid, legal aid, additional assistance to IDPs, children and other vulnerable groups and case management. National NGOs conducted shelter and CCCM activities as well (in particular in Chortkivska), such as repairs and non-food items (NFI) distribution, and provision of accommodation, including operating collective sites. In Volodymyrska, it was also noted that NGOs provided trainings and support to local authorities. Additionally, NGOs with permanent local presence were more likely to conduct continuous activities, than those without a local office.

All informants noted that in the past year, in Volodymyrska and Chortkivska hromadas, humanitarian activities led by IOs and (I)NGOs included protection, e.g., child protection projects, case management, financial aid, legal and administrative assistance and MHPSS. Additionally, informants in Volodymyrska mentioned in-kind aid and assistance (including through dedicated centres) to specific vulnerable groups. Respondents also noted CCCM activities, such as repairs of collective sites and NFI provision, and shelter activities (highlighted in Chortkivska), including repairs, NFI provision and subsidies. Humanitarian activities led by IOs were often implemented by national NGOs.

Across nearly all interviewed vulnerable groups, except for people with disabilities or chronic illnesses and older people in Volodymyrska, respondents reported having accessed humanitarian assistance, most commonly financial and in-kind aid. Notably, all IDPs confirmed having received some form of humanitarian assistance and were more likely than the local population to access services or aid from national and local NGOs or volunteers. Accessing services provided by NGOs, INGOs, or the United Nations (UN) was slightly more prevalent in Chortkivska hromada. Some respondents across different vulnerable groups expressed reluctance to seek additional aid, emphasising their preference for self-reliance.

It needs to be noted that the respondent selection process prioritised those who had accessed humanitarian assistance. However, identifying respondents with disabilities or chronic illnesses proved overall challenging, potentially leading to an underrepresentation of this group who accessed humanitarian aid in the study. This does not necessarily indicate that individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses did not receive aid.

Nonetheless, this group was reported to rely heavily on state-provided benefits before and after the war, thus may not have been impacted as much by the aid provision that appeared after the war.

Although some respondents highlighted that they obtained needed information on services that they are eligible for (largely through targeted information campaigns), some (IDPs and people with a disability or chronic illness) asserted that they did not obtain information on all available humanitarian assistance, which may partially explain why they did not access it. Overall, among most groups, particularly in Chortkivska, respondents noted that they needed additional information on available services regarding protection, shelter or CCCM. Among local and international stakeholders some gaps in awareness of local services were also noted (with some not able to pinpoint any locally-funded NGOs or CBOs).

Cooperation between stakeholders

Findings revealed a relatively broad and diverse network of cooperation among stakeholders, including Ukrainian and international structures, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations. Overall, collaboration was reported to be robust at the local level, operating independently of international structures, which increases the likelihood of sustaining cooperation even amidst the ongoing humanitarian scale-down.

However, with humanitarian stakeholders withdrawing from Western Ukraine, their coordinating role is also diminishing. Responsibility for ensuring effective service provision now falls to regional and local structures. Despite this shift, formal coordination bodies have reportedly not been established. Instead, existing cooperation tends to rely on bilateral or multilateral arrangements. While such arrangements may be satisfactory under stable conditions, during a potential emergency (e.g., sudden surge in IDP arrivals) they risk causing duplication and/or gaps in service provision.

In both hromadas, many local informants highlighted cooperation between NGOs and local authorities. It was commonly mentioned that this cooperation was formal and continuous, although local informants in Chortkivska noted ad hoc cooperation between stakeholders, driven by immediate needs. Informants emphasised that cooperation was a significant advantage, allowing stakeholders to address the population's needs by complementing each other's activities and filling critical gaps.

When we first arrived [in 2022], we were treated as some kind of charitable foundation, a one-off [aid], and [local authorities] associated us only with (...) material support. (...) The attitude began to change, especially when we came in with (...) psychological support. We understand that these services are paid for the most part and they are inaccessible to ordinary people, and those provided by social services they often cannot cover this need, they simply do not have enough of

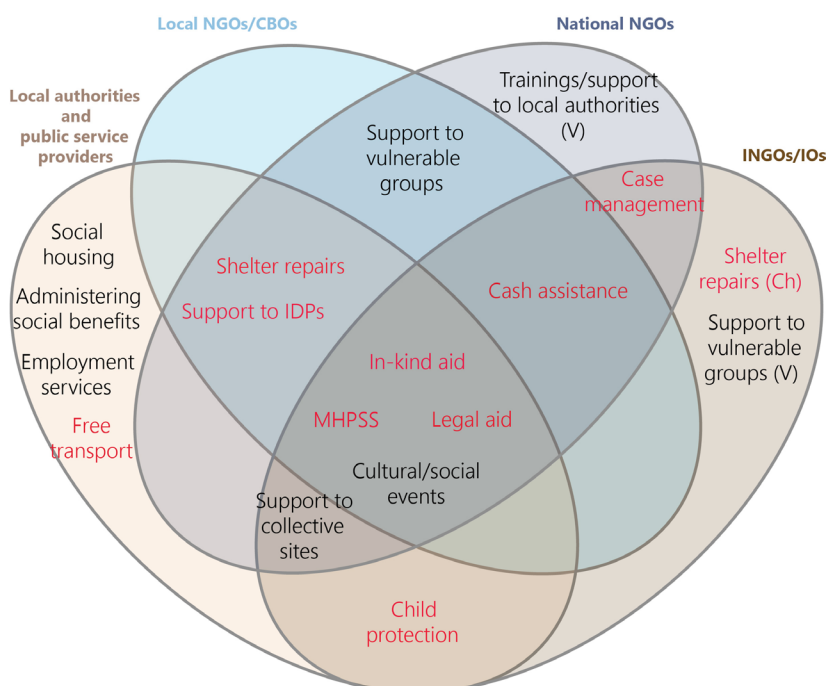
these psychologists or social workers. (...) So in terms of professionalism and quality, we turned out to be the best. (...) The result was the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation with local authorities. Therefore, all this changed when cooperation began, and having gained power, we can call the head of the community directly at the official level, arrange a meeting, and so on.

Volodymyrska, National NGO

Collaboration between local authorities and NGOs often involved information-sharing on people in need (PIN) and ongoing activities, as well as partnerships in funding and in-kind aid distribution. Additionally, international stakeholders noted that INGOs and local authorities referred vulnerable population to relevant service providers. Cooperation also extended to IDP-oriented structures, such as collective sites and IDP councils, with the latter playing a coordinating role. NGOs were also reported to collaborate with each other, although some in Chortkivska noted that it had become more limited recently. Several local informants also noted foreign support, primarily directed toward NGOs, from international counterparts or partner cities.

While some local informants described effective coordination between NGOs and regional or central authorities, others reported a lack of alignment efforts or support from higher-level authorities to local structures. Local authorities were reportedly working with regional and national authorities and international organisations. Some international stakeholders stressed the importance of regional-level coordination, particularly between NGOs and authorities.

Figure 2: Landscape of protection, shelter and CCCM activities in Volodymyrska (V) and Chortkivska (Ch) hromadas, as indicated by the respondents. Activities marked in red have been reportedly reduced.



However, the disparity in perspectives regarding coordination and support from regional and central authorities suggests gaps in policy planning or communication. Such inconsistencies may result in inefficiencies or unmet needs at the local level. Furthermore, following the decentralisation reform, implemented since 2014, hromada authorities have a higher degree of autonomy in policymaking - although this has been a largely popular and successful approach in Ukraine, this also means that certain policies of hromadas may differ¹¹.

Transitioning from humanitarian aid to longer-term solutions

Scale-down of activities

Most international and local stakeholders reported that humanitarian aid in Volodymyrska and Chortkivska hromadas has already been reduced, or was expected to decrease further in 2025. The scale-down concerned primarily IO- or (I)NGO-led protection activities (MHPSS, gender-based violence, child protection), shelter repairs, financial assistance to IDPs, WASH, social cohesion initiatives and in-kind aid. Stakeholders noticed as well a reduction in financial assistance, in-kind aid and other support targeting the IDPs. Fig. 2 offers an overview of the activities conducted and scaled-down in both hromadas.

National NGOs often rely on international funding, thus their activities would be scaled-down as an extension of IOs shifting focus away from the West. A robust net of local initiatives offers some optimism, but smaller initiatives often depend on donations (especially regarding in-kind aid), which may be decreasing too. At the same time, the government needs to allocate funding to the defence effort, which strains resources and may lead to lower allocations for social benefits (e.g., in March 2024, the coverage of IDP allowance has been limited by introducing new criteria for eligibility¹²).

However, several local informants in both hromadas reported that humanitarian activities remained ongoing, including the provision of in-kind aid, funding and repairs for shelters, and the operation of resilience centres.

These centres exemplify a collaborative initiative where humanitarian stakeholders and local authorities share responsibilities. Established by the Ukrainian government in partnership with IOs, resilience centres provide case management, psychosocial support, and social services while also offering training to prospective service providers from international organisations¹³. Regarding shelter repairs, these have been funded by the oblast or central authorities and thus may be less affected by humanitarian scale-down.

Informants also noted continued assistance to IDPs, as well as other vulnerable groups (e.g.,

children, victims of domestic violence). Notably, few informants in Volodymyrska declared that humanitarian activity in their hromada increased lately. Some informants were unsure, as they did not know of humanitarian activities in their hromada.

Respondents from vulnerable population groups, in particular those in Chortkivska, corroborated observations of a scale-down, citing a reduction in activities of the UN, international and national/local NGOs, and churches in their hromada. The most commonly cited reductions involved in-kind aid (including NFIs and food) and financial assistance, such as benefits and subsidies. Other services reported as reduced included MHPSS, free transportation, and programmes aimed at supporting IDPs. IDPs were more likely to report service reductions, as they had been significant beneficiaries of humanitarian aid.

Additionally, it was reported, particularly in Volodymyrska, that local authorities have stopped some of the activities addressing humanitarian needs, such as financial and in-kind aid, as well as shelter-related activities. This was echoed by respondents from vulnerable groups who noted reduction in in-kind aid and subsidies (including assistance targeted at IDPs) provided by the state or local authorities.

Most vulnerable groups reported being negatively impacted by the scale-down in humanitarian aid. Common challenges included inability to save money and difficulty affording basic necessities, while one respondent noted worsened mental health. Additionally, local stakeholders noted that some people became heavily reliant on humanitarian aid and accustomed to receiving it.

Among the people who moved to these regions, including the Chortkiv community, we observed the negative impact of the reduction in aid. (...) In 2022, people became very accustomed to the fact that this assistance is available, somewhere food or hygiene kits, or cash payments are periodically issued. That is, IDPs thought that after a certain period there would be some kind of support again, and this became the norm. Therefore, when at one point everything simply stopped, (...) it became a very unexpected and unpleasant surprise for people.

Chortkivska, Local NGO

However, some respondents noted their ability to adapt, such as IDPs residing in collective sites in Chortkivska. Others, particularly among the local population, stated that they were less affected as they had not been heavily reliant on humanitarian aid in the first place.

Transition process

Scale-down of humanitarian assistance increased the pressure on local service providers. Some international stakeholders in Chortkivska reported that humanitarian activities or cases were passed on from larger NGOs to public service providers or local NGOs, while other informants confirmed that vulnerable populations increasingly sought needed support from the local

authorities as humanitarian presence in their hromadas was declining. In Volodymyrska, an informant reported that cases were not passed on to local authorities, but rather resolved and closed when NGOs/IOs were leaving the hromada.

Some local informants declared that there was no change in their or other local stakeholders' activities following scale-down of humanitarian assistance. This was particularly highlighted by those who did not base their activities on humanitarian support (such as financing from humanitarian entities) in the first place. However, a few noted an increased responsibility scope of local authorities and service providers, as they would effectively take over the NGOs' workload. Few also noted decreased funding available for humanitarian activities. Nonetheless, some organisations and institutions have reportedly expanded their activities lately or increased coordination with other stakeholders.

Most international stakeholders asserted that there was no unclarity or ambiguity about the scale-down of humanitarian activities. Scale-down was reportedly communicated to beneficiaries through local authorities or NGOs, e.g., when beneficiaries turned to them for aid (instead of rolling out a general information campaign). Some local informants reported that scale-down was communicated to the beneficiaries, e.g., once they reached out for aid, or via social networks.

However, some, mostly in Volodymyrska declared that humanitarian activity scale-down was not communicated to local stakeholders or population. Meanwhile, several local informants (and one international), in particular in Volodymyrska, claimed (contrary to the actual situation) that none of humanitarian activities were stopped lately, or that they were unaware of any such activities ending. A few were uncertain about whether any activities had ceased. Limited awareness of the scale-down may stem from the fact that such information was reportedly shared at the regional level, for instance, through cluster meetings, rather than directly at the local level.

Since we were informed about this [scale-down] by donors, we conveyed information to beneficiaries accordingly. But due to the fact that the security situation is changing very rapidly (...) and evacuations took place closer to the contact line, people moved en masse to the Western regions and this factor was not taken into account.

Chortkivska, Local NGO

Among the majority of vulnerable groups, at least some respondents noted that they were informed about the scale-down of humanitarian assistance (either reduction or suspension of certain services), e.g., by service providers assisting vulnerable population. However, many, especially IDPs, remarked that they were not properly informed, e.g., they found out about the scale-down post factum. Several, in particular IDPs, noted uncertainty about the scale-down (were not sure who will scale-down which services and when).

Lastly, withdrawal of humanitarian stakeholders from the West poses questions about the potential loss of human capital, in terms of qualified staff. Personnel of the IOs and (I)NGOs that scaled-down or finished their activities in Volodymyrska reportedly stayed within the organisations, but changed their position (programme). In Chortkivska, it was reported that local staff either moved to other locations with their organisation or moved to work with the public services, but informants noted a lack of an established personnel reallocation mechanism (staff often had to reapply for new positions).

From humanitarian assistance to development

Despite the deprioritisation of Western Ukraine in recent humanitarian plans, local informants in both hromadas frequently mentioned that their organisation or institution, or other entities they knew of, continued to apply for humanitarian aid - either through appeals for specific aid (e.g., shelter activities), or by applying for grants for various projects (reported mainly by NGOs). Local authorities in Chortkivska also reportedly sought other international aid (from entities located abroad, including partner cities). Some, in particular governmental institutions, highlighted that they organised their own activities without support from humanitarian actors (e.g., through state financing or local budgets).

The HNRP 2025 has excluded activities addressing protracted needs that are no longer directly linked to war-induced emergencies - such as socio-economic issues, awareness-raising activities, capacity-building for authorities, or several shelter activities (e.g., provision of household appliances). This shift aims to transfer responsibility for these areas to recovery and development actors. To support this transition, the Ukraine UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) will be launched for the 2025–2029 period. The UNSDCF will focus on promoting economic growth, investing in human capital, fostering an inclusive and cohesive society, and tackling environmental challenges¹⁴. Meanwhile, the government has relaunched sectoral working groups with development stakeholders¹⁵ and established Digital Restoration Ecosystem (DREAM) programme that offers a single digital route for the local authorities and other stakeholders to apply for restoration and development projects, focusing largely on reconstruction and modernisation of various facilities and critical infrastructure¹⁶.

Transition from humanitarian assistance to development and early recovery efforts was not widely observed in Volodymyrska and Chortkivska hromadas. Many international and local informants were unaware of any early recovery or development activities in their hromada. Among the activities mentioned by some informants as part of the development or early recovery phase were shelter repairs, IDP councils - typically classified as humanitarian efforts - and initiatives supporting business establishment. This suggests a limited presence of such efforts in these hromadas - no DREAM projects are ongoing in the assessed hromadas. However, lack of clarity regarding the humanitarian vs. development activities

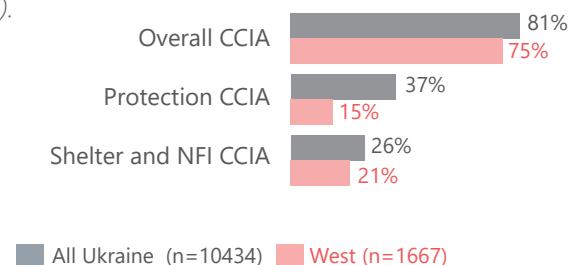
indicates that local stakeholders may either lack awareness of development or early recovery initiatives in their area or have a limited understanding of the concept itself.

Populations' needs amid humanitarian scale-down

Unmet needs of the local population

According to Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) 2024, population of the Western area exhibits lower needs across all sectors. While overall in Ukraine 81% of households are in need, this share drops to 75% for Western Ukraine (Fig. 3). Regarding shelter and NFIs, 21% of Western Ukraine's households are considered in need, while 51% are under stress. Notably, 61% cited intermittent supply of electricity, 35% noted disruptions to utilities (including Internet, hot and cold water), and 26% reported missing NFIs in their shelter. Only 1% reported war-induced damage to their current shelter. In terms of protection, 15% of households in the Western areas were considered in need, while 36% were under stress. Households reported concerns over war-related violence for women (39%), children (38%) and men (28%) in their community. Additionally, 47% cited conscription as a safety concern for men. Only 9% reported requiring legal assistance - most often to obtain property documentation, apply for subsidies and social benefits¹⁷.

Figure 3: Share of households in need by Contextualised Composite Indicator Analysis (CCIA*) score per sector (MSNA 2024¹²).



* The CCIA is a Ukraine-specific MSNA analysis framework used to analyse sectoral needs in the country. The CCIA uses a five-metric scale to categorise need per sector, based on severity: None/minimal, Stress, Severe, Extreme, Extreme+. Households are considered in need if their needs are severe or higher.

IDP households reveal higher level of needs - in the West, 53% of IDP households expressed shelter needs and 49% - protection needs (compared to 20% and 13% respectively for non-displaced households)¹⁸. Studies show that collective sites are places of particularly high vulnerability. Internally displaced older people, people with disabilities or chronic diseases, or mental health issues are more likely to live in collective sites rather than outside. Western and Eastern regions have the highest share of IDPs living in collective sites (5% compared to 0.4-2% in other areas)¹⁹. In case of an increased IDP influx there would be a further rise in demand for specialised services tailored to their needs, in addition to the broader requirement for adequate IDP accommodation. People with disabilities

or chronic illnesses also make up a significant proportion of veterans, a population group that continues to grow and will require increasingly more support regarding the provision of essential services²⁰.

Households with older members were more likely to be in need of shelter and NFI aid. In the West 27% of households with older members and 23% for households with older and younger members were in need, against 18% for households without older persons. Another vulnerable group which expressed needs in shelter and NFI more often were households that had at least one member with a disability (28% against 18% for households without a member with disability). Variations in protection needs for these groups in the West were less pronounced. Regarding households with children, those with a single female caregiver were more likely to express protection needs (24% against 15% for households without children)²¹.

In this case study, some respondents among older people in Chortkiv asserted that all their needs were satisfied, while some respondents with disabilities reported that their needs in terms of shelter, NFIs and protection were satisfied. A few informants claimed that some needs of IDPs were satisfied in their hromadas, including access to in-kind aid, protection and shelter services. However, among all groups several respondents declared that at least some of their needs were currently unmet.

I cannot say that these needs were fully satisfied. Those who care for children with disabilities or anyone with a vulnerability understand how many needs such families have. They can almost never be completely covered. But when there was more humanitarian aid, it was much easier. Now we have to adapt to the situation that exists.

Chortkivska, Local households with children



The most commonly cited unmet needs concerned livelihoods, including financial assistance, employment opportunities (particularly for IDPs) and winterisation assistance, which further impacted respondents' ability to meet their protection and shelter needs. Respondents with disabilities noted a need to expand free public services, including transportation networks, and suggested reforms to increase pensions. Local stakeholders emphasized the need for further in-kind aid provision, including food and NFIs.



Respondents with disabilities highlighted the insufficient availability of free services, including rehabilitation (such as stays in sanatoriums) and other medical care. IDPs were slightly more likely to indicate insufficient access to physical healthcare and WASH-related needs, while local population was slightly more likely to require MHPSS services. Both local and international stakeholders also emphasised the need for MHPSS provision.



Local population, particularly persons with disability or chronic illnesses highlighted insufficient access to free legal aid and free transportation. Local

stakeholders also identified additional gaps in legal assistance and social protection services tailored to specific vulnerable groups.



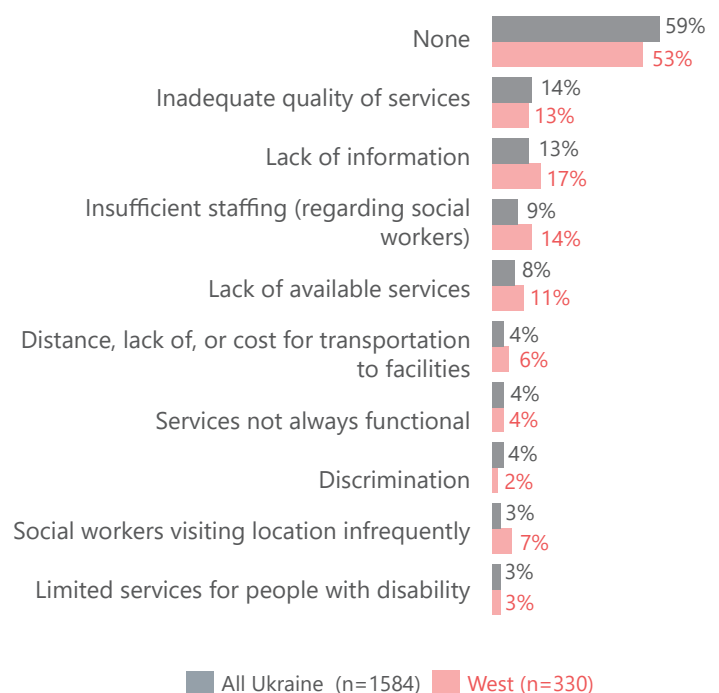
IDPs commonly suggested expanding accommodation opportunities. According to the local and international stakeholders, the lack of adequate accommodation for IDPs was among the most prominent issues, with some noting the need to increase the capacity of collective sites - a concern raised in both hromadas. Local stakeholders, particularly in Volodymyrska, also noted the need for provision of social housing, including for local vulnerable population.

The majority of local stakeholders acknowledged that some of the needs of local vulnerable population groups were not fully met. Awareness of local needs was less comprehensive among international stakeholders (it needs to be noted that some of these informants did not reside in the assessed hromadas and did not work on projects in these hromadas anymore).

Barriers to accessing services and coping strategies

Across Ukraine, 40% of those who sought to access various public services encountered barriers (Fig. 4). In the Western area, this share was slightly higher, at 46%, indicating that at least some barriers may be structural, rather than an effect of proximity to the frontline, and thus require further attention and sustainable solutions. The most commonly reported barriers in the West included lack of information regarding available services (17%), insufficient staffing of social facilities (14%), and inadequate quality of services (13%)²².

Figure 4: Households reportedly facing barriers while accessing services provided by the government, responses above 2% included (MSNA 2024²²).



In this case study, all vulnerable groups identified barriers to accessing services in their location. Respondents from nearly all groups (apart from older people in Chortkivska), reported concerns about the insufficient quality of certain services (or their provision), such as legal assistance, healthcare, and social benefits. Other common challenges included bureaucratic hurdles (particularly in obtaining social benefits) and complex procedures, insufficient social benefits (i.e., not allowing to cover basic needs) or high prices of services when those that should be provided free of charge do not succeed to address the needs. In Volodymyrska, respondents frequently mentioned long waiting times for services or the unavailability of specific services or products, such as specialised healthcare or medications. Some noted that due to limited access to free services, lengthy waiting times, or inadequate quality, they were forced to rely on private services.

Respondents, particularly individuals with disabilities and those in Chortkivska, highlighted as well physical barriers to accessing some services, such as infrastructure that was not accessible to people with limited mobility. However, some in Chortkivska praised the local authorities' efforts to establish a barrier-free environment and noted improvements in accessibility of hromada's infrastructure.

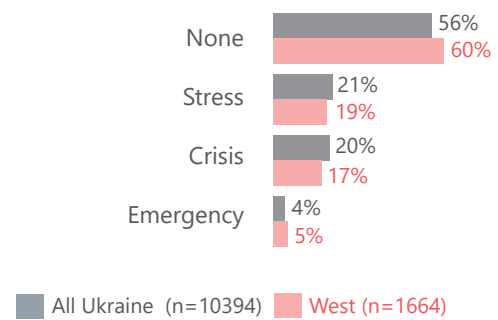
Some respondents reported having applied for social assistance programmes but being informed that they were ineligible. Several did not fully understand the reasons for their ineligibility, suggesting an information gap. A lack of accessible and comprehensive information on available services was cited as a barrier, more commonly in Chortkivska. Some, in particular older respondents, pointed to insufficient digital literacy as a significant obstacle, preventing them from accessing information or applying for services online.

When facing barriers to accessing services, financial strain and resulting unmet needs, households may resort to coping strategies. The Livelihood Coping Strategies for Essential Needs (LCS-EN) indicator measures the strategies households use to cope with insufficient financial resources to meet their essential needs. These strategies are categorised by severity, ranging from "stress" (lowest severity) to "emergency" (highest severity). The use of more severe strategies indicates a reduced ability for households to meet their essential needs in the future.

According to the MSNA 2024, 44% of households across the country reported resorting to LCS, with a slightly lower rate of 40% in the Western area (Fig. 5)²³. This data underscores, that despite regional variations, households, including those in the West, continue to face significant challenges in meeting their essential needs.

In this case study, among most of the vulnerable groups, respondents reported adopting various coping strategies in response to financial hardship and/or inadequate access to protection, shelter, or CCCM services. The most commonly mentioned strategies included relying on support from family members, friends, or community members (either for financial assistance or help with daily tasks and accessing services) and reducing expenses

Figure 5: Households resorting to Livelihood Coping Strategies, by type of the strategy (MSNA 2024¹⁵).



(including limiting utility usage to lower costs). Cutting expenses can have serious negative impacts on health, as it often involves sacrificing essential needs like healthcare and food.

Today, [medical] treatment is the number one problem. For example, this month I spent more than 2000UAH on all medicines. For me, this is a lot. With my pension, this is a lot. Help comes from children, not from the state.

Volodymyrska, Local household with a member with disability or chronic illness

Some respondents, particularly internally displaced persons, reported selling property or exhausting their savings to meet basic needs, while respondents with disabilities or chronic illnesses cited taking on debt. Such strategies further exacerbate vulnerability to future challenges.

In addition, some IDPs in Chortkivska shared that their displaced friends had returned to unsafe areas because they were unable to secure suitable housing, highlighting the severe strain on resources and the long-term risks posed by insufficient support systems. Other strategies aimed at self-sufficiency included growing their own food or taking on additional employment.

Hromadas' ability to meet population's needs

From the perspective of the stakeholders, the most common supply-side barrier to meeting the local population's needs were reportedly insufficient financial resources and shortage of staff (especially among NGOs), in particular the shortage of qualified and specialised personnel (e.g., psychologists, social workers). The latter was reportedly caused by displacement and mobilisation (of former staff).

Since 2014, Ukraine has been implementing decentralisation reform, designed to empower local authorities with greater decision-making authority and to increase their local budgets. As a result, a significant portion of income taxes became retained at the hromada level, typically serving as the primary source of local government revenue²⁴.

Since the introduction of martial law in February 2022, Personal Income Tax (PIT) of military staff (so called

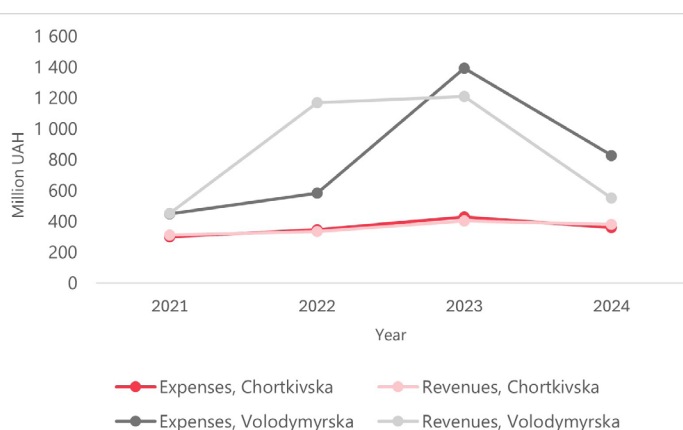
“military PIT”) has been redistributed to the hromada hosting the military unit of the PIT payer, rather than the individual’s hromada of origin²⁵. This redistribution of tax revenues has impacted the financial landscape across hromadas.

Later, in 2023, the government adopted an amendment which redistributed the military PIT from local authorities to central government’s budget, in a bid to fund the defence effort. This has negatively impacted local budgets, although particularly those of hromadas located near the frontline, as they do not have many other sources of funding²⁶.

In April 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a resolution to expand possibilities of financing from the state budget to compensate for the losses of local budgets (particularly of frontline hromadas) to some extent²⁷. In both assessed hromadas these transfers did not fully cover loss from tax income - compared to 2023, in 2024 their revenue from tax decreased (-35% in Chortkivska and -69% in Volodymyrska), while official transfers slightly increased (27% in Chortkivska and 9% in Volodymyrska)²⁸.

Meanwhile, overall revenue growth struggled to keep pace with rising expenses, exacerbated by outmigration and the broader economic downturn induced by the war. Volodymyrska hromada suffered significant budget deficit for the second year in the row²⁹ (Fig. 6 - for a more detailed analysis of hromadas’ expenses and incomes see the Annex).

Figure 6: Change in hromadas’ expenses and revenues between 2021-2024²⁰.



Aside from the financing issues, other commonly mentioned barriers to meeting local population’s needs included low awareness of needs, high workload of responders (related to increased demand for services and personnel shortages), bureaucracy and issues related to arrival of IDPs (such as shortage of accommodation space, increased demand for services and social tensions). Additionally, international stakeholders cited poor infrastructure (concerning in particular insufficient quality of potential sites for collective sites and shelters) and difficulties faced by rural populations in accessing services, as these are predominantly concentrated in urban areas.

What’s next? Future needs, challenges, recommendations

Recommendations for ensuring adequate services’ provision

When discussing qualities that enhance service quality, respondents commonly mentioned inclusivity and accessibility for various vulnerable groups (including physical accessibility and inclusive planning of service provision), positive and professional approach to beneficiaries, straightforward procedures to accessing services and good organisation (in terms of effective administration and logistics) of service provision. Stability in service provision - understanding which services will be available, to whom, and for how long - was mentioned by some as critical.

Respondents further underlined the importance of sustainability in service provision, suggesting that services should aim to empower beneficiaries to achieve greater self-reliance wherever possible. International stakeholders in Volodymyrska echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need to prioritise systematic support and long-term interventions to enhance the sustainability of solutions.

This included the need for solutions addressing IDPs’ needs and facilitating their integration into local communities. Local informants anticipated that in the nearest future there will be a need for additional accommodation for IDPs and employment opportunities for the IDPs to integrate within the local society and settle down. Other anticipated needs included material aid, MHPSS, shelter improvements and reducing bureaucratic obstacles to service provision.

Furthermore, cooperation between stakeholders was identified as the most important factor in facilitating the effective meeting of needs. This collaboration was seen as crucial for securing funding and distributing workload.

Quality coordination with our partners and local governments helps to cover the needs of the population the most, because until a certain point, when all organizations had more resources, there were even situations of duplication of assistance. In 2023, we began to communicate with partners on our initiative, creating a chat for local non-governmental organizations, where we share information (...). If, for example, there are complex cases that our organization cannot solve purely on its own, we coordinate with partners and thus solve this problem together.

Chortkivska, Local NGO

Half of the interviewed vulnerable groups expressed a preference for services to be provided through joint efforts of multiple organisations and institutions. However, some, particularly among the local population, favoured service provision by the state or local authorities, citing their better understanding of the local context. Others preferred services from the UN or international organisations, noting their simpler access procedures.

Additional factors improving services' provision highlighted by stakeholders included adequate funding. International informants suggested that local stakeholders could attract donors through effective project implementation, thereby enabling financing for future initiatives. Local informants anticipated that to address the needs of the local population their institution or organisation would need additional funding - this was more often highlighted by representatives of governmental institutions. It was mentioned that local authorities' disposable budget shrank due to the martial law and spending on defence efforts. Funding would be needed mostly for shelter and CCCM activities.

Moreover, local stakeholders noted necessity of timely needs' assessments to conduct well-informed and coordinated activities. International stakeholders recommended to strengthen information campaigns to increase awareness of available services among the hromadas' population. Among the vulnerable population, most commonly preferred source of receiving information about available services was the Internet, including social media and websites on which information could be gathered and updated in a comprehensive and timely manner. Nonetheless, it was highlighted that online dissemination is not sufficient as some older people may have difficulties accessing it. Thus, other sources, such as local newspapers, radio, TV or phone calls were preferred by some.

Finally, internal advantages of service providers that facilitate effective activity reportedly included having additional personnel, appropriate remuneration of staff, well-coordinated and highly qualified team, a deep understanding of local issues, strong engagement, and active participation by volunteers in service activities.

Anticipated challenges

Many stakeholders, particularly in Chortkivska, anticipated reduced or insufficient funding for humanitarian activities, which would stem from both - the scale-down of humanitarian initiatives in the West and the central government retaining a higher share of former revenue sources of the hromadas. Insufficient funding was perceived as a significant threat to meeting the needs of local populations in the near future, especially when paired with a potential rise in the number of people in need, notably the IDPs. Alongside funding difficulties, concerns were also raised about shortages of personnel, including within local institutions, partly due to the displacement of staff.

The outlook in Volodymyrska seemed more optimistic. Some informants did not expect a worsening of the humanitarian situation or a significant increase in IDP arrivals. However, some noted that insufficient service provision, particularly the insufficient accommodation for IDPs, might deter displaced persons from choosing Volodymyrska as a destination, even if internal displacement dynamics across Ukraine intensify. This suggests that the relatively positive outlook may not stem from expectations of improved conditions but rather from

the existing limitations and challenges within the area.

Informants warned that inadequate availability of services and humanitarian aid, coupled with high demand, could push IDPs to return to their areas of origin, even if conditions there remain unsafe. Since February 2022, 1.6 million people returned to areas within 30km from the frontline. The most common reasons for IDP returns were personal, namely wishing to reunite with family (40%). Nonetheless, recent (January-June 2024) returnees to the 30km zone more frequently cited reasons such as accommodation challenges in the location of displacement (31%) and economic challenges in areas of displacement (30%), although family reunification remained the primary driver (46%)³⁰.

Anticipated funding shortages, staffing constraints, and a further influx of IDPs have also been highlighted in other studies as the most likely and impactful challenges ahead³¹.

Conclusion

The landscape of humanitarian assistance and funding is shifting rapidly. In addition to the planned scaling down of aid in Western Ukraine, unforeseen changes may arise, emphasising the need for localised long-term planning. Nevertheless, ensuring a responsible and well-coordinated transition away from humanitarian assistance is essential to mitigate the impact on vulnerable populations.

Although communities' needs in Western Ukraine are less severe, some outstanding needs in protection, shelter and CCCM remain and could be rapidly exacerbated in case of a worsening security situation. Additionally, it is essential to prioritise the empowerment of affected population groups, including IDPs and single caregivers. Their inclusion in local society and the workforce is not only vital for their well-being and self-reliance but also for fostering community resilience.

Central and local authorities conduct a wide array of activities aiming to address various population needs related to protection, shelter, and CCCM. However, limitations in the scope of services provided risk leaving some individuals without adequate support. The current gaps in funding and staffing, limiting capacity of local service providers, highlight the need for sustainable support mechanisms that can operate beyond humanitarian structures. Strengthening collaboration between stakeholders, while enhancing transparency and local engagement, is critical to ensure effective provision of services.

Annex

Figure 7: Sources of hromadas' revenues in 2024 and income dynamics between 2021-2024, by revenue type²⁸.

	Chortkivska			Volodymyrska		
	Income (UAH) in 2024	Share of income (2024)	Income Dynamics (2021-2024)	Income (UAH) in 2024	Share of income (2024)	Income Dynamics (2021-2024)
Tax income	217 631 291	57%	19%	312 169 159	57%	7%
Non-tax income	24 778 595	7%	130%	38 963 305	7%	235%
Income from capital transactions	6 370 036	2%	-31%	11 624 584	2%	-20%
Official transfers	130 466 593	34%	22%	188 720 760	34%	40%
Trust funds	0	0%	0%	181 571	0,03%	-34%
Overall	379 246 516	100%	22%	551 659 379	100%	22%

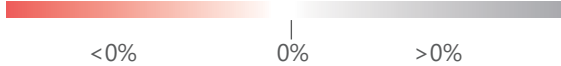
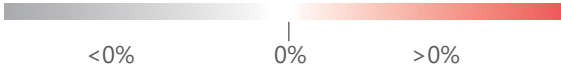


Figure 8: Distribution of hromadas' expenses as of 2024 and expense dynamics between 2021-2024, by sector²⁸.

Expenses by type	Chortkivska			Volodymyrska		
	Expenses (UAH) in 2024	Share of expenses (2024)	Expenses dynamics 2021-2024	Expenses (UAH) in 2024	Share of expenses (2024)	Expenses dynamics 2021-2024
State functions	45 176 284	13%	50%	247 227 339	46%	295%
Public order, security and judiciary	2 940 742	1%	3137%	38 080 209	0,2%	2164%
Economic activity	9 955 115	3%	-44%	58 397 308	12%	3%
Protection of the environment	199 756	0,1%	-62%	269 888	0,01%	-1%
Utilities	35 702 122	10%	0%	64 534 009	7%	37%
Healthcare	11 675 180	3%	-21%	21 837 308	5%	-15%
Culture and sports	19 722 880	5%	54%	46 845 343	3%	40%
Education	212 127 231	59%	21%	281 549 399	23%	37%
Social protection and social security	22 107 038	6%	101%	68 081 563	4%	323%
Overall	359 606 350	100%	21%	826 822 364	100%	84%
Net balance	19 640 166			-275 162 985		



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ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).