

Ukraine | Local Responder Area Profile: Services for Vulnerable Groups

Situation Overview

October - November 2024

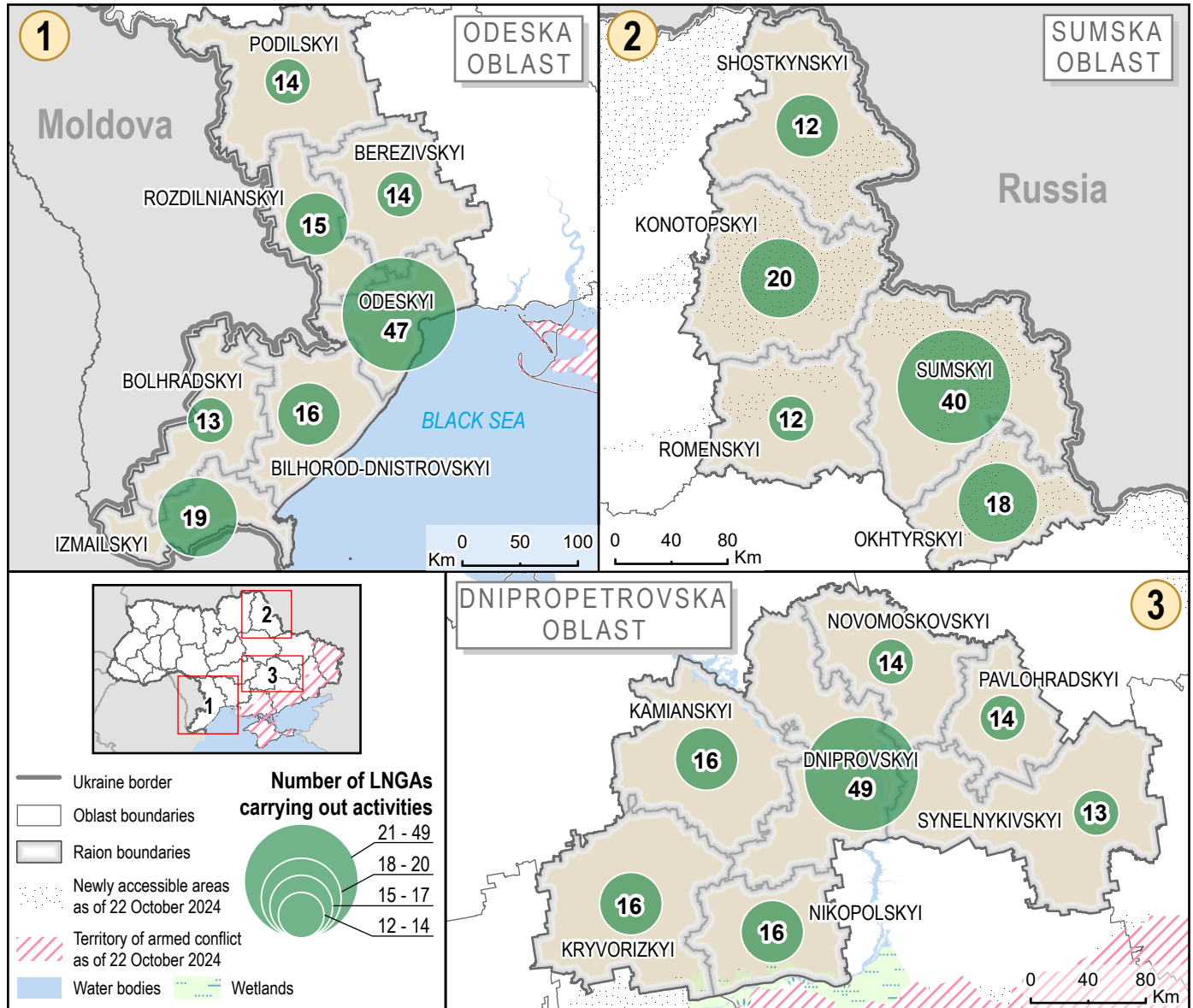
INTRODUCTION

The Local Responder Area Profile is designed to gather actionable, area-specific information about the needs, capacities, working methods, and preferences for international support of local non-governmental actors (LNGAs)¹. The goal is to provide international organizations (IOs) with data that helps avoid duplication, enables direct support to LNGAs, and strengthens the alignment of international efforts with local systems on local terms. This assessment focuses on LNGAs working to assist vulnerable groups in the **Odeskyi, Sumskyi, and Dniprovskyi raions**. It aims to provide international humanitarian actors, such as the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG), with valuable insights that will enhance their collaboration with local actors. The research explores the roles of local NGOs and authorities in these areas, identifying their barriers, capacities, and needs, particularly in relation to cooperation with international organizations. The research includes both quantitative data and qualitative data, which were obtained from different LNGAs.

All findings are indicative only. See p. 2 for full methodology.

RAION-LEVEL ACTIVITIES COVERAGE OF LNGAs

Areas where LNGAs working to assist vulnerable groups are reportedly conducting activities, by number of LNGAs reporting:



KEY FINDINGS

- Shelter Shortages:** In Sumskyi raion local capacity of shelter for vulnerable groups is insufficient, with many shelters unable to accommodate people, exacerbating the crisis.
- Funding Challenges:** LNGAs struggle to secure funding, hindering operations and staff retention. Staffing shortages are worsened by conscription, and transportation issues limit the ability to meet humanitarian needs.
- Coordination Gaps:** Bureaucratic hurdles and rigid requirements from IOs create barriers to effective collaboration between LNGAs.

Reported Priority Needs:

- Shelter Assistance;
- Food Security / Basic Needs;
- Mental Health Services.

¹ Throughout this factsheet, "LNGA" refers to Ukrainian non-governmental actors including national NGOs, registered civil society organisations (CSOs), and volunteer groups that met inclusion criteria (see p. 5).

² Displayed by number of LNGAs reporting participation in each activity. LNGA respondents could select more than one option.

METHODOLOGY

The Local Responder Area Profile: Services for Vulnerable Groups (LRAP: SVG) assessment was conducted using data collected from October 7th to November 12th, 2024. The study gathered information from local non-governmental actors (LNGAs) and local authorities currently providing assistance to vulnerable groups (VGs) in Odeskyi, Sumskyi, and Dniprovskyi raions. REACH employed a mixed-methods approach, starting with a quantitative phone survey targeting as many LNGAs as could be identified in these regions. This was followed by in-depth qualitative key informant interviews (KIIs) with a smaller subset of the initially identified LNGAs.

Quantitative data collection took place from October 7th to 22nd, during which REACH field teams reached out to all identifiable LNGAs operating in Odeskyi, Sumskyi, and Dniprovskyi raions with activities related to vulnerable groups. A total of 129 Key Informants (KIs), representing 129 LNGAs, completed the quantitative survey. The survey focused on LNGAs’ activities related to VG needs, coverage, operational challenges, barriers, risks for vulnerable groups, coordination efforts, and local capacity perceptions by sector.

The rapid analysis of the quantitative data helped identify key informants for the qualitative phase, concentrating on LNGAs reporting insufficient resources or activities in sectors identified as undercapacitated. The qualitative KIIs were conducted from October 29th to November 13th with representatives from 15 LNGAs and 9 local authorities. These interviews explored local actors’ perceptions of the benefits and challenges of cooperation with international organizations, sectoral capacity gaps, and risks and barriers for the future.

Please, see LRAP: Services for Vulnerable Groups Terms of Reference for more details on methodology.





LIMITATIONS





REACH cannot guarantee that all relevant LNGAs operating in Odeskyi, Sumskyi, and Dniprovskyi raions were identified by the field team. While efforts were made to contact all LNGAs that met the inclusion criteria, a small number did not respond or chose not to participate in the survey. As a result, some VGs-related LNGAs in these areas may not be represented in this study. Additionally, since the total number of VGs-related LNGAs in Odeskyi, Sumskyi, and Dniprovskyi raions is not definitively known, the results cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of this group. Therefore, all findings should be considered indicative only.

Moreover, the area-based approach used in this assessment is not generalizable to other regions, and the findings may not apply to LNGAs working with vulnerable groups elsewhere. Finally, certain qualitative questions, particularly those addressing specific operational needs, were asked on a case-by-case basis based on individual LNGAs’ quantitative responses. These questions highlight the unique experiences of specific LNGAs within the operating environment, meaning these findings are highly individual and should not be generalised.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Economic Vulnerability		
	Low income households	76
	Unemployed individuals	74
	People living in poverty	70
	Homeless individuals	28
	Individuals dependent on informal work	22
	People with limited access to primary education	16
	Households with significant debt	11
LNGAs that target people with economic vulnerability		105

Mental Vulnerability		
	People in need of psychosocial support	50
	Survivors of trauma	28
	Individuals with mental health conditions	49
	People struggling with substance abuse	21
LNGAs that target people with mental vulnerability		69

Physical Vulnerability		
	People with disabilities	117
	Age-related vulnerabilities	85
	People with chronic illnesses	46
	People that live with HIV/AIDS/etc	31
LNGAs that target people with physical vulnerability		122

Social Vulnerability		
	Internally displaced people	109
	Women	81
	Veterans	49
	People experiencing gender-based violence	45
	Individuals experiencing discrimination	43
	People with limited access to social services	42
	Ethnic minorities	28
	LGBTQI+ individuals	21
	People who have experienced trafficking	11
LNGAs that target people with social vulnerability		123

Organisations’ Profile



ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW


Social Vulnerability

	Non-food item distribution	93
	Food Security Programs	85
	Mental Health Support Services	82
	Legal Aid, Protection Assistance	56
	Community Integration/Reintegration Programs	37
	Economic Empowerment Programs	36
	Health Education Programs	29
	Support Services for GBV Survivors	28
	Awareness Raising Programs	25
	Transportation Services	22
	Healthcare Services	22
	Financial Assistance Programs	20
	Emergency Shelter Services	19
	Nutrition Programs	18
	Trainings for providers of services for VG	17
	Education Programs	15

Mental Vulnerability

	Mental Health Support Services	52
	Non-food item distribution	37
	Food Security Programs	33
	Legal Aid, Protection Assistance	23
	Community Integration/Reintegration Programs	15
	Economic Empowerment Programss	15

Physical Vulnerability

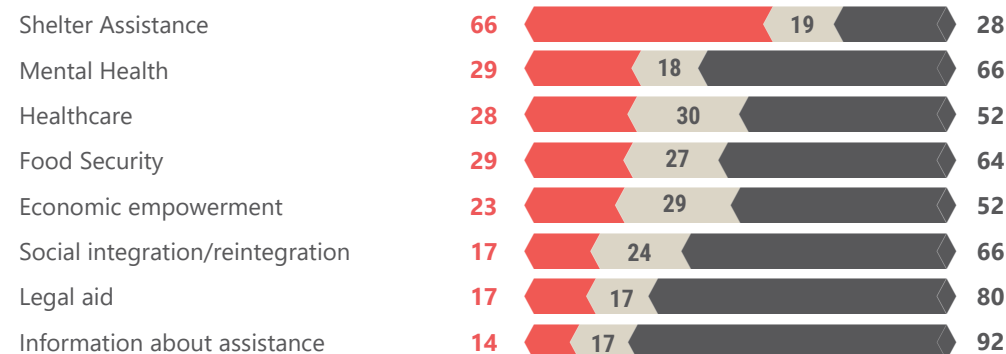
	Non-food item distribution	88
	Food Security Programs	83
	Mental Health Support Services	67
	Legal Aid, Protection Assistance	48
	Community Integration/Reintegration Programs	35
	Provision of Assistive Devices	29
	Transportation Services	24
	Economic Empowerment Programs	23
	Healthcare Services	22
	Awareness Raising Programs	21
	Health Education Programs	21
	Financial Assistance Programs	19
	Outreach Programs	17
	Emergency Shelter Services	16

Economic Vulnerability

	Non-food item distribution	75
	Food Security Programs	71
	Mental Health Support Services	53
	Economic Empowerment Programs	44
	Legal Aid, Protection Assistance	38
	Community Integration/Reintegration Programs	24
	Health Education Programs	20
	Healthcare Services	17
	Financial Assistance Programs	17
	Transportation Services	15

SECTORAL RESPONSE CAPACITY

Perception of LNGAs on how local capacity can address sectoral needs, by number of LNGAs reporting:



● Generally negative (somewhat, fairly, very poorly including)

● Neither well nor poorly

● Generally positive (somewhat, fairly, very well including)

Shelter Response Capacity








The sector with the highest number of respondents reporting challenges related to capacity was shelter, with only 28 LNGA representatives rating local shelter capacity as generally positive, while 66 assessed it as generally negative. The situation is particularly concerning in Sumy raion, where the capacity to meet shelter needs is reported to be especially inadequate (29 reporting generally negative, 2 - neutral, and 0 reporting generally positive). As one key informant (KI) noted:

'There is a big limitation of this resource (shelter), because the intensity of evacuation is increasing. All available shelters are filling up very quickly, in addition, not all of them can accept people with animals, people with disabilities, men for some reason. Additionally, not all of them are in a satisfactory condition for people to agree to live there.' - CSO representative from Sumy.

This highlights the urgent need for increased support and resources to address housing and shelter issues in the region.

LOCAL PERCEPTION OF PRIORITY NEEDS

Top 3 priority needs in their area of coverage, by number of LNGAs reporting:

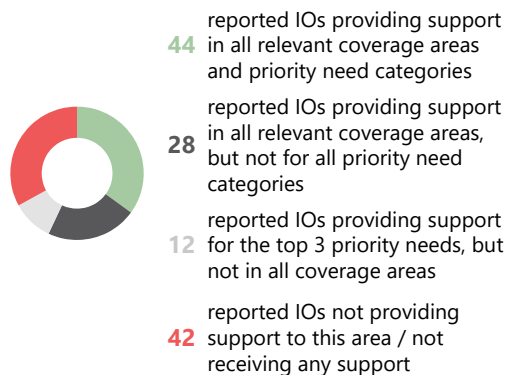
	Shelter Assistance	74
	Food Security/Basic Needs	65
	Mental Health Services	61
	Economic Empowerment	45
	Healthcare	40
	Legal Aid	40
	Community Integration	34

Three KIs have mentioned that development strategies are being prioritised now, however, humanitarian needs are still very high. As one CSO representative from Sumy noted:

'Humanitarian response programs, especially emergency response, is being reduced now. And now there are trends that most programs are moving from emergency to recovery, but the number of people who need emergency assistance is increasing.'

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Provision of support by IOs, by number of LNGAs:



Among LNGAs confirming not receiving any support from IOs,

36 of 42

reported not being able to respond to all priority needs with their own resources.



Among LNGAs confirming receiving support from IOs,

71 of 84

reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with the assistance provided.

Successful cooperation with international organisations is heavily influenced by effective and transparent communication, which was raised in 10 KIs. Well-structured cooperation programs (2), flexibility from IOs, ability of LNGAs to make independent decisions (2), and contextual knowledge of IOs (2) were also identified as key factors.

'Successful cooperation depends on close interaction, constant communication, meetings and coordination meetings.' - local authority from Dnipro.

OPERATIONAL RESOURCE GAPS

Among assessed LNGAs,

44 of 129

reported that they anticipate **not having** sufficient resources to continue meeting the needs of their target population for the next 6 months



Among LNGAs confirming insufficient resources,

22 of 44

reported that these gaps **would** cause them to **downscale** their **activities** within the next 6 months



Perception of local gaps anticipated in the next 6 months, by number of LNGAs (n=44):

	Funding	38
	Material supplies for beneficiaries	23
	Human resources	16
	Fuel	15
	Vehicles for transportation	15
	Premises	11
	Office utilities	9
	Other equipment	6
	Expertise in specific topic	6

Amount of funding reportedly needed to meet resource gaps, by number of LNGAs reporting (n=44):

Less than 5,000 USD	3
5,001-10,000 USD	10
10,001-35,000 USD	14
35,001-60,000 USD	8
60,001-100,000 USD	6
More than 100,000 USD	4

Among those LNGAs that reported lack of resources to continue meeting the needs of the population over the next 6 months (n=44), funding needs remain a critical issue for LNGAs (n=38). Many face significant challenges in paying salaries to experts (7 KIs), which impacts their ability to maintain skilled staff.

Staffing is a challenge for LNGAs as some volunteers or workers have joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces or are at risk of conscription (2 KIs), further depleting available human resources. According to Sumy CSO:

'...several people from our team were conscripted and died, and now there is a staff shortage. This a challenge, because if we talk about evacuation missions, they are performed mainly by men, not women.'

OPERATIONAL NEEDS ZOOM-IN

Reasons for human resource gaps reported by LNGAs (n=16):

	Unable to afford salaries	14
	Staff with required skills are not living in the area	2
	Staff with required skills live in the area but work for other organisations	2

Types of required material supplies, by number of LNGAs that reported that as an operational gap (n=23):

	Food	15
	Hygiene Supplies	15
	Other non-food items	12
	Assistive devices for people with disabilities	6
	Medicines	5
	Toys or education materials for children	5
	Fuel	4
	Shelter repair supplies	4

In-kind Distribution Gaps:

2 KIs mentioned a need for material provision of good quality (both Non-Food item (NFI) and grocery sets). Another KI reported a need for chemicals and building materials for beneficiaries.

Transportation and Fuel Gaps:

Transportation needs are a significant challenge for some local non-governmental actors, with 3 KIs facing a lack of budget to afford necessary transportation costs. One KI mentioned a need for accessible transport for people with disabilities and low-mobility population groups. The lack of fuel for evacuation and the limited availability of international organisations able to assist with fuel needs have been identified as major challenges by 2 KIs.

LOCAL COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION



Among assessed LGAs,

106 of 129

reported that they had some kind of local mechanism **for coordinating humanitarian response**



Among assessed LGAs,

86 of 129

reported that they were aware of OCHA's General Coordination Meetings (GCM), yet only 36 reported it as their main coordination modality

Main coordination mechanism among LGAs reporting any coordination efforts, by number of LGAs (n=106):

Local in-person meetings	74
Coordination meetings with Humanitarian Clusters	68
Groups in messaging apps (Telegram, WhatsApp)	61
Channels on social media (Facebook, Instagram)	51
Local online meetings	50
Informal verbal or phone communication	49
Local hybrid meetings	43
OCHA's GCM	36

Local coordination mechanisms are often seen as effective due to strong communication, networking, and more even resource distribution (mentioned by 8 and 7 KIs, respectively).

Regular local meetings (5 KIs) and local cluster or OCHA meetings (5 KIs) are key modalities of these mechanisms, helping to foster mutual learning and capacity building (2 KIs). Yet, 2 KIs mentioned that such meetings are too long and ineffective

However, challenges in coordination remain, including a lack of interest from LGAs (reported by 3 KIs). Additionally, 1 KI mentioned an existing competition between local actors that prevents LGAs from coordinating with each other.

Perceived Effectiveness of Inclusion of Local Actors in Humanitarian Coordination

The effectiveness of local actors in coordination mechanisms is largely driven by strong information sharing (14 KIs reporting this), which enables better collaboration among LGAs, international organisations, and government bodies (9 KIs). Additionally, 7 KIs mentioned that local authorities have to play a role in supporting these mechanisms.

'Including local organisations in coordination structures is an ideal option. Why? Because we already have an established base and organisational structure ... we can quickly find out where the problem is, who needs help.' - CSO representative from Dnipro

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Ways in which LGAs cooperate with IOs, by number of LGAs that reported cooperation (n=100):

Joint projects	88
Financial partnerships	55
Information sharing	54
Capacity building initiatives	12
Advocacy campaigns	8

Barriers in collaboration with IOs

LGAs face challenges in their cooperation with IOs, primarily due to bureaucratic obstacles (9 KIs) and the lack of standardised approaches across IOs (for reporting/data collection/etc) (4 KIs). Rigid requirements from IOs (3 KIs) make it difficult for LGAs to align with IOs' expectations, while ineffective communication and decision-making (9 KIs) further exacerbate the challenges. Additional barriers include limited local capacity to cooperate with IOs (6 KIs) and gatekeeping practices that make it harder for smaller LGAs or those without prior grant experience to access funding (3 KIs).

Ideal collaboration with IOs

Ideal cooperation with international organizations (IOs) is characterised by effective coordination (16 KIs), where responsibilities are clearly defined and shared among organisations. Clear and transparent communication (11 KIs) was reported as crucial for successful collaboration. Additionally, respondents emphasised the need for more collaborative process during implementation of joint projects (4 KIs), more long-term proposals (2 KIs), and a shift towards focusing on project implementation rather than just reporting (2 KIs), all of which would strengthen the overall partnership and improve outcomes.

Challenges LGAs face while collaborating with IOs (n=129):

Communication barriers	36
None	33
Differences in priorities	28
Have never tried collaborating	17
Coordination issues	15
Inequitable partnerships	13
Don't know	11

Gaps that exist in the support, provided by IOs, by number of LGAs (n=129):

Lack of understanding of local context	44
Overemphasis on short-term projects	39
Bureaucratic challenges	35
Insufficient funding	33
Communication barriers	25
Don't know	22
Poor coordination with local actors	21
Limited capacity-building opportunities	11
Other	2