

### Context and Methodology

Since the escalation of conflict on Thursday 24 February 2022, over 8 million people have been displaced internally across the country.<sup>1</sup> Since early April, further escalation was reported in the Eastern and Southern part of the country, causing more damages to infrastructure and disruptions in access to services in affected areas, as well as additional displacement. REACH has worked in Ukraine since 2015, primarily focusing on the East, and has collected data relevant to actors who seek to develop strategies to communicate with communities – both prior and after the escalation. This briefing note summarizes data on preferred communication channels and most reported information needs from REACH's second round of Humanitarian Situation Monitoring data collection exercise.<sup>2</sup> Data collection was conducted between April 13th and April 20th through 223 telephone interviews with NGO and local authority key informants (KIs). 44 settlements (towns or villages) were selected for data collection. Settlement selection criteria included being the highest populated settlements within 100 km of conflict lines, along train evacuation routes, or with reported presence of IDPs. Enumerators aimed to interview 5 different KIs per settlement. KI responses were aggregated at settlement level. The findings are triangulated with secondary data sources from media or information-focused actors such as the CDAC network, Internews and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, and with historical data collected on preferred communication channels and information needs prior to the escalation, through REACH's Multi Sector Needs Assessments.

#### Background & key takeaways

- Multiple resources are available for humanitarian actors who seek to better understand immediately the situation prior to the crisis. The **CDAC network** published a [Media Landscape Guide of Ukraine](#) in March 2022, based on research conducted immediately prior to the escalation.<sup>3</sup> Another key resource is **USAID-Internews'** [Media Consumption Survey](#) from March 2021.<sup>4</sup> Both reports outline the **growing preference for social media** as a primary source of information among a younger audience, while persons over 46 years old **continued to consume information primarily on television**. The Media Landscape Guide also indicates that around 60% of the population uses social media, and presents information on reliance of the various social media to receive news and information.<sup>3</sup>
- Following the onset of the crisis, several key media developments have occurred, as outlined in the **Emergency Telecommunications Cluster in two separate reports** based on rapid Key Informant Interviews in [Western parts](#) of Ukraine as well as in [Eastern conflict-affected regions](#).<sup>5 6</sup> These reports highlight the fact that volunteer and CSO networks as well as various levels of Government officials are **heavily using Telegram channels** to broadcast information about humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian situation.
- While REACH has not conducted in depth research about communication preferences in Ukraine, its various data collection exercises since the beginning of the escalation suggest a **heavy reliance on social media as a way to access information about humanitarian assistance**. Key information needs were: information about aid actors, how to register for cash assistance, and how to access assistance deliveries.<sup>7</sup>
- It is nevertheless **important to distinguish between what is being used widely and what would be preferred by a majority of the population**, especially considering the fact that heavy reliance on social media to communicate with communities might exclude persons who are not social media users, elderly people or other people who are not digitally literate. The 2021 Multi Sector Needs Assessment conducted by REACH in Eastern Ukraine showed that when asked about their preference, HHs were more likely to prefer communicating and receiving information over the phone.<sup>8</sup>

#### Channels to receive information about assistance

In the second round of data collection for Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, which focused on conflict affected areas in Eastern and Southern Oblasts, the most commonly reported channels used to receive information on humanitarian assistance across the various assessed conflict affected settlements were **Facebook** (reported to be used by affected population in **97% of assessed settlements**), **Telegram** (**93%**), and **Viber** (**79%**). In assessed settlements that receive large numbers of transiting or arriving IDPs, the findings were similar, although official government or NGO websites were also frequently cited as a key source of information in a large proportion of settlements.

#### Most frequently cited sources of information for humanitarian assistance used by the affected population in the assessed settlements, according to KIs (among all 29 assessed settlements in conflict-affected oblasts):

Facebook	97%	
Telegram	93%	
Viber	79%	
Friends and family	79%	

Nevertheless, this finding likely does not reflect a unanimous preference for social media as a way to receive information about humanitarian assistance in Ukrainian population. Indeed, it is very unlikely that people of a certain age have a high awareness of information available in such channels. Rather, it is likely more reflective of the fact that these channels are the ones that have been the most widely used by volunteer networks, government officials and other public figures to communicate about ongoing assistance efforts. As a matter of fact, other sources would suggest that when observed at the household level, and when households are specifically asked to cited the channel through which they prefer to receive information, social media is not necessarily at the forefront. This was the case in **REACH's 2021 Multi Sector Needs Assessment in Government Controlled Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk** where it was found that The majority of households preferred to receive information pertaining to humanitarian assistance through phone calls (**68%**), SMS (**41%**) or leaflets (**19%**), and ideally directly from the

humanitarian organizations. In fact, only **13%** of HHs reported a preference for social media as a way to receive information about available humanitarian assistance. While this assessment was conducted prior to the current escalation and only in the Donetsk and Luhansk areas, it does suggest that **social media is not necessarily the go-to option for everyone**, especially not elderly people, and that humanitarian actors should be sensitive to the reality of digitally illiterate persons or households when choosing communication channels.

### Primary information needs

In terms of primary information needs reported by KIs among the affected population in the second round of Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (April 2022), KIs reported that the **most common types of information needed** were information about humanitarian assistance and agencies (cited in **72%** of assessed settlements), information on how to access financial assistance or to register for assistance (**69%** of assessed settlements), information on how to access shelter or accommodation (**66%**), information on evacuation routes (**59%**) and information on how to access food and water or basic health services (**59%**). In settlements assessed in key IDP arrival or transit hubs, most frequently cited information needs were information on how to access shelter / accommodation (needed in **75%** of assessed settlements) and how to access cash assistance (**69%**) or register for assistance (**63%**). **These findings echo those identified in the pre-escalation period in the GCA of the Donbas**, where the third most frequently cited information needs with regards to humanitarian assistance among households were: (1) How to register for assistance (**41%**), (2) how to get more money / finance support (**22%**) and (3) Information about the aid agencies they are receiving assistance from (**17%**).

### Most frequently cited information needs among the affected population in the assessed settlements, according to KIs (among all 29 assessed settlements in conflict-affected oblasts):

Information about aid agencies present in the area	<b>72%</b>	
Information on how to register for assistance (cash or in kind)	<b>69%</b>	
Information on how to access accommodation	<b>66%</b>	
Information on available evacuation routes	<b>59%</b>	

### Focus on communication about assistance by the local response

As international humanitarian actors have largely had to deploy rapidly to new areas of operations and to prioritize a rapid scale up of operations, many are lagging behind in terms of establishing / identifying communication channels to raise awareness about the assistance that they provide. In many ways, local actors involved in the humanitarian response are showing the way with their use of social media to coordinate aid operations and to communicate about available assistance. **For example, Telegram channels are widely used by grassroots volunteer groups** to request donations of specific items that are in short supply at local humanitarian aid distribution hubs, as well as to advertise availability of items for people in

need. A **plethora of telegram channels associated with specific volunteer groups have emerged to coordinate assistance delivery, evacuations, and to track urgent need for more assistance** in affected communities. This offers a case study on how social media channels can be used as a pragmatic tool to increase efficiency in communication and coordination with affected populations rather than only for visibility / self promotion purposes.

**Government representations at various levels have also stepped up communication with communities through various media and channels.** Officials are heavily using Telegram channels to broadcast information about humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian situation to their constituencies. Mayors have been vocal via the Telegram channels of their City Councils or their personal social media accounts. At the Oblast level, heads of Civil-Military Administration usually also provide regular updates on Facebook or Telegram channels. **At the national level, several digital initiatives contribute to connecting assistance providers and affected populations:** The [DIIA mobile app](#) provides an interactive information platform that allows IDPs to register directly for IDP status, report housing damages, and to access cash transfers. The [Coordination Headquarters for Humanitarian and Social Affairs](#) provide information at national and oblast level, mostly through Telegram and Facebook. Another initiative from the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine ([eDopomoga](#)) connects people in need directly with potential donors, allowing people to make requests for specific needed items and connecting them with a donor willing to transfer an amount to support the purchase of these items. The office of the President, in collaboration with Ukrzaliznytsia, also has a [dashboard](#) that allows IDPs to verify current hosting capacity at hromada level. Beyond digital coordination, local and national structures have also **set up hot lines and information points to favour in person communication.** For example, IDPs are able to register and access information at Departments of social protection offices and in various ad-hoc humanitarian aid distribution centers). Government structures are also **stepping up the availability of printed information** such as the large boards present at multiple train stations across Ukraine and that provide contact information or addresses for registration / assistance points.

### End notes :

1. IOM DTM. [Internal Displacement Report. General Population Survey](#). R4. 9 May 2022.
2. REACH. [Humanitarian Situation Monitoring Round 2](#). May 2022.
3. CDAC Network. [Ukraine Media Landscape Guide](#). March 2022.
4. USAID-Internews. [Ukraine Media Consumption Survey](#). March 2022.
5. Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC). [Assessment of communication needs of the affected population \(Western Ukraine\)](#), 5 March 2022
6. ETC. [Assessment of communication needs of the affected population \(Eastern Ukraine\)](#), 13 March 2022
7. REACH. Rapid Needs Assessment in IDP-influx and on the situation in conflict affected settlements. Factsheets of findings from the IDP assessment in [Western, Central, Northern, Southern & Eastern](#) Oblasts. Findings on information needs and communication preferences in conflict-affected settlements of the various regions can be obtained on demand.
8. REACH. [Multi Sectoral Needs Assessments \(MSNA\)](#) in GCA of Donetsk and Luhansk. July 2021.