

UKRAINE: HUMANITARIAN SITUATION MONITORING

Overview of protection concerns and population vulnerabilities in frontline areas

March 2024 | Ukraine

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

In February 2024, the war in Ukraine entered its third year and continued to negatively impact people's daily lives. Over the 2023-2024 winter, intensified attacks further exposed people to security risks and affected access to essential services, especially in areas closer to the front line.¹

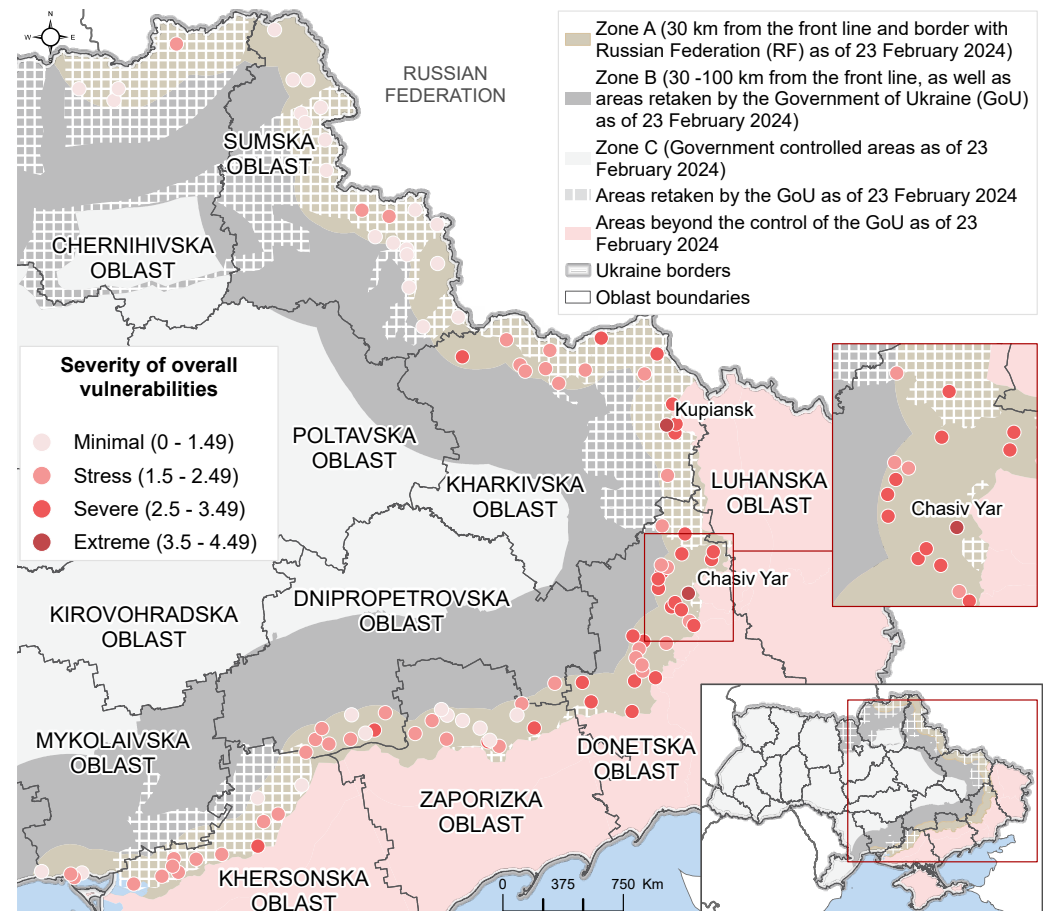
Given the dynamic nature of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, ongoing monitoring is essential to enable a comprehensive assessment of the needs and their severity among the affected populations, and to ensure that humanitarian response plans remain aligned with the situation on the ground. In line with the primary objective of REACH's Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) of providing up to date multisectoral data on the evolution of community-level humanitarian needs to enable monitoring of change over time, **this brief provides an overview of the humanitarian situation and overall vulnerabilities, and zooms into the protection-related indicators.**

Given the sample size and methodology used, the **findings should be understood as indicative** and offering an approximate understanding of the humanitarian situation in the assessed settlements.

KEY MESSAGES

- Protection remained the main driver of overall settlement-level vulnerabilities, primarily in the areas closer to the front line, which were continuously and directly affected by hostilities. **The share of settlements with heightened protection vulnerabilities increased in March 2024 compared to December 2023, primarily in relation to intensified winter attacks.**
- Chasiv Yar and Kupiansk appear to have the highest level of multisectoral vulnerabilities among all the assessed settlements**, necessitating closer attention to these settlements by aid actors.
- Older people and people with disabilities were highlighted as disproportionately affected by the situation and less able to meet their everyday needs.** The challenges are compounded as these groups compose the majority of the remaining population in the frontline settlements and access constraints limit aid actors' ability to reach them.

Map 1: Settlements in Zone A by the severity of multisectoral vulnerabilities based on the HSM Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI)



OVERALL HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The humanitarian situation and the level of multisectoral vulnerabilities (identified via HSM Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI)²) remained challenging but relatively stable in the assessed settlements in Zone A (areas closer to the front line and the border with the Russian Federation (RF)). Only a very minimal change was observed in the number of settlements with severe and extreme level of vulnerabilities from November/December 2023 (Round 14) to March 2024 (Round 15). **A relative worsening of the situation was particularly observed in protection and education, with an increased share of settlements found to have Extreme and Extreme+ levels of sectoral vulnerabilities.**

The intensified attacks over the winter months, causing further damage to civilian facilities and housing and further affecting access to essential services, seem to be the primary drivers of increased sectoral vulnerabilities.

Figure 1: % of assessed settlements by the level of multisectoral vulnerability (SVI) and by zone³



The only settlements with a Severe level of vulnerability in more than one sector in Zone B were Chuhuiv, Izium, and Balakliia (Kharkivska Oblast), Andriivka (Donetska), and Blahodatne (Chornomorska Hromada, Mykolaivska Oblast).

The primary drivers of heightened vulnerabilities in Zone A appeared to be protection, education, and WASH.



Considering the concentration of the assessed settlements with multisectoral heightened vulnerabilities in Zone A and the worsening of the situation in protection, **the current brief will primarily focus on this Zone (areas within 30km distance from the front line and the RF border) and protection-related indicators.**

Figure 2: % of settlements in Zone A found to have an SVI score of Severe, Extreme or Extreme+, per sector (n=107)



Table 1: % of settlements by zone by the level of vulnerabilities (SVI score) and by single sector (Zone A: n=107; Zone B: n=206)


		None/minimal	Stress	Severe	Extreme	Extreme +
Protection	Zone A	11%	8%	47%	30%	4%
	Zone B	23%	11%	60%	5%	0%
Education	Zone A	36%	21%	23%	20%	0%
	Zone B	64%	18%	7%	9%	1%
WASH	Zone A	40%	21%	24%	15%	0%
	Zone B	76%	17%	7%	0%	0%
SNFI	Zone A	25%	54%	15%	6%	0%
	Zone B	69%	30%	1%	0%	0%
FSL	Zone A	37%	44%	14%	5%	0%
	Zone B	70%	29%	1%	0%	0%
Health	Zone A	56%	29%	8%	7%	0%
	Zone B	76%	18%	5%	0%	0%
Multisectoral SVI	Zone A	31%	41%	26%	2%	0%
	Zone B	61%	37%	2%	0%	0%

The proportions of settlements with heightened education vulnerabilities increased in March 2024 (Round 15), likely related to intensified attacks on civilian infrastructures in frontline areas. The Education SVI is composed of indicators on impact on the (un)availability of education facilities, and findings show that in **65% (n=69/107)** of assessed settlements in Zone A, at least some educational facilities were not suitable for educational purposes, primarily due to damage or destruction.⁴

PROTECTION

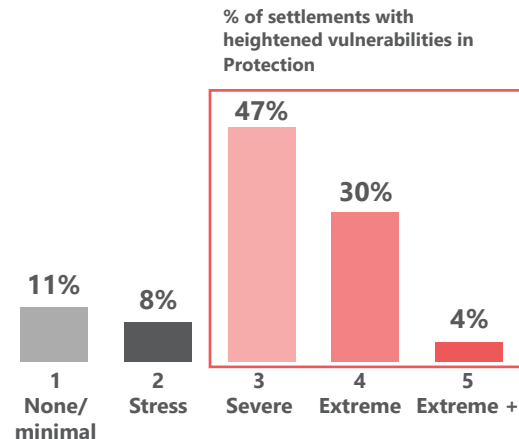
Protection concerns continued to shape the humanitarian situation across Ukraine, primarily affecting people's lives in the areas closer to the front line. Intensified attacks across Ukraine over the winter of 2023 - 2024 resulted in damage of civilian housing and infrastructure, disruptions of vital utility services (i.e., electricity and heating), and further affected access to essential services, including health and education.⁵

The **majority of assessed settlements in Zone A displayed heightened Protection sectoral vulnerability scores** (Severe, Extreme, and Extreme+) in March 2024. The score is primarily based on reported safety and security concerns and movement restrictions in the assessed settlements.

 The settlements with **Extreme+ level of vulnerability in Protection** were Kurylivka, Vilkhuvatka (Kharkivska Oblast), Chasiv Yar, and Krasnohorivka (Donetska).

Of these, **Chasiv Yar also displayed an extreme level of multisectoral vulnerabilities**. While most of the population has left the settlement⁶, those who remained are among the more vulnerable population groups, primarily older people (according to KIs, most of the people in the settlement at the time of data collection were either between 51-65 years old or 65+ y.o.).

Figure 3: % of assessed settlements by the level of vulnerability in Protection (n= 107)



The main drivers of heightened Protection vulnerabilities related to the safety and security concerns.

KIs most frequently reported the **threat of missile attacks (67% (n=72/107))** of assessed settlements in Zone A), **exposure to armed violence and shelling (46% (n=49/107))**, **presence of landmines/UXOs (28% (n=30/107))**, **damaged/destroyed property (23% (n=25/107))**, **lack of/inadequate conditions of bomb shelters (21% (n=22/107))**, **looting of private property (21% (n=22/107))**, and **attacks on civilian infrastructure (schools, hospitals) (23% (n=21/107))** as safety and security concerns for people in the assessed settlements.



In addition to the damage or destruction of property and looting of private property, the other housing, land, and property related risks were housing and/or land use for military purposes (reported by KIs in **18% (n=19/107)** of assessed settlements), and unlawful occupation of property by others (**16%, n=17/107**).

Less commonly, but in some areas, KIs also identified concerns related to social tensions (reported by KIs in **7% (n=7/107)** of assessed settlements), trauma or psychosocial distress (**7%, n=7/107**), and abduction or forced disappearance (**5%, n=5/107**).



Social tensions were prevalently reported by KIs from Sumska Oblast settlements, including Sumy, Velyka Pysarivka, Boromlia, Krasnopillia, and Myropillia. The two other settlements in Zone A where social tensions were identified as protection concerns were Chasiv Yar and Kostiantynivka in Donetska Oblast.*

Furthermore, KIs in Mala Tokmachka also identified discrimination of certain population groups as a protection concern.

The low level of reporting of these concerns may be related to underreporting due to other safety and security concerns being perceived as more prevalent, as well as due to KIs' overall low awareness of such issues or their subjective perception of their importance.

* While the HSM questionnaire does not capture further information on the nature of the social tensions, as part of Round 15, a separate semi-structured assessment⁷ was conducted on the dynamics of social relations in a number of settlements (primarily areas regained by the Government of Ukraine) where such tensions were reported in the previous rounds.

✗ Movement restrictions

In March 2024, movement restrictions⁸ continued to pose an obstacle to people's movement into and out of the assessed settlements, with KIs in over two thirds of the assessed settlements in Zone A (**71%, n=76/197**) reporting at least some restrictions. The highest degree of restrictions was reported by KIs in **Chasiv Yar, Krasnohorivka (Donetska Oblast), Vilkhuvatka, and Kurylivka (Kharkivska)** **with the movement into/out of the settlement reportedly being not possible**. Restricted access to frontline settlements also affects aid actors' ability to reach to remaining populations,⁹ primarily the most vulnerable groups who constitute the majority of the remaining population in these frontline areas (see 'Vulnerable population groups' on p.4).



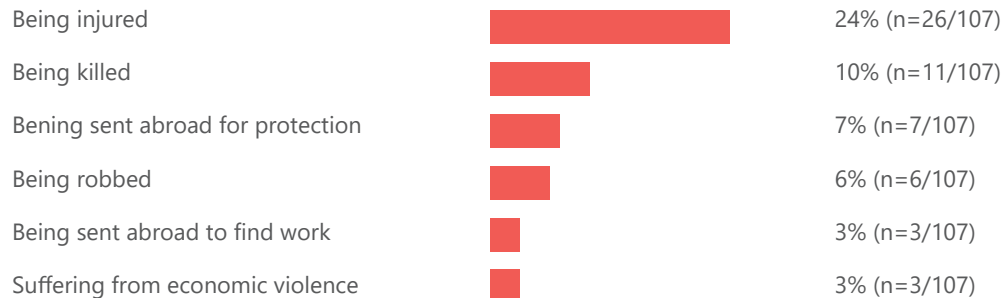
PROTECTION

Safety and security concerns for women and girls



While in a third of the assessed settlements in Zone A KIs did not identify any specific safety and security concern for women and girls, in the remaining settlements the concerns were mostly surrounding conflict-related risks.

Figure 4: % of settlements in Zone A by most commonly reported safety and security concerns for women and girls (n=107)

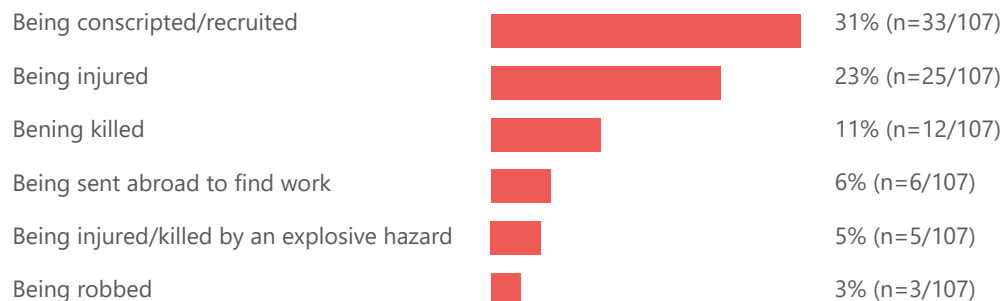


Safety and security concerns for men and boys



The proportion of settlements where KIs indicated at least one safety and security concern for men and boys was higher compared to those where concerns for women were identified. Only in **22% (n=24/107)** of settlements did KIs not indicate any specific protection concerns for men and boys.

Figure 5: % of settlements in Zone A by most commonly reported safety and security concerns for men and boys (n=107)



Vulnerable population groups

Older people, people with disabilities, and people with chronic illnesses were most commonly reported to be less able to meet their everyday needs, compared to other population groups.



Older people

51-65
65+

These groups compose large segments of the remaining population in the assessed settlements in Zone A. **In the majority of settlements, KIs reported that most people were either between 51 and 65 years old, or over 65.**

35%

In all assessed settlements KIs reported the presence of people with disabilities, with a third of the settlements (35%, n=37/107) reportedly having many people with disabilities.



People with disabilities



People with chronic illnesses

The pre-existing vulnerabilities of both groups are compounded by their exposure to hostilities, leaving them more vulnerable and less able to meet their everyday needs. The situation is likely further exacerbated by the fact that most people in the assessed frontline settlements reportedly left since the start of the war, leaving the vulnerable people with less social support. This can also further deepen their susceptibility to “psychological distress, triggered by feelings of heightened loneliness and reduced social interaction”.¹⁰

i Preliminary insights from HSM Semi-structured assessment on the dynamics of social relations

The preliminary findings from the semi-structured assessment conducted through focus group discussions in areas regained by Ukraine also showed that **older people were one of the population groups facing disproportionate barriers to accessing basic services and goods compared to other people in their hromadas/settlements.** In addition, the preliminary findings of this assessment underscored the vulnerabilities of children, including limited socialisation opportunities, challenges in learning modalities, and conflict-inflicted psychological distress. It also emphasized the vulnerabilities faced by unemployed or low-income individuals. In some cases, participants also highlighted vulnerabilities among men connected to fears of conscription. The comprehensive findings will be published in a separate briefing note on [REACH Resource Centre](#).



ENDNOTES

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¹ OCHA, [Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan 2024](#), January 2024.

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² The **HSM Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI) framework** is tailored to ascertain the severity of vulnerability at the settlement level through composite intersectoral and sectoral (Food Security and Livelihoods, Protection, Healthcare, Shelter and Non-Food Items, WASH, and Education) scores.

³ Please note that due to the rounding up of the figures, percentages on this factsheet may not amount exactly to 100%. This applies to all graphs and tables in this output.

⁴ Among the 72 settlements with reported damage to civilian infrastructure, schools and educational facilities (including scientific institutions) were among the three most commonly highlighted types of infrastructure reportedly damaged, together with industrial facilities and government buildings. **It is important to highlight that HSM does not capture information about children's enrolment in or attendance of the educational facilities, and consecutively, the Education SVI does not account for this information or the presence of school-aged children in the settlement either.**

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⁵ OCHA, [Ukraine Situation Report](#), accessed on 18 April 2024.

⁶ The Kyiv Independent, [Governor: 790 people still live in Chasiv Yar](#), 20 March 2024.

⁷ The assessment explored the following questions:

- What are the dynamics of social relations in the areas of interest?
- What are the manifestations of the social tensions within the community, if any?
- What community mechanisms are currently employed by the population to cope with social tensions in the area, if any?
- How can social tensions be mitigated or addressed by aid actors?

More information on the assessment can be found in the [HSM Round 15 Terms of Reference](#).

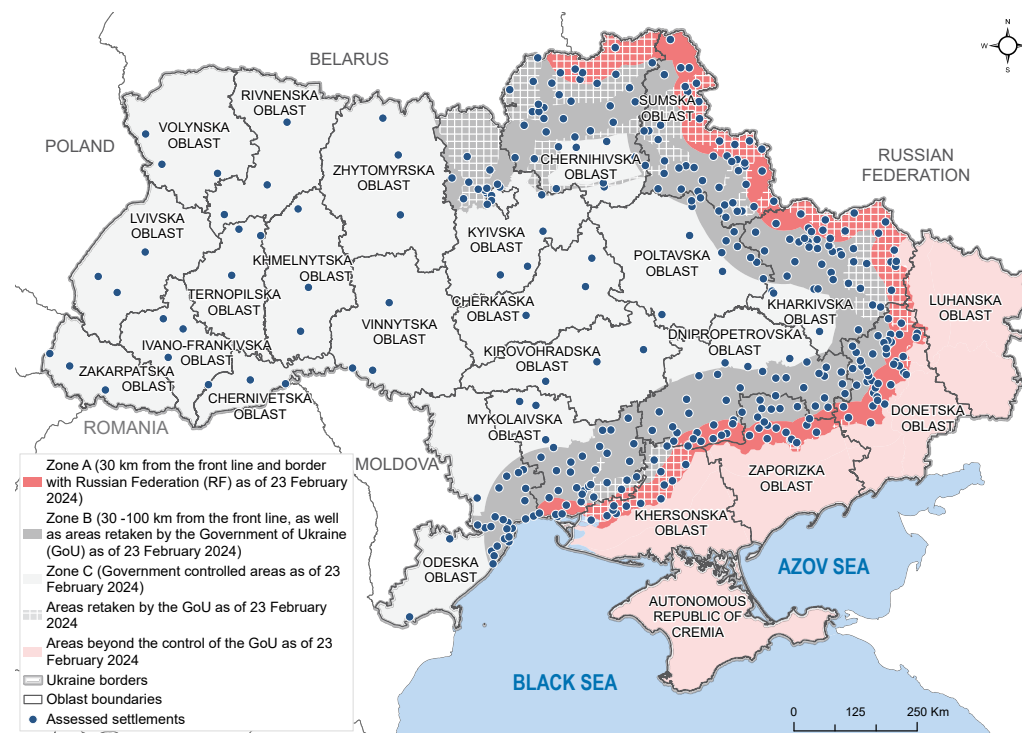
⁸ Movement restrictions entail restrictions into or out of the settlement imposed by local authorities (e.g. check points, block posts), armed actors or other reasons (e.g. fear of safety when travelling, fear of mobilisation, fear of discrimination based on displacement status or other demographic characteristics).

⁹ ACAPS, [Ukraine: Quarterly humanitarian access update](#), 26 April 2024.

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¹⁰ Danish Refugee Council (DRC), [Protection Monitoring Snapshot - Ukraine](#), March 2024.

ASSESSMENT COVERAGE



More comprehensive findings across all assessed sectors can be found in REACH Ukraine HSM [Dashboard for Government-controlled areas in Ukraine](#). It displays key findings and trends, which can be filtered by time periods, areas, and levels of needs.

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).



HSM METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Data collection in Government-controlled areas was conducted on **04-17 March 2024**, through phone interviews with **community key informants (CKIs)**: representatives from local government, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and specific population groups (older persons, people with disabilities, children, women, internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, and others). A total of **370 settlements** (towns and villages) were assessed through a total of **1,413 CKI Interviews**.

For a more accurate analysis, the assessed settlements were grouped into three geographic zones within the GCAs:

- **Zone A:** Areas within 30 km range from the front line at the time of sampling, as monitored by LiveUA, and the state border with the Russian Federation.
- **Zone B:** Areas within 30-100km range from the frontline at the time of sampling, as monitored by LiveUA, Areas retaken by the GoU, and raions intersecting with these areas by 50% of the raion territory.
- **Zone C:** Remaining GCAs.

'Administrative centre' approach was applied in all zones:

- **All administrative centres** (including hromada, raion, and oblast centres) were sampled in **Zones A and B**.
- Only in the case of Chernihivska Oblast, where no settlements were included that were categorised as administrative centres within Zone A, with settlements being selected purposively among non-administrative-centre settlements.
- In comparison to the previous Rounds (Round 8 - 10), 26 settlements with a significance similar to administrative centres were added to the sample of Zones A and B.
- To avoid over-representation of settlements from specific oblasts in the overall sample of Zone B, rural settlements (administrative centres) were purposively sampled in these oblasts (Dnipropetrovska, Odeska).
- In **Zone C**, as it covers a wider area and a larger number of settlements, only **three administrative centres were purposively sampled in each oblast**.
- Settlements with a pre-war population size of less than 1,000 people were excluded from the sample.

To account for a possible higher variation in needs in units with a larger population, the number of KIs per settlement differed for the following **3 categories**:

- **3 KIs** in every selected settlement with a population size of 1,000-9,999*,
- **5 KIs** in every settlement with a population size of 10,000 – 99,999*,
- **7 KIs** in every selected settlement with a population size of over 100,000*.

* Population size prior to the start of the war in February 2022.

All KI responses from the same settlement were aggregated to have one data point for each variable per settlement. The **Data Aggregation Plan** used the **average approach** to aggregate the settlement responses by using a severity scale in cases of **single-choice** questions. In case of **multiple-choice** questions, the rule was to select all responses that have been reported by at least 1 out of 3 respondents, 2 out of 5 respondents, and 3 out of 7 respondents in the settlements per the relevant categories, as presented above.

The statistics presented in this brief **cannot be extrapolated to represent a proportion (%) of the population, and thus should be interpreted as indicative** rather than representative. Given the small and unrepresentative sample, these results only provide an indicative understanding of the situation in the assessed areas.

SETTLEMENT VULNERABILITY INDEX (SVI) FRAMEWORK

REACH Ukraine developed this framework based on HSM indicators to determine the severity of vulnerability at the settlement level. The data utilised in the SVI's score calculation is reported by KIs referring to the situation in the whole settlement, thus does not capture specific household inputs and potential nuances within individual household situations. Accounting for the different approaches, indicators used, and objectives, the current framework should not be understood as comparable with other similar frameworks, including by REACH.

The SVI framework requires the calculation of individual composite scores for each sector, followed by a calculation of an inter-sectoral composite score as the final Settlement Vulnerability Index. **The framework may undergo further adjustments following consultations with humanitarian partners.** The final version will be made available on the REACH Resource Centre for reference and use.

The framework is composed of HSM indicators across six sectors: Food Security and Livelihoods, Shelter and Non-food items (NFIs), Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Healthcare, Protection, and Education. The indicators incorporated in the calculation of sectoral scores were selected based on the information they capture regarding people's access to basic services and essential items. The indicators not incorporated in the score will still be used as part of the analysis and reporting as a way to present a comprehensive overview of the situation in the assessed settlements.

'Severity' signifies the intensity of vulnerabilities in the settlement, using a scale that ranges from 1 (minimal/none) to 4+ (Extreme and Risk of Catastrophic/Sectoral Collapse). The levels of sectoral vulnerability imply:

- **None/minimal:** Essential basic sectoral needs are met in the settlement,
- **Stress:** Borderline inability to meet basic sectoral needs in the settlement,
- **Severe:** Moderate inability to meet basic sectoral needs in the settlement,
- **Extreme:** Extreme inability to meet basic sectoral needs in the settlement,
- **Extreme+:** Collapse of basic services and/or total inability to meet basic sectoral needs in the settlement,

Both sectoral and inter-sectoral composite scores were calculated using the arithmetic mean (average) of scores and were rounded up if the score has a decimal of 0.5 or higher to assign it to a value (1-4+, Minimal to Extreme+). The sectoral score is calculated based on the sectoral indicators incorporated in the framework (see Annex), and the inter-sectoral score is calculated based on the sectoral scores calculated in the previous step. If an indicator cannot be recoded to 1-4+ values, it is by default given a value of 1 (Minimal). In cases where only part of the conditions satisfies for a given level of vulnerability for the selected indicator / combination of indicators as specified in the SVI Framework, those cases will be classified with one lower level (e.g., 'Severe' instead of 'Extreme'). Please refer to the Framework for more details.

The approach of calculating the 'average' score has its limitations primarily in relation to limited sensitivity to outliers (e.g., if a particularly strong indicator is showing a severe situation by itself, or if one of the sectors indicates a severe vulnerability of the settlement by itself). To account for this, the sectoral scores are to be reviewed as a second level of the analysis to identify settlements where only a single or limited number of sectors is/are showing a severe situation and due to the average approach the settlements are classified in a lower-level vulnerability group. Where relevant, the scores for individual indicators/indicator combinations will also be reviewed for a comprehensive understanding of what drives higher levels of settlement vulnerabilities.

Due to the included data being indicative in the scoring process, the resulting scores cannot be considered representative of the conditions within settlements and offer an approximate understanding of the humanitarian situation.



ANNEX 1: Sectoral indicators incorporated in the SVI Framework

Sector	Indicator
Food Security & Livelihoods	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to accessing sufficient food in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to accessing markets to purchase goods in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers for people to access markets in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers to accessing food items in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by coping strategies used to cover basic needs in the 30 days prior to data collection
Shelter & Non-Food items	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to accessing safe and adequate housing in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers for people to access safe and adequate housing in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers for displaced persons to access safe and adequate housing in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main sources of energy most people used for heating during winter
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced in accessing heating during winter
	% of settlements by the proportion of civilian housing damaged in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% settlements by MOST people having access to non-food items (NFIs) in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced in accessing NFIs in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by frequency of disruptions to electricity supply in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% settlements by frequency of disruptions to gas supply in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% settlements by frequency of disruptions to phone network in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% settlements by frequency of disruptions to internet coverage in the 14 days prior to data collection

Sector	Indicator
Health	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to healthcare services in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced to access healthcare services in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by types of healthcare/facilities people were unable to access in the 14 days prior to data collection (used only for the 'Extreme' classification)
	% of settlements by types of healthcare/facilities people were unable to access in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced to access medicines in the 14 days prior to data collection
Protection	% of settlements by main safety and security concerns faced by people in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by the degree of restrictions on movement into or out of the settlement
Education	% of settlements by the proportion of education facilities NOT available for educational purposes in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% settlements by frequency of disruptions to internet coverage in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main reasons for educational facilities being unavailable for educational purposes
WASH	% settlements by frequency of disruptions to water supply in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to accessing water in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced in accessing water in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by the level of need in relation to accessing improved sanitation facilities in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced in accessing functional toilets in the 14 days prior to data collection
	% of settlements by main barriers people faced in accessing water in the 14 days prior to data collection