

AREA-BASED ASSESSMENT IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREA OF UKRAINE

Briefing note: Basic service provision for women and children in Kharkiv city Ukraine, November 2022

Context

Escalation of hostilities in Ukraine have caused massive displacement, widespread damage to infrastructure, significant disruption to basic services, and many civilians killed or wounded. Being one of the regions most affected by the conflict, Kharkiv oblast accounts for up to 18% of the infrastructure damages¹ across the country after Donetsk oblast (25%), according to official figures.² Kharkiv region's deputy prosecutor indicated that, as of August 2022, at least 1,019 civilians had been killed in the region, including 52 children.³

Kharkiv city, the capital of the oblast – Ukraine's second largest city, and major industrial, educational and cultural hub⁴ – has been a primary target due to its proximity to the Russian border and its strategic significance. Heavily impacted by shellings, the city suffered numerous infrastructure damages, most of which were observed on the northern and eastern part of the city.⁵ The highly volatile security context led to an outflow of civilians towards western Ukraine and abroad in the earliest months of the escalation. Oblast authorities estimated that only 700 to 800 thousand people remained in the city as of July 2022⁶, compared to an estimated 1.4 million at the same period in 2021.⁷

The situation changed early September when the counteroffensive launched by the Ukrainian armed forces pushed Russian troops to the border north of Kharkiv city, and to the eastern bank of the Oskil river, shrinking the non-government controlled areas from 32% to 6% in the oblast.⁸ However, it did not lead to a complete interruption of shellings in the city, as Kharkiv remains vulnerable to long-range missiles and drones.⁹ In addition, an increasing number of strikes targeting critical infrastructures is still an acute threat for civilian areas in Kharkiv, and hampers access to energy and water provision ahead of winter. In the meantime, however, many have returned to the city, partly repealed by costs of living and lack of employment opportunities in the west of Ukraine.¹⁰ Similarly, Kharkiv city remains a major hub for IDPs fleeing surrounding conflict-affected areas.¹¹

¹ Refers to damage in monetary terms, comprising amount of damages to residential and non-residential real estate, as well as other infrastructure.

² National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the Consequences of the War, [audit-of-war-damage-eng.pdf \(kmu.gov.ua\)](#), July 2022

³ Human Right Watch, [Ukraine: Unlawful Russian Attacks in Kharkiv | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#), August 2022

⁴ Left Bank Analytics, Kharkiv Location Profile, September 2022

⁵ REACH, [Ukraine: Infrastructure and Facilities Damage Analysis Summary Northern districts of Kharkiv, February-May \(July\) 2022 \(v.1\) - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), September 2022

⁶ Novyny Live, [It became known how many people live in Kharkov \(novynylive\)](#), July 2022

⁷ Kh.ukstat.gov.ua, [Archive. Population size \(estimated\) as of July 1, 2021 and average in January-June 2021 — Main Department of Statistics in Kharkiv region \(ukrstat.gov.ua\)](#), June 2021

⁸ Left Bank Analytics, Kharkiv Location Profile, September 2022

⁹ UNIAN News Agency, [Liberation of Kharkiv region from the occupiers: has the situation with enemy shelling changed - UNIAN](#), October 2022

¹⁰ Nonviolent Peaceforce, [Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

¹¹ Diy!, [The largest number of IDPs was accepted by Kharkiv region – the Network of Public Control Centers "DIY!" \(act.org.ua\)](#), October 2022

Rationale

Assessments since 24 February 2022 point towards an exacerbation of inequalities and disadvantages of vulnerable populations in Ukraine, at the forefront of which are women and children.¹² This, in turn, increases their dependence on service providers in various sectors (educational, social, psychosocial, or medical). However, findings indicate that women and children currently face numerous barriers in accessing these basic services fully, further deepening their conditions.¹³ The situation being all the more critical in areas of Ukraine highly impacted by security incidents and infrastructure damages such as Kharkiv city.

This brief aims to inform a gender-responsive humanitarian response by assessing the distinct needs, priorities and capacities of vulnerable populations.¹⁴ For instance, children face drastically higher risks of enduring psychological distress, decreasing access to education, family separation, abuse, sexual exploitation or even trafficking.¹⁵ Women, on the other hand, see their employment situation worsening and their dependence on social assistance increasing, while often remaining the only parent in charge of the household.¹⁶ In addition, despite playing a key role in the humanitarian response, women remain often excluded from formal decision-making, which tends to side-line issues of social development and gender equality in the response.¹⁷ In this regard, REACH consulted displaced and non-displaced female beneficiaries to voice their concerns and difficulties in accessing basic services in Kharkiv city.

According to REACH's last situation overview in Kharkiv (June 2022)¹⁸, local organisations, volunteer networks, and public service providers are best positioned to identify needs and deliver direct assistance to beneficiaries in the city. However, local actors – in particular volunteers' initiatives – face difficulties implementing sustainable long-term activities, due to limited funds and human resources. This may prove to be an issue in the coming months as the humanitarian community seek to scale-up their activities in the city and expand their partnerships with local actors. Key informants of various local organisations were therefore consulted to identify gaps in their capacities to continue providing assistance in Kharkiv city.

¹² OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

¹³ UN Women, [Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), May 2022

¹⁴ UN Women, [Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine: Secondary data review | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), March 2022

¹⁵ UNICEF, [One hundred days of war in Ukraine have left 5.2 million children in need of humanitarian assistance \(unicef.org\)](#), May 2022

¹⁶ OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

¹⁷ UN Women, [Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), May 2022

¹⁸ REACH, [Ukraine Situation Overview: Kharkivska Oblast - June 2022 - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

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Methodology

To inform response actors on needs and challenges related to basic service provision and the needs of women and children residing in Kharkiv city, REACH conducted **18 semi-structured Key Informant (KI) interviews with three types of KIs:** public service providers (healthcare, school, mental health, social workers, PSP-KIs), representative of local authority' departments (LAD-KIs), responsible for social service provision for woman and children (health, education, social services, child protection department), and civil society organizations (CSO-KIs) to understand the impact of the crisis on each of these services, their functionality and opportunity for better collaboration among actors to deliver basic services in a timely and effective manner.

In addition, **two focus group discussions (FGDs)** were conducted with the local female residents and displaced female population, respectively, both currently residing in Kharkiv using basic services and having children. The discussion guide of the FGDs explored perceptions of the priority needs and barriers for women and children in Kharkiv in terms of access to basic social services.

The data collection was conducted between **the 20th of September and 2nd of October.** Preliminary search of KIs involved in the basic service provision was conducted and participants based on their perceived relevance and availability were selected using a snowballing technique. Participants of the FGDs were identified via a snowballing approach during interviews with KIs.

In addition, to support the humanitarian response, IMPACT Initiatives has conducted a basic services infrastructure damage analysis to estimate the degree of damage to basic services in three northern districts of Kharkiv city: Saltivskiyi, Kyivskiyi, and Shevchenkivskiyi. The analysis is based on recent high-resolution satellite imagery acquired in June 2022 provided by the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT). UNOSAT used images provided by MAXAR company acquired during the escalation of hostilities in Kharkiv.

Limitation

KIs were members of local administration, CSOs employees, public service providers. They answered questions regarding the overall situation in Kharkiv city, in one or multiple sectors (education, child protection, social security, healthcare, communication). KIs may not be sectoral experts for each topic that they were required to provide information on. The findings are not statistically generalisable and should be considered indicative only. Whenever possible, data has been triangulated with secondary data sources.

The damage analysis on the map in Annex only highlights severely damaged facilities that were clearly visible on the high-resolution satellite image of Kharkiv City and is not intended to cover all existing damage of city infrastructure. In addition, the data on damage analysis is available only as of June 2022 and therefore does not represent the actual destruction situation at the time of publication of this brief.

Key findings

- **Since February 2022, the demand of women and children for basic services in Kharkiv has significantly increased.** The crisis enlarged the socio-economic disadvantages of women in Kharkiv, reinforcing their dependence on financial assistance and employment support. This trend particularly affected displaced women. Children reportedly were placed at greater risk of post-traumatic stress, lack of socialisation, and protection issues.
- **Human and material resources of local actors have reportedly decreased and were insufficient to fully meet the needs of women and children.** The outflow of labour strongly impacted vital sectors such as education and healthcare. At the same time, the key informants often reported a lack of necessary funding to attract employees and purchase necessary equipment. This situation has been exacerbated by the influx of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in the oblast, as well as the necessity to expand their activities to meet new priorities and needs.
- **Strikes, infrastructure damages, air alarms, and energy disruptions severely impacted the ability of service providers to provide basic services in a comprehensive manner.** The part of the city that hosted the largest number of basic service providers (i.e., educational, social, and medical institutions) was the most impacted by the escalation of hostilities. Furthermore, local respondents – civil society organisations (CSOs) and volunteers' initiatives – reported being ill-equipped to respond to rehabilitation and repair needs. Key informants also expressed a strong need for support in adapting, renovating, and equipping bomb shelters to be suitable for a long stay and comprehensive service delivery.
- **The coordination among local actors was reportedly satisfactory, while their interaction with international organisations needed improvement.** The local basic service providers regretted mostly the length of partnership procedures and called for more flexible support. Meanwhile, some beneficiaries complained about basic service provision and distribution of humanitarian aid from local actors in Kharkiv. They shared accounts of poor management, or difficult access for vulnerable groups.

Needs and Priorities of Women and Children in Kharkiv

Exacerbation of women's vulnerabilities

Discussions with beneficiaries and KIs in Kharkiv support findings that the escalation of hostilities since February 2022 increases disadvantages of women in Ukraine. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the crisis severely impacts women's livelihoods and employment situations, exacerbating poverty risks, pushing them into the informal sector, and increasing their dependency on social payments. This trend is all the more precarious for IDP women, who have a higher risk of losing their job, and have little connection to public employment services.¹⁹

In Kharkiv, KIs corroborated this point by reporting a drastic increase of women's needs, such as financial assistance, employment support, or provision of childcare service needed to free up time to go to work. Likewise, displaced women taking part in the FGD expressed mainly preoccupations regarding socio-economic considerations. Many of them reported losing savings and income sources, rendering their economic empowerment difficult in the face of price increases. On the other hand, non-displaced women focused on other priorities such as psychosocial issues (e.g., socialisation of children), likely indicating different degrees how the conflict impacted these two groups.



"I contacted the employment centre, there was no job for my specialty. An unemployment benefit of 1,000 UAH²⁰ [≈ 27 USD] was assigned to me."

[Displaced woman]

Increased short and long-term risks for children

KIs and women who answered questions during discussion insisted on tackling psychosocial, post-traumatic, and protection risks for children. While the testimonies included in this report relate to Kharkiv exclusively, these risks remain highly pertinent across the country.

¹⁹ OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

²⁰ The subsistence level has been assessed in October 2022 by the Government of Ukraine at 2600 UAH/month for able-bodied persons

Lack of children's socialisation

Children who remained in Kharkiv lack sufficient social connection, primarily due to online learning and the absence of in-person interaction with teachers and friends.²¹ This topic of conversation immediately came to the centre of attention among non-displaced women taking part in the FGD, certainly revealing concerns on their part. In the meantime, online learning can also impact the parents – often single women – who have to stay at home to supervise the children.²²



"Children's lives moved into virtual reality. Covid-19 was merely a 'warm-up', now the situation is much worse."

[Non-displaced woman]

Long-term mental health conditions

According to a study by Roberts et al. conducted nation-wide in Ukraine in 2016, adult IDPs fleeing the east of the country suffered from a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with a prevalence of 32%, depression with a prevalence of 22%, and anxiety with a prevalence of 17%.²³ In the meantime, preliminary evidence in the early days of the escalation of hostilities point towards a dramatic mental health impact, as reported feelings of depression and nervousness were observed among two-thirds of the population in March 2022 (up 20% from January 2022), according to the OECD.²⁴

KIs working in children affairs interviewed indicated that stresses and anxieties caused by the escalation of hostilities are much more likely to impact children significantly, in particular those living in districts of the city that suffered from shellings, who are coming from newly accessible areas, or who have been separated from their families. According to them, long-term devastating consequences could be expected if support is not provided rapidly. By drawing attention to the matter, KIs are joining earlier calls to urgently scale-up on-the-ground and virtual mental health support to children in Kharkiv city.²⁵



"Children's psychology has always been a relevant topic. And now, because of the war, this problem has become a priority. Stress and anxiety have an impact on children's whole life and affect relationships in families".

[Representative of a local organisation]

²¹ Nonviolent Peaceforce, [Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

²² Left Bank Analytics, [Adjusting to the school year](#), September 2022

²³ Roberts et al, [Mental health care utilisation among internally displaced persons in Ukraine: results from a nation-wide survey | Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences | Cambridge Core](#), 2017

²⁴ OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

²⁵ Nonviolent Peaceforce, [Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

Recommendations have also been made in the humanitarian network suggesting to integrate resilience components at different levels, such as in the household, school, or community as a whole. At the household level, early childhood development (ECD) activities can be embedded in livelihoods programming, in order to ensure the ability of parents to respond to children's emotional needs.²⁶ At the school level, psycho-social care should be provided insofar as it is possible.²⁷ At the community level, initiatives such as neighborhood discussions groups could be envisaged. It is also necessary to identify a diverse group of stakeholders that could be involved in identifying and responding to mental health needs despite other initial mandates (e.g., pharmacists, youth workers, social workers, etc.).²⁸

Abductions and domestic violence

In May 2022, UNICEF released a warning of an "acute child protection crisis", as millions of children – for the most part displaced – faced significant risks of family separation, violence, abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.²⁹ These risks still concern many children in Kharkiv according to one respondent working in the Department of Children Affairs of Kharkiv City Council.

According to one KI working in child protection in Kharkiv, the protection of children who lost their legal representatives (e.g., separated children, unaccompanied children, orphans, children with caregivers, etc.) should be considered a high-level priority in light of the risks of trafficking and abduction in Kharkiv. Child protection services in the city reportedly have to deploy extensive means to keep records and track movements of these children in and out of the city, and outside the borders of Ukraine – by coordinating their work with border guards. On that matter, the Government of Ukraine should urgently reform the adoption system to ensure that the country's system is aligned with the Hague Convention.³⁰ Similarly, the UN and its partners should ensure the expansion of the Humanitarian Country Team Framework on Protection from Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA).³¹



"If children are abroad with their legal representatives and wish to stay there, that is their right. But there are children who were taken away by someone who are not their legal representatives. These children are our priority".

[Representative of a local authority department]

²⁶ UN Women, [Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine: Secondary data review | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), March 2022

²⁷ Left Bank Analytics, [Adjusting to the school year](#), September 2022

²⁸ OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

²⁹ UNICEF, [One hundred days of war in Ukraine have left 5.2 million children in need of humanitarian assistance \(unicef.org\)](#), May 2022

³⁰ OECD, [Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine \(oecd.org\)](#), July 2022

³¹ UN Women, [Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine: Secondary data review | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), March 2022

Intra-family child violence – along with gender-based violence (GBV) – is also a risk for children in Kharkiv. According to the same KI, children face the risk of enduring violence and abuse, as men will gradually come back from the front. According to him, measures should be taken now to prevent this persisting issue to the largest extent possible. Mainly, by establishing coordination with the courts, and in particular with juvenile services, in order to have the capacity to rapidly address questions of temporary removal of children in case of intra-family violence. In addition, the KI insisted that ongoing reforms should not cut staff in services ensuring children protection.



"I myself am a combat veteran, and I understand what will happen when the guys come back from there, from the war. Our wives, our girls were always the first ones to get hit".

[Representative of a local authority department]

Current capacities of local actors to provide basic services to women and children in Kharkiv

Expansion to new users and services

New service users

Nearly all KIs interviewed indicated that their organisations or institutions faced an increase of service users since the start of the escalation of the hostilities. As exposed above, intensification of previous vulnerabilities is likely to push more women and children from Kharkiv towards these services. In addition, Kharkivskyi raion – where Kharkiv city is located – is the second most populous raion in terms the IDP presence (185,786) according to the latest official figures of registration, tracked by the IOM's Area Baseline Assessment.³² In the meantime, the number of returnees is increasing in Kharkiv oblast, as many return to some of the newly accessible areas. However, their pendular movements could add a strain to basic service providers in Kharkiv city, as they might need to be evacuated again in the coming months because of unmet needs during the winter.³³

³² IOM, [Area Baseline Assessment: Ukraine – Round 16 \(31 October –11 November 2022\) – Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), November 2022

³³ ACAPS, [Humanitarian situation in newly accessible areas of Kharkiv Oblast](#), October 2022

New services and methods

While most basic service providers reported maintaining existing activities – as needs and issues addressed before the escalation of hostilities remain – a majority of them had to expand the field of their activities since the start of the escalation to meet new priorities. Numerous organisations or institutions reported, for instance, implementing humanitarian activities on top, or instead, of their initial mandate. Some activities have also been significantly scaled-up in administrative services due to the massive influx of IDPs. The registration process or the provision of documentations being necessary to guarantee assistance or monetary compensation. It is also vital for accessing rehabilitation and treatments, for instance, in case of disabled children (medical history, individual rehabilitation card).³⁴

In order to mitigate security risks, several respondents from local authorities' departments (LAD-KIs) indicated that their institutions started to conduct their work remotely. However, this can impact the quality of service delivery in departments such as children affairs, as some activities initially require social workers to meet beneficiaries directly. One LAD-KI indicated that in-person meeting is required to establish contact, meet the family, inspect living conditions, ask for clarification, or ensure the presence of a mediator. In that regard, and partially to cope with transportation difficulties of service users, one LAD-KI explained that they set up mobile teams to meet and pick up beneficiaries directly.



"There is no way to eradicate communication with officials when it comes to children affairs services, because in all areas, from the family code to all regulations on our responsibilities, "interview" is a must".

[Representative of a local authority department]

Factors constricting service provision

The workflow of basic service providers interviewed during the data collection phase has been highly disrupted since the start of the escalation of hostilities. Their capacities are reportedly undermined by strikes, air alerts, infrastructure damages, outflow of workers, power outages, disruptions of telecommunication, delays in aid delivery, and overall stress and anxiety.

³⁴ Voices of Children Charitable Foundation & NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research", [Children and the war in Ukraine: 24.05–24.06.2022 – Kharkiv Institute for Social Research \(khisr.kharkov.ua\)](#), June 2022

Infrastructure damage

The escalation of hostilities since 24 February 2022 has caused significant damage to public utilities, gas and energy infrastructure in Kharkiv city. The northern districts of Saltivskiyi, Kyivskiyi, and Shevchenkiivskiyi are the most affected and have suffered numerous damages to facilities and infrastructure.³⁵ These districts are particularly residential and the most densely populated, with the largest number of educational, social and medical institutions throughout the city (see Map 2 in the Annex).

As reported by the Department of Housing and Communal Services, in the register of buildings damaged as a result of hostilities, there were 884 objects of the social infrastructure in the city of Kharkiv, as of 28 October 2022. Among them, there were 528 administrative buildings and non-residential buildings, 117 secondary education institutions, 107 objects of preschool education institutions, 79 healthcare facilities, 36 higher education institutions, and 17 culture facilities.³⁶ Among the damaged educational facilities, there were pre-school education facilities, comprehensive schools, specialized schools, vocational colleges, and universities – some of which were targeted on more than one occasion.³⁷ Shelling and destruction of educational institutions complicate the safe access to specialised equipment for children with disabilities and disrupt the learning process.

As for healthcare institutions, according to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the largest number of damaged medical facilities across the country was in Kharkiv oblast – 249 objects, as of November 2022.³⁸ These destructions hinder access to medical care and lead to a large influx of people from the oblast to Kharkiv city to receive healthcare assistance.

Strikes and air alarms

Further intensification of hostilities constitutes one of the main constraining factors according to KIs. It creates an anxiety-inducing environment where safety for employees and beneficiaries is never fully guaranteed. Practically speaking, every air alarms also leads to delays, and back and forth to bomb shelters, rendering the provision of aid in a comprehensive manner difficult. On that matter, a woman taking part in an FGD expressed discontent for having to leave the building of service providers in case of an air alarm, as this method is arguably more dangerous when there are no bomb shelters around. On the other hand, other FGD participants reported avoiding as much as possible taking their children outside for fear of shellings, consequently limiting their access to a series of services (e.g., kindergarten).

³⁵ REACH, [Infrastructure and Facilities Damage Analysis Summary Northern districts of Kharkiv](#), September 2022

³⁶ Kharkiv city council, [More than 800 objects of social infrastructure were damaged in Kharkiv](#), October 2022

³⁷ Centre for Information Resilience, [The systematic targeting of educational infrastructure in Kharkiv \(info-res.org\)](#), September 2022

³⁸ Ukrainska Pravda, [Russians damage more than 1,000 Ukrainian hospitals since start of full-scale war | Ukrainska Pravda](#), November 2022



“Due to constant shelling and air raid alerts in the city, it is impossible to provide aid in a comprehensive manner. [Service providers] run with children to bomb shelters more often than they help them”.

[Representative of of a local organisation]

Energy disruptions

Strikes on critical infrastructures and subsequent power, heating, water, and telecommunication disruptions are slowing down and impacting the quality and continuity of service provision, according to KIs. Similarly, women who took part in the FGDs reported facing barriers in accessing basic services fully (e.g., online instead of in person education for children) or restricted access to medical facilities and pharmacies. Therefore the most vulnerable categories of the population (e.g., women with small babies) are likely impacted disproportionately more by these disruptions. It raises therefore the question of the capacity of basic service providers – in particular in the healthcare sector – to ensure vital services after consecutive disruptions. A study conducted in 2015 by Koroglu et al. regarding healthcare disruptions due to power cuts in low/middle-income countries concluded, for instance, that frequent power outages impact rates of institutional deliveries and skilled birth attendance.³⁹



“When the school year started, the electricity problems became even more significant. At first one teacher had no electricity at home, then another one and so one. ”

[Non-displaced woman]

In addition, women and children in Kharkiv are at risk of losing access to heating in the winter months due to damage to centralized heating systems or energy infrastructure. According to the communal enterprise “Kharkiv Heating Networks” (heat supplier for Kharkiv), as a result of shellings, they were forced to restart the city’s heating system from scratch for the fourth time since the start of the escalation of hostilities.⁴⁰ As reported in REACH Winterization factsheet on damage to energy infrastructure (August 2022)⁴¹, about 25% of all heating plants in Kharkiv needed restoration before the next heating period, while the most damaged infrastructure was situated in Kyivskiy and Saltivskiy districts of the city.

³⁹ Koroglu et al, (PDF) *Effect of power outages on the use of maternal health services: evidence from Maharashtra, India* (researchgate.net), June 2019
⁴⁰ Kharkiv city council, *Due to shelling in Kharkiv, the heating system has been started for the fourth time* (city.kharkov.ua), November 2022
⁴¹ REACH, *Ukraine: Winterization 2022/2023: damage to energy infrastructure (August 2022)* - Ukraine | ReliefWeb, August 2022

Capacities gaps of basic service providers

Previous assessments conducted in Kharkivska oblast indicate that capacities of local actors and volunteer networks to provide basic services are decreasing and is becoming insufficient, as they lack the necessary staff and resources to meet the population’ high needs.⁴² In the meantime, the maintenance of their activities in Kharkiv city is key, as they are best positioned to identify needs and deliver assistance.⁴³

Human resources

Two-thirds of employed IDPs fleeing the country in the first months of the escalation of hostilities were estimated to have tertiary education, and half of them to be employed in high-skilled jobs.⁴⁴ It resulted in an outflow of labour that gravely impacts the economy and public activities in Ukraine. Another issue – facing mostly volunteers and CSOs working at the forefront of the humanitarian response – is the risk of burnout and cumulative stress, reportedly high in Kharkiv.⁴⁵ These two factors were significantly reported during the interviews with KIs, with nearly all of them indicating that their organisations or institutions were understaffed due to the two factors mentioned above.

The outflow of labour strongly impacts the provision of basic services in Kharkiv. For instance, in the education sector, where teachers who relocated outside of Ukraine are sometimes recruited by educational institutions to teach Ukrainian in their host country, which retain them abroad.⁴⁶ In addition, some teachers were stuck in non-government controlled areas of the oblast, according to women taking part in the FGDs. Regarding healthcare, the escalation of hostilities has led to the mass displacement of specialist care professionals, resulting in severely understaffed facilities, and a risk of burnout for the remaining staff.⁴⁷ This was confirmed in the FGDs, with women sharing accounts of having online consultations with doctors who fled to the west part of Ukraine or abroad.



“Our orthodontist went to Poland, and only young professionals remained. So, during our primary consultation a new doctor was making photos and sending them to our doctor in Poland, so that she helped us with our case.”

[Non-displaced woman]

⁴² ACAPS, *Ukraine: Humanitarian situation in newly accessible areas of Kharkiv oblast* | ACAPS, October 2022

⁴³ REACH, *Ukraine Situation Overview: Kharkivska Oblast – June 2022* - Ukraine | ReliefWeb, June 2022

⁴⁴ OECD, *Social policies for an inclusive recovery in Ukraine* (oecd.org), July 2022

⁴⁵ Nonviolent Peaceforce, *Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine (September 2022 Update)* - Ukraine | ReliefWeb, September 2022

⁴⁶ Left Bank Analytics, *Adjusting to the school year*, September 2022

⁴⁷ Nonviolent Peaceforce, *Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine* - Ukraine | ReliefWeb, June 2022

Funds and material resources

Funding was the most frequently reported need by KIs, followed by the need for staff, as this priority is considered by some as the solution to meet all capacity gaps and to retain and attract specialised workers. KIs reported lacking the necessary resources to continue conducting their activities in the long-term, which requires paying salaries, equipment, and running costs of basic service provisions. The third most reported needs were direct in-kind equipment such as IT equipment, educational materials, office supplies, etc. When asked from who they expect to receive assistance, most KIs call on international actors' support, followed by the private sector, and the state administration.



"There is one need that solves all problems at once, and it is money".

[Representative of a public service provider]

Restoration and repair capacities

In its Cold Spot Risk Assessment, REACH classified Kharkivskiy raion (Kharkiv city) in the top 3 raions with the highest 'CSI' (Cold Spot Index) in Ukraine. This index aims to identify geographic areas of the country where winter-related hazards (e.g., cold waves), compound with susceptibilities (e.g., older persons), and lack of coping capacity (e.g., infrastructure damage) were more likely to severely impact vulnerable populations.⁴⁸

Needs to cope with the hazards of winterization in Kharkiv include notably repairing and restoring damaged buildings. However, previous report from REACH in Kharkiv indicates that local respondents in Kharkiv – principally CSOs and local volunteer networks – are less equipped to respond to the shelter needs in terms of rehabilitation and repair works.⁴⁹ This was further confirmed by KIs interviewed during this assessment, who requested support in implementing these activities as soon as possible, as needs have reportedly increased in the past months.

In addition, CSO-KIs highlighted the necessity for bomb shelters to be adapted, renovated, and equipped, to be suitable for long stay and service delivery. This is similar to the findings of the previous assessment in Kharkiv identifying an insufficient number of dedicated bomb shelters in the city,⁵⁰ or their maladjustment to properly host the necessary amount of people during air alarms.⁵¹ Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that members of vulnerable populations with limited mobility who rely on basic services (e.g., residents of care facilities) can access these bomb shelters in an appropriate manner, and that services can be provided to them there.⁵²

⁴⁸ REACH, Ukraine: [Cold Spot Risk Assessment Winterization 2022/23, Factsheet - November 2022 - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), November 2022

⁴⁹ REACH, Ukraine: [Situation Overview: Kharkivska Oblast - June 2022 - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

⁵⁰ Left Bank Analytics, Kharkiv Location Profile, September 2022

⁵¹ Nonviolent Peaceforce, [Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

⁵² CEDOS, [Social security and war in Ukraine \(February 24 – April 30, 2022\) | Cedos](#), May 2022

Concerns expressed by beneficiaries on basic services provision

Opinions on basic service provision in Kharkiv varied widely between displaced and non-displaced women taking part in the FGDs. Interestingly, displaced women expressed overall general satisfaction, while non-displaced women indicated on the contrary that their needs are broadly speaking not met, sharing concerns regarding the assistance received.

Poor management

The concerns regarding poor management are directed at basic service providers, mainly social and administrative, but also regard the humanitarian aid delivered in the city which was said to be disorderly and not fully reaching beneficiaries. Opinions on administrative and social services were more diverse. Main complaints revolved around the mismanagement of the assistance provided (delays, long queues, contradicting information, etc.). One non-displaced woman blamed social services for the lack of coordination with volunteers' initiatives, which slowed down aid distribution, forcing beneficiaries to wait extensively. Non-displaced women also complained that assistance providers did not actively reach out to them, especially those who have children or vulnerable members in their households. Some displaced women also reported not being informed where exactly to access the aid available to them.



"Even if you arrive on time, at the specified time, you still won't get what you need [because of the queues]. That's humiliating..."

[Non-displaced woman]

Difficult access for vulnerable groups

Non-displaced women taking part in the FGDs indicated that assistance for at-risk groups was insufficient, in particular in the earliest months of the escalation of hostilities. Specialised centres for disabled children were, for instance, reportedly closed or understaffed. No assistance was offered at home either, according to one mother who deplored having to take care of her disabled child on her own. Medication was also reported to be still lacking (e.g., medication for HIV-positive patients), which was already flagged by REACH in June 2022.⁵³



"Initially, we couldn't get any social support [after 24 February]. For a couple of months, we couldn't get medicine for our child with a disability from one programme."

[Non-displaced woman]

⁵³ REACH, Ukraine: [Situation Overview: Kharkivska Oblast - June 2022 - Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#), June 2022

Inequitable distribution of goods and services

Displaced women expressed not having access to the same quality of basic services than the host community in Kharkiv. For instance, one woman argued for that she could not send her children to private education institutions due to financial constraints. Another one reported that all IDPs in the city are being assigned to a medical institution where conditions and reportedly unsatisfactory and patients are mistreated. Regarding distribution of humanitarian goods, one non-displaced woman shared account of aid being given with priority to those having connections with individuals in charge of distribution, leaving little behind.



“People said that they were arriving to the places of aid distribution and there wasn’t anything left. In the morning the person responsible for humanitarian aid called his/her acquaintances and informed them about humanitarian aid being available”.

[Non-displaced woman]

Coordination of the response in Kharkiv

Coordination between local actors

KIs reported a good level of collaboration among the different actors involved in the response at the local level (CSOs, PSPs, LADs, churches, religious organisations, and private sector). CSOs are reportedly playing a key role in Kharkiv, as it has been the case since the escalation of hostilities in 24 February 2022.⁵⁴ Their work complements the efforts of public service providers to ensure access to basic services, as they provide precious support with social, psychological and educational assistance to women and children in need. Simultaneously, public services providers and local authorities’ departments reportedly started supporting the provision of humanitarian aid. It corresponds to a national practice, since early April 2022, based on which all oblast administrations have started to distribute humanitarian aid via public service providers such as social workers.⁵⁵

Local authorities also play a coordination role, all the way to the oblast’ administration, according to KIs. They ease the work of small organisations, for instance, by providing pass cards to move rapidly in the city and the oblast, or by ensuring their security in conflict-affected areas. At the city level, the City Coordination Headquarters reportedly support the work of CSOs by providing information on the locations and needs of IDPs. However, CSO-KIs shared concerns regarding the extensive use of bureaucratic procedures impacting the flexibility of their coordination.



“Almost all hubs of the city of Kharkiv cooperate with each other and help people on newly accessible territories now”.

[Representative of a local organisation]

Coordination between local and external actors

International organisations operating in the oblast and in the city of Kharkiv distribute aid mainly through oblast and local authorities. They also support local organisations to a certain extent; however, they tend to avoid working with unregistered organisations which creates constraints for volunteers’ initiatives and CSOs, despite being the actors with the highest access to communities.⁵⁶ According to the OCHA latest data on operational presence in Kharkiv oblast, only a few cluster partners are mapped in sectors such as education (3), child protection (7), and GBV protection (3),⁵⁷ not likely reflecting the variety of local CSOs and volunteer initiatives actively operating in these sectors in the city.

Nevertheless, nearly all KIs, even CSO-KIs, reported that their organisation or institution collaborates to some extent with international organisations. The key international humanitarian actors (Red Cross, UNICEF, World Central Kitchen, etc.) were cited by most KIs, but some PSP-KIs and LAD-KIs also reported relying on pre-established networks abroad, with organisations operating in the same line of work, with which they had created partnerships with prior to the escalation of hostilities. In that regard, most CSO-KIs ask for support in improving the visibility of their organisations, locally and abroad, to broaden support and donations from various sources.

According to a handful of KIs, the work of international organisations is “extremely helpful” in Kharkiv. However, they also expressed concerns regarding frequent issues encountered during the collaboration. They cited mainly the length of procedures, slowing down access to funds and activities implementation. This relates to requests often made by local organisations to international partners since the start of the escalation to “cut the bureaucracy”, calling for more “trust and accountability” through unrestricted rapid and flexible funding.⁵⁸ On the other hand, third-party oversight and capacity-building remains necessary for CSOs in Kharkiv, mainly regarding humanitarian aid delivery.⁵⁹



“Everything is very bureaucratic, it is difficult to reach them, to formulate needs. There is a large amount of paperwork, and it takes a lot of time”.

[Representative of a local authority department]

⁵⁴ ACAPS, [Ukraine: Humanitarian situation in newly accessible areas of Kharkiv oblast | ACAPS](#), October 2022

⁵⁷ OCHA, [Ukraine: 5W Operational Presence Map, As of 29 September 2022 - Ukraine](#), September 2022

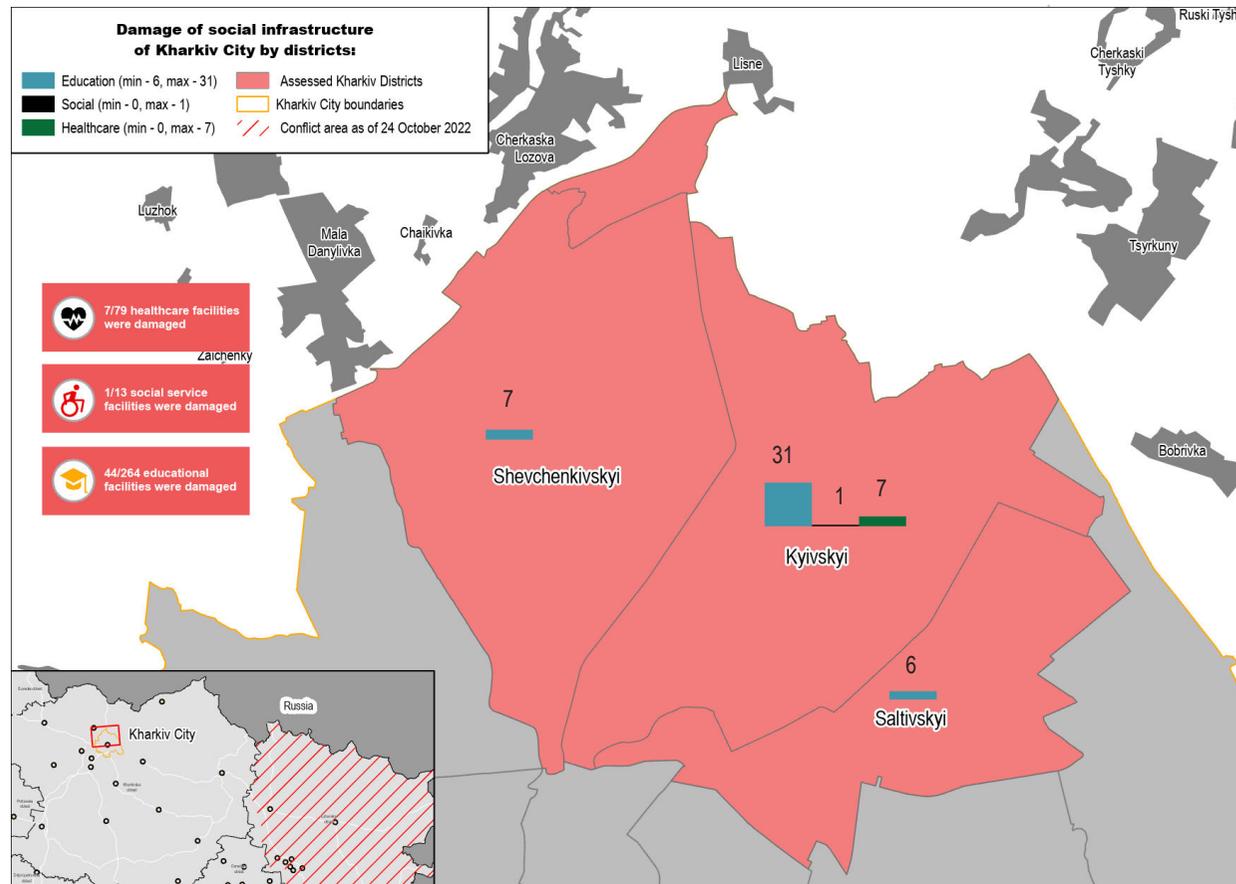
⁵⁸ National Network of Local Philanthropy Development, [If not now, when? \(philanthropy.com.ua\)](#) 2022

⁵⁹ Nonviolent Peaceforce, [Kharkiv snapshot: Civilian protection needs & responses in Ukraine \(September 2022\) - Ukraine](#), September 2022

Annex

The analysis of satellite images (provided by UNOSAT) suggests that the total number of damaged social infrastructure facilities in the three mentioned districts of Kharkiv (Shevchenkivskiy, Kyivskiy and Saltivskiy) is 36, as of June 2022. They include 33 educational facilities, 2 healthcare and 1 social service facility. As indicated in the Map 1, most of the detected damaged social infrastructure in Saltivskiy and Shevchenkivskiy districts consists of educational facilities (schools and kindergartens) with moderate and severe disruptions, rather than healthcare or social facilities such as primary and tertiary healthcare facilities and social protection services. In Kyivskiy district the analysis showed that 22 educational facilities (of 86 in total in district) were moderately damaged.

Map 1. Damage to basic service infrastructure in three districts of Kharkiv city: Saltivskiy, Kyivskiy, and Shevchenkivskiy (as of June 2022)



Map 2. Basic service infrastructure of Kharkiv city, by district

