

Briefing Note: Focus on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and information needs in government controlled areas (GCA)

Context and Methodology

As of 23 July 2022, there are estimated to be over 6.6 million people internally displaced in Ukraine.¹ Since early April, further escalation in the eastern and southern parts of the country have been causing more damages to infrastructure and disruptions in access to services in affected areas, as well as additional population displacement.² This briefing note summarizes data on accountability to affected populations (AAP) in government controlled areas (GCA), including the level of satisfaction with and barriers to receiving humanitarian aid, preferred channels of communication and information needs from REACH's³ fifth round of Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) data collection exercise.⁴ Structured data collection was conducted between July 4th and July 26th through **1658 phone interviews** with key informants (KIs) representing non-government organisations (NGOs), local authorities and civil society in **306 settlements** in GCA. KI responses were aggregated at settlement level. In addition, **10 long-form semi-structured interviews were conducted with interviewees⁵ who were displaced to government-controlled areas with high influx of IDPs** (5 with IDPs residing outside displacement sites⁶ and 5 with IDPs residing at displacement sites⁷), as well as **5 semi-structured interviews with people who returned to recently liberated areas.**⁸ **The findings are not statistically generalisable and should be considered indicative only.** Whenever possible, data has been triangulated with secondary data sources.

Key highlights

- In most of the cases in assessed GCA settlements, humanitarian assistance reportedly **did not help to meet the immediate needs of the population or helped to a limited extent.**
- Food and medicine** were identified by interviewees as **the most useful types of humanitarian assistance** in the assessed settlements in both GCAs and recently liberated areas.
- In the settlements where interviewees reported that people were facing some barriers to accessing aid at distribution sites or reception centres, **long waiting lines** were the most frequently reported barrier in the assessed settlements both in GCAs and recently liberated areas.
- Interviewees also highlighted **limited availability of information on where to register for aid or on eligibility criteria**, which was consistently one of the main information needs identified by the respondents through structured data collection of HSM Round 5.
- Mostly, interviewees reported that some level of consultations were held with various actors in the settlement (including local authorities, volunteers, or residents), and in most of these cases interviewees reported that these **consultations made a significant difference**, particularly in terms of tailoring following rounds of aid to the needs of the people.
- While **targeting of humanitarian aid was generally considered as fair** and believed to be provided to those most in need, interviewees also shared perceived concerns in relation to some **population groups either facing additional challenges or receiving preferential conditions in the aid distribution process**, resulting in a level of dissatisfaction with aid targeting among people left out of assistance, or sense of injustice in relation to some people receiving aid more frequently than others.
- Interviewees generally reported **some level of perceived awareness among people about procedures and referral pathways to report protection issues** (such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), gender-based violence (GBV), human trafficking, etc.), and the police or law enforcement bodies were most frequently cited as relevant bodies to report such cases to.

Priority needs and relevance of assistance provided

Most of the interviewees (**7 out of 10**) in the GCA settlements of interest (with high influx of IDPs) reported that the **assistance provided in their settlements did not help to meet the immediate needs of the population or helped to a limited extent.** One of the most frequently cited reasons of aid not covering most immediate needs of the population appears to be the perceived **insufficiency of aid**, which concurs with the reported concerns in relation to **aid not corresponding to the needs of people.** Other concerns were about **aid not being provided in time** (particularly referring to multi-purpose cash assistance) and **concerns in relation to unmet housing needs of IDPs.**

“IDPs’ need for housing was not satisfied at all. At first, people were settled in dormitories, but now, majority of people are asked to leave these places until August 15 because students are supposed to settle there. People are outraged as they have no other place to go.”

IDP residing outside a displacement site | Pavlohrad

Food was identified as **the most useful type of humanitarian assistance** by most interviewees from GCA settlements of interest (**7 out of 10**), followed by medicines (**4 out of 10**).

Top 3 assistance needs, by % of assessed settlements with reported IDP presence (n=304)
Multiple responses allowed | Quantitative data, HSM round 5

Food items	73% (n=223/304)	<div></div>
Employment	70% (n=213/304)	<div></div>
Accommodation	70% (n=212/304)	<div></div>

In terms of **variance between population groups**, interviewees in GCA settlements of interest most frequently cited **specific needs and preferences of vulnerable groups**, such as:

- IDPs not requiring additional registration for receiving aid** (based on their initial registration in hosting communities),
- perceived preference for food-based assistance** among older persons and people with disabilities,
- primary need of medicine, diapers, and special care** for people with disabilities, and,
- perceived preference among women with small children for baby formula and personal care products**, including diapers, as well as other targeted aid for children.

Multiple organisations and actors were reportedly involved in **providing humanitarian assistance** to people in the assessed GCA settlements, according to the interviewees. Particularly, **5 out of 10** interviewees reported that aid was provided by the **Centres for provision of social, administrative or labour services, local humanitarian actors** (including charitable foundations), as well as **international organisations**, followed by **humanitarian aid centres, volunteer groups and organisations** (reported by **4 out of 10** interviewees).

In **recently liberated areas**, **3 out of 5 interviewees** reported that **volunteer groups or organisations and local authorities and local communities** were the main assistance providers, followed by **international organisations and NGOs** (reported by **2 out of 5** interviewees). Religious organisations were also cited among main aid providers.

In all of the 5 assessed settlements in **recently liberated areas**, the interviewees reported that **aid helped to cover most of the needs of the population.** Similar to assessed GCA settlements, in recently liberated areas, **medicine** and **food** were perceived to be the most useful types of humanitarian assistance for most people in the settlement (cited, respectively, by **4 and 3 out of 5** interviewees).

While the interviewees from recently liberated areas generally did not report any significant variance between population groups in terms of aid covering their needs, the interviewees familiar with the situation in **Bila Krynytsia** and **Novovorontsovka** reported, respectively, that there was a **“first come, first served”** approach in terms of delivery of humanitarian assistance and that the **older persons were commonly left out of assistance.**

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Barriers to receiving humanitarian assistance

Interviewees in the assessed settlements in both GCAs and recently liberated areas frequently cited that people in the settlement were facing some **barriers to receiving humanitarian assistance**, primarily related to accessing aid at distribution sites or reception centres, and in a few instances to registering for aid as well.

Most of the interviewees (**8 out of 10**) in assessed GCA settlements mentioned people faced barriers to receiving humanitarian assistance at **aid distribution sites or reception centres**. The most frequently cited barrier to receiving aid appeared to be **long waiting lines**. Other barriers identified by interviewees included **challenges reaching distribution sites, lack of space at distribution sites, insufficiency of aid**, as well as **requirement for personal presence to pick up aid** (this requirement reportedly applied to children as well, if the aid was specifically targeted at them).



"...In order to receive child benefit, the center's employees require the child's physical presence, even if the IDPs have documents proving they have children. But if the child is sick, then aid will not be provided. This causes certain conflicts."

IDP residing at a displacement site | Yaremche

Additionally, while most of the interviewees (**6 out of 10**) in GCA settlements did not identify major barriers to registering for humanitarian aid, the interviewees familiar with the situation in **Pavlohrad** reported about **limited availability of information on where to register, who is eligible, or where to pick up aid**.





The quantitative data from HSM Round 5 also indicates that **information about how to register for assistance from Ukrainian government or humanitarian agencies** was a frequently reported information need (reported by respondents in **9%, n=29/306** of assessed settlements, while in **270 of 306** settlements respondents did not identify any information needs).

In the case of recently liberated areas, interviewees from **3 out of the 5** assessed settlements (Irpin, Verkhnia Syrovatka, and Semenivka) highlighted **long waiting lines** or **overcrowded distribution centres** as the main barriers, followed by **non-compliance with eligibility criteria**. Meanwhile, the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Bila Krynytsia** reported that some groups of people in the settlement were not able to receive humanitarian aid due to **shelling or other security concerns**.

Similar to assessed GCA settlements, interviewees in recently-liberated areas also highlighted concerns surrounding **lack of information on how to register for aid** (mentioned by **3 out of 5** interviewees).

Furthermore, in half of the interviews in assessed GCA settlements, interviewees mentioned that **vulnerable population groups faced specific barriers to receiving humanitarian assistance**.

Along with this, some interviewees also highlighted instances where **vulnerable population groups received preferential conditions in the aid distribution process**, such as:

-  **home delivery of aid to older persons,**
-  **special time allocation at distribution sites for older persons to pick up aid,**
-  **people from vulnerable groups being allowed to pass ahead in waiting lines, or**
-  **IDPs not requiring additional registration for receiving aid** (based on their initial registration in hosting communities).

Consultations of affected populations

While in most cases interviewees in assessed GCA settlements reported that humanitarian aid agencies consulted with various actors (including local authorities) or groups of people (mostly IDPs) in the settlement, **3 out of 10** interviewees mentioned that there were **limited or no consultations** held with local residents for decision-making about humanitarian assistance. The interviewee familiar with the situation in **Yaremche** (residing at a displacement site) shared a perception that the lack of consultations was conditioned by **lack of commitment** and not lack of capacity or staff of humanitarian actors. Additionally, the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Pavlohrad** (residing at a displacement site) mentioned that consulting limited number of IDPs could **not be representative of all IDP needs**.

Mostly, interviewees who reported that people in their settlement were consulted by aid actors, also mentioned that these consultations were **perceived to be making a significant difference**, and that people (referring to IDPs) believed they were **being heard and their needs taken into consideration**. The interviewee familiar with the situation in **Zmiiv** highlighted that aid actors tried to identify immediate needs of people while delivering aid and used the information to plan following rounds of aid delivery (including provision of food, medicines, and arrangement of access to necessary healthcare services).

Meanwhile, **in recently liberated areas**, the interviewees familiar with the situation in **Verkhnia Syrovatka** and **Semenivka** reported that **no consultations** were held with local residents. Overall, **lack of humanitarian organisations present in the area, heavy workload of aid actors and/or lack of financial resources and staff** were perceived to be the main reasons for the lack of consultations by humanitarian aid actors. Additionally, the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Bila Krynytsia** reported about **limited consultations due to mobile connection issues**.

Unlike these settlements, the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Irpin** reported a **high level of consultations** by aid actors, including with **local authorities, social workers, and residents**.

Impact of humanitarian assistance on social cohesion

Interviewees in assessed GCA settlements most often reported that people considered **targeting of humanitarian aid as fair** and believed that aid was provided to those most in need. Consistently, interviewees did not report any major impact of aid targeting on social cohesion or mentioned there were **no tensions** observed in the community in relation to aid targeting and distribution. Nevertheless, in a few cases interviewees shared concerns in relation to:

- targeting of aid** (e.g. some tensions related to IDPs being prioritised over local residents, including older persons, reported by the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Pavlohrad** (residing in a displacement site)),
- perceived embezzlement or misappropriation of aid** (reported particularly by the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Yaremche** (residing at a displacement site)), and
- tensions in waiting lines**.

While in most cases (**7 out of 10**) interviewees in GCA settlements did not identify any impact or negative impact of targeting of aid on **relations between people and aid actors**, there were some instances of **perceived dissatisfaction with aid targeting among people left out of assistance**, or **sense of injustice in relation to some people receiving aid more frequently than others** (because of lack of tracking mechanisms of people receiving aid). The interviewee familiar with the situation in **Kryvyi Rih** (residing outside a displacement site) also reported cases of dissatisfaction with local authorities in relation to the **limited financial resources allocated towards the communities closer to the line of conflict** (reportedly Apostolovo, Zelenodolsk, and Shyroke).

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Similar concerns were raised by the interviewees in **recently liberated areas**, primarily in relation to **lack of proper targeting** and **perceptions that some people/groups of people received aid more frequently than others**. Only in the case of **Irpin** the interviewee reported that no such tensions were observed in the community, as well as no negative impact was observed on relations between people and aid actors.

In terms of the impact of aid targeting on relations between the people and aid actors, there were varying reports by interviewees. In the case of **Semenivka**, the interviewee shared perceptions that there was a **growing sense of distrust towards humanitarian organisations** and **dissatisfaction with the targeting of aid** applied by aid actors. Similar perceptions were shared by the interviewee familiar with the situation in **Verkhnia Syrovatka**, particularly cases of people quarreling because of lack of proper targeting and concerns in relation to some people/groups of people receiving aid more frequently than others.

Meanwhile, in the case of **Bila Krynytsia** the interviewee mentioned there was generally **limited local presence of humanitarian actors** in the settlement at the time of data collection because of its close proximity to the line of conflict (although there were reportedly humanitarian aid cargoes from international NGOs that were reaching the area).



"There were quarrels and even fights for food packages between those who received them and those who failed, didn't know or came too late. There's tension between these two categories of people."

Returnee | Semenivka

Access to information about humanitarian assistance

The quantitative data from HSM Round 5 indicates a low level of reporting of concerns in relation to access to information in assessed settlements in GCAs. Nevertheless, respondents in **14% (n=44/306)** of assessed settlements reported concerns surrounding **disruptions to telecommunications**.

Consistent with the findings outlined in REACH's previous Briefing note on Accountability to affected populations (focus on GCA settlements), both quantitative and qualitative data from the fifth round of HSM indicate frequent use of **phone communications** and **face-to-face communications** as a means of obtaining information about humanitarian assistance.

% settlements by most frequently reported means of obtaining information related to humanitarian assistance used by most people in the settlement (n=306)

Multiple responses allowed | Quantitative data, HSM, Round 5

Phone communications i.e. Whatsapp	92% (n= 282/306)	<div></div>
Facebook	87% (n= 265/306)	<div></div>
Face-to-face communications	80% (n=244/306)	<div></div>
Community group discussions	35% (n=80/306)	<div></div>

All interviewees in GCA settlements cited that **people relied on word of mouth / contacts with friends and family to obtain information about humanitarian assistance**, followed by **messaging apps** (such as Viber, Telegram) (cited by **7 out of 10** interviewees).

All **10** interviewees in GCA settlements of interest highlighted that through the above-mentioned communication channels people mainly received **information about the availability of aid, eligibility criteria**, as well as **details of aid distribution** (dates and locations).

Interviewees most commonly highlighted that among different groups of population, **older persons were particularly facing difficulties accessing information** about humanitarian assistance, primarily because of the limited use of digital services by them. This likely further exacerbated the humanitarian situation of older persons as it impeded access to information and thus likely access to humanitarian assistance. Notably, the HSM Round 5 quantitative data indicates that older persons were also one of the most frequently reported groups of population that were **less able or unable to meet their everyday needs** (reported by respondents in **33%, n=101/306** of assessed settlements).

As to recently liberated areas, interviewees in **4 out of 5** settlements of interest reported that people had sufficient access to information via multiple channels/sources. Even in the case of **Bila Krynytsia** where limited access to information was reported, the interviewee highlighted that those who managed to access information about humanitarian assistance shared it with other people in their communities.

Consistently, **face-to-face communication** was the most frequently cited means of communication used by people to access information about humanitarian assistance, along with messaging apps, such as **Telegram** (both reported by **3 out of 5** interviewees).

Procedures and referral pathways to reporting cases of protection issues

Interviewees were also asked to share information about the perceived level of awareness among people in the settlements of interest about reporting mechanisms for **sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), gender-based violence (GBV), human trafficking or other protection issues**.

Overall, in most cases (**6 out of 10**), interviewees in assessed GCA settlements reported **some level of awareness** among people about such reporting mechanisms. While in a few of these cases interviewees highlighted that the **level of awareness was very limited**, in other cases interviewees highlighted that people were generally aware on where to report such cases. Half of the interviewees highlighted that people could potentially **report such cases to the police**.

In **all 5** settlements in recently liberated areas, the interviewees reported that people were perceived to have **some information about the reporting procedures for cases of SEA, GBV, human trafficking, and other protection issues**. Interviewees familiar with the situation in Novovorontsovka, Irpin, and Bila Krynytsia particularly highlighted possibilities to **report to the police or law enforcement bodies in such cases**.

Notably, some interviewees in assessed settlements both in GCA and recently liberated areas also shared perceptions that **these topics were not discussed much within the community**, and this may have resulted in a **certain level of underreporting of these matters** by interviewees.

Endnotes:

1. IOM, [Ukraine Internal Displacement Report: General Population Survey](#), Round 7, 23 July 2022.
 2. UN OCHA, [Ukraine Situation Report](#), 13 April 2022.
 3. 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 to and after the escalation.
 4. REACH, [Humanitarian Situation Monitoring in Ukraine, Round 5](#), August 2022.
 5. Throughout this brief, KIs of semi-structured data collection will be referred to as interviewees, while KIs of structured data collection will be referred to as respondents.
 6. Settlements of interest: Kryvyi Rih, Pavlohrad, and Pershotravensk (Dnipropetrovska), Yaremche (Ivano-Frankivska), and Vyshneve (Kyivska).
 7. Settlements of interest: Kryvyi Rih and Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovska), Yaremche (Ivano-Frankivska), Zmiiv (Kharkivska), and Truskavets (Lvivska).
 8. Settlements of interest: Novovorontsovka (Khersonska), Bila Krynytsia (Mykolaivska), Irpin (Kyivska), Verkhnia Syrovatka (Sumska), and Semenivka (Chernihivska).
- While these settlements also fall under the category of GCAs, for the purpose of differentiation of findings, they will be referred to separately as "recently liberated areas" throughout the brief.