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DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

DRC Quarterly Protection monitoring Report

January–March 2025

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Introduction

This report summarises the findings of DRC protection monitoring conducted in Ukraine in Sumy and Chernihiv Oblasts in the North, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts in the East, Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts in the South between January to March 2025. This report seeks to identify trends in protection risks and rights violations, challenges facing conflict-affected populations, and barriers in access to services (particularly for the most vulnerable) across surveyed oblasts during the reporting period. Findings inform ongoing and planned humanitarian response, enable identifying vulnerable people for individual support, and support evidence-based advocacy on behalf of persons of concern. Findings from protection monitoring are visualized in an interactive dashboard, enabling DRC and all relevant stakeholders to easily access this data.

To view the Protection Monitoring dashboard summarizing the main findings for the reporting period, click here.

Key findings include:

- Escalating hostilities in northern, eastern, and southern oblasts (especially in Sumy, Kharkiv, Donetsk oblasts) drove both mandatory and voluntary displacement, with over 47,500 evacuated from border areas. Voluntary evacuations in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts occurred despite the lack of formal evacuation orders.
- Vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities and elderly faced barriers to safe evacuation, including lack of accessible transport and information.
- Fears of conscription from men of conscription age poses a barrier in evacuations and willingness to access services.
- Fear of mobilization continues to lead to widespread self-confinement among men, impacting their access to services, livelihoods and family cohesion.
- Sense of insecurity remains high, especially in Sumy, Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts due to aerial attacks, UXO/landmine contamination, and loitering munitions.
- Assessment participants share that bomb shelters are often inaccessible to vulnerable populations, which highlights major gaps in inclusive emergency preparedness.
- Women and girls continue to face increased GBV risks, with reported cases of intimate partner violence, online harassment, and survival sex.
- Despite high mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs, existing resilience centres and MHPSS initiatives remain underfunded and inconsistently available.
- Loss or inaccessibility of civil/HLP documentation blocks access to compensation, social assistance, and legal remedies.
- Displaced persons in residing in informal housing arrangements face eviction risk, poor shelter conditions, and exclusion from support programs. The right to housing is undermined by informal rentals, inadequate shelters, and legal insecurity.
- Access to education is limited by displacement, infrastructure damage, and lack of inclusive services—especially for children with disabilities.
- Access to healthcare continues to be hindered by facility damage, provider shortages, and logistical barriers, including cost and lack of access to transportation. Access to secure employment remains a challenge, with IDPs,

women, and persons with disabilities disproportionately affected by challenges including discrimination, childcare burdens, and skills mismatches.

- Access to secure employment remains a challenge, with IDPs, women, and persons with disabilities disproportionately affected by challenges including discrimination, childcare burdens, and skills mismatches.

Methodology

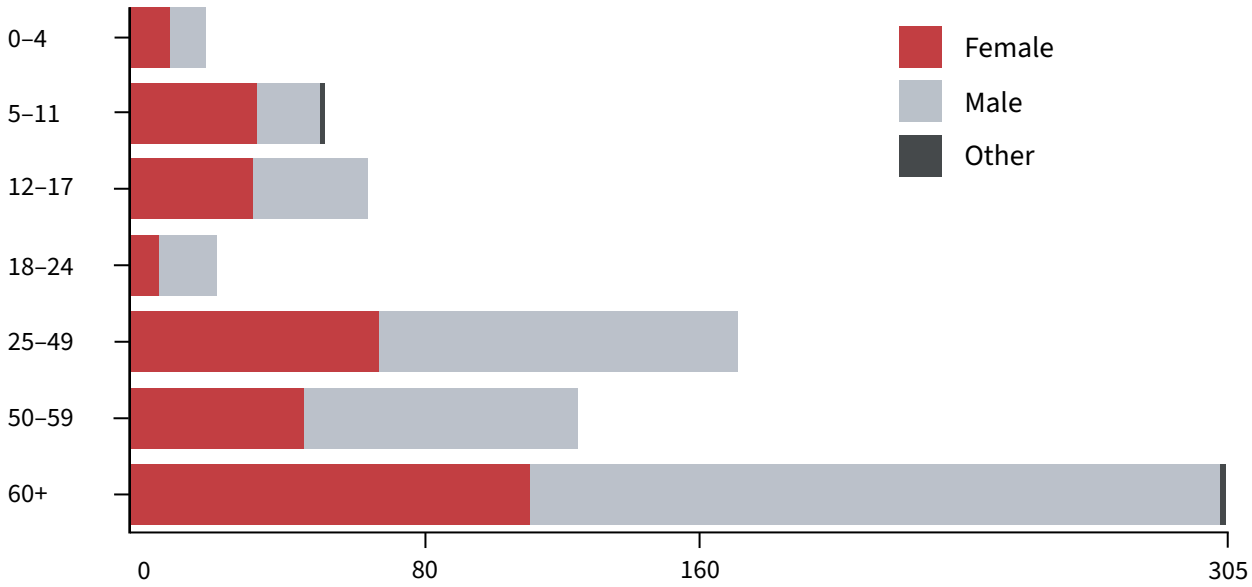
Protection monitoring data has been gathered through a mixed methodology approach including in-person household surveys, key informant (KI) interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and direct observation. The report also reflects the findings of protection monitoring carried out at the level of the Protection Cluster community, which alongside other protection partners, DRC supports using structured KI interviews. The diversity of data collection methods allows for gaining richer information and more in-depth insights into individuals' and groups' perceptions of needs and capacities. This collection of data and information is complemented by secondary data review and information shared during coordination meetings at local, regional and national levels. DRC protection monitoring activities target a variety of groups including IDP, returnees and non-displaced people directly exposed to and affected by the current armed conflict in both rural and urban areas.

Graph 1. Household respondents per displacement group

Between the 1st of January and the 31st of March 2025, DRC protection teams surveyed 323 households corresponding to 767 individuals. Most of the surveyed households were affected non-displaced (59%—190 respondents). Of those surveyed 27% (86 respondents) were IDPs and 14% (47 respondents) were returnees. A total of 99% of the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, 58% were females, while the average age of surveyed individuals was 43 years old. The average household size of those surveyed was 2.4 people.

In addition, to complement the quantitative data collection, a further 109 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted (including 34 National Protection Cluster KIIs). The KIIs targeted representatives of local authorities, community group representatives and community leaders, collective/transit sites' staff, social workers and humanitarian workers. DRC also conducted 45 focus group discussions (FGDs) reaching 401 participants from the wider community, including 328 female and 73 male participants.

Graph 2. Surveyed households per age and gender groups



Context Update

Between January and March 2025, Ukraine's security landscape was shaped by geopolitical developments, including a shift in US foreign policy under the new Trump administration. For example, temporary suspensions in US military aid and intelligence-sharing undermined Ukraine's defence capacity, contributing to further incremental territorial losses. While Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk remained under Ukrainian control, areas such as Kursk were ceded. In the north, Chernihiv saw a rise in cross-border shelling from Russia's Bryansk region, while Sumy faced increased attacks on infrastructure and border communities due to operations in Kursk. In January alone, over 3,500 explosions were recorded in Sumy oblast, increasing to nearly 4,900 in February[1]. In March, the intensity reached a new high, with at least 6,927 explosions recorded across the oblast. As a result, at least 33 civilians were killed and 248 injured during the first three months of 2025 in Sumy oblast[2]. In March, mandatory evacuation orders were introduced in several frontline communities. As of the end of March, the total number of residents evacuated from the border areas reached 47,500, including more than 7,600 children, according to the Department of Civil Protection.

In the East, the Russian Armed Forces made modest but continuous advances in Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, with Pokrovsk and Kupiansk under heavy pressure. Intensified drone warfare, especially with 'Molniya' and 'Shahed' drones, targeted both military and civilian infrastructure, complicating humanitarian access. Southern and South-East oblasts like Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizka, and Mykolaiv remained at risk from missile and drone attacks. Kherson, in particular, experienced indiscriminate assaults, including on civilians and humanitarian personnel, with FPV drones causing the majority of casualties. The evolving tactics, lack of predictable strike patterns, and use of informants have severely disrupted aid delivery across affected regions.

[1] Цукр, January–February 2025 Як Росія обстрілювала Сумщину в січні — Цукр, Показуємо на мапах обстріли Сумщини в лютому — Цукр

[2] Цукр, 02.04.25, Показуємо на мапах обстріли Сумщини в березні — Цукр

Ongoing hostilities and aerial attacks across Novopavlivska, Velykomykhaylivska, and Mezhivska Hromadas in Synelnykivskyi Raion in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, as well as in frontline-adjacent areas of Zaporizka Oblast, have contributed to continued displacement. As of now, mandatory evacuation has not been initiated in Synelnykivskyi Raion, and displacement is occurring on a voluntary basis. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, local authorities have nominated Transit Centers (TCs) in Dnipro and Pavlohrad for temporary accommodation[3]. The TC in Synelnykove remains closed due to the absence of a mandatory evacuation order. Additionally, accommodations for evacuated persons with disabilities have been prepared in Vasylkivska Hromada, but these facilities also remain unopened at this time.

During the reporting period, several legislative and policy measures were introduced or refined with the aim of improving protections and access to housing for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected individuals. The previous Medical and Social Expert Commissions (MSEC) system was abolished and replaced with a modern framework for assessing individuals' daily functioning, aligned with international standards (International Classification of Functioning—ICF). The reform took effect on 1 January 2025, shifting the focus of disability assessment from medical diagnosis to functional capacity. Complementary amendments were adopted to harmonize existing procedures with the new evaluation system. please see: **Legal Alert Special on Disability Assessment Reform.**

Notably, an experimental rent subsidy programme was launched to support IDPs spending more than 20% of their household income on rent. The initiative, available across Ukraine excluding areas under occupation or active hostilities, provides monthly rental subsidies to eligible households. It cannot be combined with other forms of monthly assistance. To encourage formal rental arrangements and expand the housing stock, the programme also offers partial tax compensation to landlords renting to IDPs, thereby promoting longer-term leasing. Anecdotal evidence from DRCs protection and legal aid programming is that this rental subsidy scheme is heavily underutilised. DRC is currently undertaking a detailed assessment on awareness and utilisation of this scheme by IDPs which will be included in the next QPMR.

In addition, the legal framework for managing the property of individuals missing due to the war was streamlined. Notaries were granted access to the Unified Register of Missing Persons and authorized to issue guardianship certificates, as well as request banking information to safeguard property rights. The compensation process for war-damaged or destroyed housing was also updated: property guardians or family members of missing or unlawfully detained homeowners can now apply for compensation, without the need for consent from foreign or stateless co-owners. Reimbursement is permitted for repeat damages following earlier repairs, and paper applications are allowed for individuals objecting to tax identification numbers for religious reasons. Importantly, social insurance and pension guarantees were extended to civilians unlawfully detained due to the war, with the state covering social contributions during the period of detention. Finally, institutional responsibility for IDP protection shifted from the Ministry of Reintegration to the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development, reflecting efforts to enhance local-level service delivery and consolidate policy oversight.

The methodology for calculating average monthly household income for all forms of social assistance was updated. Changes include deducting not only income tax but also the military tax from salaries and allowances when determining net income. One-time payments such as severance, material support for social needs, and lump-sum benefits for civil servants are now included in income calculations. Excluded income sources from housing and utilities subsidies. please see: **Legal Analysis of Housing and Utilities Subsidies and Privileges**.

[3] A transit centre is a temporary shelter designed for displaced people who are in transit to another, longer-term accommodation or destination, or during evacuation efforts.

Main protection risks and needs

Liberty and freedom of movement

Forced displacement

Displacement across eastern and southern Ukraine between January and March 2025 continued to be primarily driven by ongoing hostilities, particularly in frontline settlements and border areas. In Kharkiv and Donetska oblasts, displacement intensified from towns such as Volchansk, Kupiansk, Sloviansk, and Kramatorsk due to shelling, infrastructure damage, and proximity to frontlines. Similarly, in Sumy Oblast, intensified attacks on border hromadas like Krasnopilska and Myropilska led to mandatory evacuations, with over 6,900 explosions recorded in March alone. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, movements are concentrated from Synelnykivskyi Raion particularly from Novopavlivska, Velykomykhaylivska, and Mezhivska hromadas due to intensified aerial attacks.

Most IDPs reportedly relocate to Pavlohrad and Dnipro, where Transit Centres (TCs) are available. In the South, particularly in Khersonska and Mykolaivska oblasts, 94% of respondents cited shelling and attacks on civilians as the main cause of their displacement. Although motivations for displacement were consistent across oblasts—security threats, damaged infrastructure, and lack of services—the pace and nature of movement varied. For instance, while most movements in Kharkiv and Dnipro oblasts were self-initiated and short-distance to nearby hromadas, Sumy also saw evacuations under duress, reportedly often without adequate support or information (please see evacuations section below for more information).

Evacuations

Across eastern and northeastern oblasts, escalated hostilities between January and March 2025 have driven both voluntary and mandatory evacuations, with differing levels of coordination and support across regions. In Kharkivska and Donetska oblasts, mandatory evacuations were implemented for families with children due to intense shelling and frontline advances, with over 2,300 individuals evacuated from Kupiansk and Vovchansk and nearly 2,800 displaced from Donetska settlements such as Kostiantynivka. In Sumy Oblast, similar evacuation patterns emerged in frontline hromadas like Yunakivska and Myropilska, where mandatory orders followed intensified aerial and drone attacks. In Sumy oblast, evacuations Civil-military administrations coordinated these evacuations, while NGOs and the special police unit "White Angels" played a vital operational role. These organizations were often the only responders able to access remote and heavily affected communities, assisting with evacuations, transporting persons with disabilities, and providing essential guidance in the process. In contrast, in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts have so far seen largely voluntary movements, with no new mandatory orders in this period. In Dnipropetrovska Oblast, evacuations from Synelnykivskyi Raion particularly Novopavlivska, Velykomykhaylivska, and Mezhivska Hromadas have increased due to aerial bombings and the proximity of frontline advances. While evacuations remain voluntary, the scale of movement is modest given the absence of a formal mandatory evacuation order. In Zaporizka oblast, small-scale evacuations continue under the coordination of the Relief Coordination Centre (RCC) and partners, with no new mandatory orders announced. In these locations many people rely on self-evacuation through private means or NGO-supported transport. Financial limitations and mobility challenges remain major barriers, particularly for vulnerable individuals. In rural areas of settlement in Zaphorzhizhia, access to services such as legal aid, social assistance, and long-term housing remains fragile.

While transit and collective centers provide temporary shelter, protection risks during evacuation persist, especially for elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, and low-income families. Evacuees in Kharkiv and Donetsk reported

logistical delays, transport shortages, and fear of conscription as major deterrents, with many men choosing not to evacuate. In Sumy, the absence of accessible evacuation information left many residents uninformed or reliant on chance encounters with humanitarian responders. Reports of late pick-ups and confusion around destinations point to weak coordination mechanisms. As one woman noted, "**I left only because the White Angels saw me on the street. No one explained where we were going**". Others described chaotic coordination: "**They told us to be ready at 9 a.m., but picked us up at 3 p.m.**" Similarly, in Zaporizka and rural Dnipropetrovsk, self-evacuations remain common due to gaps in formal support, with lack of access to transport and funds continuing to be significant barriers. Though transit centers in Dnipro and Pavlohrad offer some relief, others—such as the dedicated center in Synelnykove which remains closed and specialized facilities for persons with disabilities in Vasylkivska hromada is ready but no operational. Across all oblasts, humanitarian actors stress the need for strengthened door-to-door outreach and targeted support to address the acute needs of those unable to evacuate independently.

Differences in evacuation scale and coordination also reflect broader regional disparities in preparedness and humanitarian coverage. In Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, evacuations are large-scale and often state-mandated, yet the sheer volume of displaced persons places strain on receiving centres and local resources. In contrast, Sumy oblast relies on a decentralized and NGO-driven model, which is more agile but less systematic, leaving many at risk of falling through the cracks.

Graph 3. Factors influencing displacement

Shelling, attacks on civillians	80	93.0%
Destruction or damage of housing, land and/or property due to conflict	43	50.0%
Lack of access to essential services (health, water, education, civil documentation, etc.)	25	29.1%
Infrastructure damage/destruction	19	22.1%
Lack of access to livelihoods, employment and economic opportunities	13	15.1%
Lack of access to safe and dignified shelter	10	11.6%
Exposure to UXOs/landmines	9	10.5%
Occupation of property	8	9.3%
Criminality	5	5.8%
Seeking family reunification	1	1.2%

Meanwhile, in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka, while formal evacuation mechanisms exist, the modest scale of movement belies significant unmet needs among those too vulnerable to self-evacuate. Across all regions, the absence of clear communication, accessible transport, and adequate shelter infrastructure highlights systemic gaps in the evacuation process. Despite varied operational contexts, the underlying protection risks—fragmented coordination, limited mobility, and insufficient services—are shared across oblasts and underscore the urgent need for harmonized, people-centered evacuation planning.

Vulnerable groups—including elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and low-income households—face common barriers across regions, but localised challenges shape their protection needs. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts, it was reported that older persons often remain in dangerous areas due to emotional ties and fear of insufficient support, despite the deteriorating security environment. Likewise, in Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, FGD findings indicate that participants face a lack of information both in the initial stages of relocation and afterwards. "***There was no clear information about evacuation options, available resources, and services that could help in this process***",—**FGD participant, Mykolaiv Oblast**. This creates additional challenges for people leaving their homes and complicates the process of adaptation at the place of relocation. Amongst various evacuation methods reported, the most common was self-evacuation. However, participants noted this entailed significant security risks: unverified routes. FGD participated also reported high-risk self-evacuation, with some families exposed to humiliation and threats at checkpoints. FGDs in both Kherson and Mykolaiv indicate that displaced persons are settling in nearby hromadas, living with relatives or based on verbal agreements with homeowners, paying for utilities. This creates instability, since homeowners can evict them at any time.

Graph 4. Intentions per displacement status

IDPs		
Return to the place of habitual residence	49	65.3%
Integrate into the local community	23	30.7%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	2	2.7%
Relocate to a country outside of Ukraine	1	1.3%
Non-displaced		
Stay in place of habitual residence	184	97.4%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	5	2.6%
Refugees and returnees		
Stay in place of habitual residence	39	84.8%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	7	15.2%

Meanwhile, Khersonska's aging population—40% of whom are elderly [4]—faces long-term demographic implications, as younger people increasingly relocate and may not return. In Kherson Oblast, 40% of the remaining population is elderly, as compared to approximately 25% of the country-wide population (ACAPS Thematic Report, March 2025). Further to findings from a meeting with representatives of the Protection Sub-Cluster for the South in Kherson, collective spaces are being set up, but their number is insufficient, and they do not meet the basic needs of low-mobility populations. Additionally, the perceived lack of suitability for people with mental health disorders and their families, as well as for families with pets, means people remain in their homes even in dangerous areas, which can increase the threat to their lives and health.

Intentions to return or integrate vary across regions, revealing both common aspirations and diverging trends in displacement trajectories. While many IDPs in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts express a desire to return—18% and 55% respectively—practical barriers such as damaged housing and disrupted services remain. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka, over half of IDPs (52.9%) would return if conditions improve, but the protracted conflict is pushing some to consider local integration instead. In contrast, only 15% of IDPs in the South (Kherson and Mykolaiv) wish to return, reflecting more permanent damage and deeper displacement fatigue. Access to safe and secure accommodation and challenges in accessing social services were reported as the main barriers to local integration in Sumy. While in in southern oblasts, challenges in accessing. Informal arrangements—such as living with relatives or verbal housing agreements—further undermine stability and heighten the risk of secondary displacement. Overall, while intentions to return remain strong in the east and north, realities on the ground are shifting many displaced persons toward reluctant integration amid current conflict intensity.

Self-imposed confinement and restrictions of movement

Across all monitored oblasts, fear of conscription continues to shape the mobility, behaviour, and well-being of men of conscription age, with varying levels of visibility and severity. In Mykolaivska and Khersonska oblasts, although only 12% of respondents explicitly identified conscription fears as a barrier to movement, protection teams observed a pervasive reluctance among men to discuss their experiences, suggesting widespread unreported anxiety. Reports of mass document checks by Territorial Recruitment Centres (TRCs), along with allegations of psychological pressure, arbitrary detention, and confiscation of personal devices, were noted by assessment participants as creating a climate of fear. These practices have led many men to self-isolate, avoid public spaces, or decline formal employment, directly impacting household income and mental health. Women in these regions increasingly assume responsibility for both caregiving and income generation, compounding their burdens.

Similar dynamics are evident in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts, where assessment participants report growing levels of self-confinement among men due to intensified mobilization enforcement. Fear of TRC patrols and increased document checks has significantly curtailed men's engagement with essential services such as healthcare, legal aid, and humanitarian assistance. The psychosocial toll is compounded by reduced economic participation, eroding household resilience and deepening reliance on social or humanitarian support. In more rural settings, these trends are exacerbated by limited service availability, placing displaced or vulnerable families at even greater risk of social isolation and unmet needs.

In frontline oblasts such as Kharkiv and Donetsk oblast, the impacts of conscription-related fear are even more acute. Key informants and focus group participants described a widespread pattern of self-withdrawal among men, contributing to the predominantly female, elderly, and child composition of displaced populations. In communities like Berestyn and Savynska, men reportedly "**try to remain invisible**," often hiding indoors and avoiding movement altogether. This behaviour, while aimed at avoiding mobilization, can disrups family unity and intensifies the

[4] ACAPS Thematic Report, March 2025

caregiving and financial responsibilities shouldered by women. The visibility of individuals in rural communities further complicates concealment efforts, as residents noted that "**you can't hide in the village—everyone sees everything**." This environment fosters pervasive fear, undermining access to services and placing additional strain on already-fragile coping mechanisms in conflict-affected communities.

Life, safety and security

Sense of security

Across all monitored oblasts, the population's sense of safety remains significantly affected by continued hostilities, with regional variations reflecting proximity to the frontlines and intensity of attacks. In Sumy, the sense of insecurity rose sharply to 58%, driven by ongoing aerial attacks, fear of renewed occupation, and repeated shelling of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals. Similar fears were reported in Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, although the percentage of respondents reporting insecurity slightly decreased from 28% to 24% compared to the previous quarter. Attacks in these areas included strikes on medical facilities and administrative buildings, reinforcing perceptions of persistent danger. Meanwhile, in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts, 44.4% of households reported poor safety, with notable gender disparity—61% of women versus 28% of men—reflecting differentiated exposure and coping capacities. Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts also reported widespread fear, with nearly half of respondents citing shelling as a primary concern. The presence of loitering munitions and FPV drones has escalated risks in urban and frontline areas alike, notably in Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, often impeding emergency response and medical evacuation.

Graph 5. Factors influencing the sense of safety

Bombardment/shelling or threat of shelling	149	97.4%
Landmines or UXOs contamination	20	13.1%
Presence of armed or security actors	20	13.1%
Fighting between armed or security actors	3	2.0%
Risks of eviction	2	1.3%
Criminality	2	1.3%
Risks of arbitrary arrest/detention	1	0.7%
Risks of abduction or enforced disappearance	1	0.7%
Other	1	0.7%

The increasing use of explosive weapons and drone strikes has led to widespread contamination by unexploded ordnance (UXO), posing long-term risks to life and mobility, especially in recently de-occupied and rural areas. In Kherson, 48% of respondents reported the presence of UXO or landmines—the highest among the regions assessed. In both Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, residents report that they continue to encounter explosive remnants in gardens, fields, and forests, restricting access to firewood, farmland, and basic resources. Natural processes such as rain and soil erosion further displace landmines, risking undermining demining efforts, particularly in Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts. Legal obstacles—such as the requirement for landowner consent—further complicate clearance operations. Debris and construction waste, especially in Mykolaiv, add to the physical hazards in communities, with elderly residents particularly affected by the inability to safely manage their surroundings. Despite government and humanitarian demining efforts, community perceptions suggest limited progress, raising concerns about sustained mobility restrictions, risk taking behaviour, and the continued threat of injury and death.

While intercommunity relations remain stable across most oblasts—with 76.5% of respondents in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka reporting no major tensions—access to essential services is increasingly constrained by insecurity. In Sumy and Kherson oblasts, residents delay or avoid medical treatment due to fears of shelling, particularly at hospitals. While in Kharkiv, feelings of safety are often limited to daylight hours, and public disorder—including vandalism and violence by unsupervised youth—further erodes trust in local authorities. In both Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts, challenges faced by persons with limited mobility were frequently cited, especially regarding access to inadequate or poorly equipped bomb shelters. Reports from FGDs highlighted barriers such as lack of ramps, locked entrances during evenings, and the absence of water, toilets, or internet access. These conditions disproportionately affect vulnerable groups during air raids. Although some oblasts—like Dnipropetrovsk—demonstrate higher levels of resilience and stable social cohesion, escalating risks from UXO, damaged infrastructure, and constrained humanitarian access continue to undermine recovery and protection outcomes across eastern and southern Ukraine.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka Oblasts, protection monitoring has identified a range of emerging and compounding risks that fall outside conventional protection categories but significantly impact the safety, dignity, and well-being of affected populations. These include risks associated with deteriorating security conditions, barriers to evacuation and shelter access, and critical service gaps in underserved and high-risk areas. The evolving security environment in Synelnykivskyi Raion (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast), marked by intensified aerial bombardment and increased proximity to the frontlines, has led to sustained voluntary evacuations. However, many individuals, particularly elderly persons and persons with disabilities (PwDs), remain in affected areas without access to safe shelters or timely evacuation support. The absence of a functioning transit center in Synelnykove further hinders the coordinated provision of life-saving assistance. Discussions during the February 2025 Protection Cluster meeting in Dnipro underscored the urgent need for operational transit centers and accessible collective accommodations that include case management, physical accessibility, and support with documentation. In both Synelnykove and Lyubimivka (Zaporizka Oblast), residents reported a reluctance to use bomb shelters due to physical inaccessibility or alert fatigue, despite recent civilian casualties—highlighting critical gaps in inclusive crisis preparedness and risk communication.

Additional risks were identified across both oblasts, with a notable impact on rural and isolated communities. In Shyrochany (Apostolivska Hromada), residents expressed concern over safety threats from stray dogs, particularly for children and older persons. In Volodymyrivka and other remote settlements, the lack of public transport continues to restrict access to healthcare, social services, and essential administrative processes, disproportionately affecting PwDs and elderly individuals. A significant outflow of qualified professionals, including teachers and social workers, has also created service delivery gaps in localities such as Mykhailo-Zavodske and Shyrochany, placing additional strain on already limited community resources.

Protection concerns for children and elderly IDPs remain prominent. Focus group discussions in Synelnykove highlighted the growing social isolation of elderly displaced persons, which increases risks of neglect and deteriorating mental health in the absence of inclusive community activities or home-based care.

Child protection actors identified an urgent need to scale up psychosocial support (PSS) for children affected by conflict-related trauma, noting that while early intervention services exist—such as in Novomykolaivka (Zaporizka Oblast)—their reach remains limited. Key informants also raised emerging concerns regarding the reintegration of war veterans, suggesting that this issue is likely to escalate in complexity and visibility in upcoming quarters.

These findings reinforce the necessity for area-based protection approaches that are tailored to the specific risks facing underserved populations in rural and frontline communities. They also highlight the importance of inclusive infrastructure, targeted outreach, and strengthened multisectoral coordination to address evolving protection threats and ensure that no group is left behind.

Gender Based Violence

Across conflict-affected oblasts, the prolonged presence of military personnel and the militarization of civilian areas continue to exacerbate GBV risks, particularly for women and girls. In Novomykolaivska Hromada (Zaporizka) and Synelnykove city (Dnipropetrovsk), a persistent military presence over the past two years has reportedly heightened vulnerabilities, even in the absence of directly reported incidents this quarter. Historically, such environments are associated with increased risks of sexual harassment and intimidation in public spaces, especially near military installations. These findings align with broader trends observed in Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, where women and adolescent girls have reported increased fear of harassment linked to the growing visibility of male-dominated security formations.

Findings from a Rapid GBV assessment: Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts (January 2025) highlight the ongoing and multifaceted nature of GBV in these regions. Women face economic, psychological, and sexual violence both within and outside the home, with intimate partner violence reportedly on the rise. Contributing factors include post-conflict stress, alcoholism, and the reintegration challenges of veterans. Despite the apparent increase in cases, survivors often refrain from seeking help due to fear of stigma, lack of confidentiality, and limited trust in institutional support systems. Particularly alarming is the emergence of new forms of GBV targeting teenage girls, such as online harassment and extortion via social media. Economic hardship has further compounded vulnerabilities, increasing risks of survival sex and exploitation. In Kherson, GBV response services reportedly remain critically under-resourced, with a lack of rape kits and trained personnel limiting survivors' access to justice and medical support.

In Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, GBV remains significantly underreported, although key informants continue to raise concerns about intimate partner violence and the structural barriers that prevent disclosure. One case from Donetsk oblast described a man abusing both his wife and mother, with the victims unwilling to report due to fear of retaliation and social stigma. These barriers are consistent with previous reporting periods and illustrate the ongoing challenge of identifying and addressing GBV in high-risk, conflict-affected settings. Additionally, women—particularly those heading households—face heightened vulnerability due to gendered displacement dynamics. The loss of male family members through mobilization and conscription has left many women struggling to access housing, livelihoods, legal aid, and essential services, compounding protection risks in already fragile environments.

During the monitoring period, key informants in Chernihiv report that there has been a notable increase in GBV as a result of the ongoing conflict. In a meeting with authorities in Borzna, Nizhynskyi Raion, Chernihiv Oblast, it was revealed that the number of GBV survivors had doubled since the onset of the war; noting that GBV continues to be significantly underreported so the real number of cases is likely considerably higher than official figures. In response to the increase in cases, local authorities shared that they had acquired a special vehicle to enable quicker responses to these cases. While the authorities emphasized that the additional vehicle allows for faster reaction times to GBV incidents, they also acknowledged the significant challenges they face in addressing these cases due to the lack of a comprehensive support system for survivors, making it incredibly difficult to provide the necessary care and assistance to survivors.

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress continues to affect conflict-impacted populations across all monitored oblasts, with regional variations shaped by proximity to hostilities, displacement status, and access to services. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka Oblasts, the main sources of psychological strain remain consistent: fear of injury or death (66%), property damage (60%), and displacement (49%) are the most frequently cited stressors. Men of conscription age also experience elevated anxiety linked to fears of mobilization and movement restrictions. In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, while the proportion of respondents fearing direct threats to life dropped by 28% compared to the previous period. In the previous reporting period, DRC had received anecdotal information about a reported increase in social media alerts about the imminent threat of bombardments that was highlighted by participants as a source of anxiety which could account for the increased fear of threats to life in the previous reporting periods. Similarly, assessment participants reported during this reporting period that these alerts on social media have subsequently decreased which may account for the reduction in fear of threats to life during this reporting period.

Uncertainty about the future, economic instability, and adaptation difficulties among IDPs continue to drive high stress levels. Sumy residents reported persistent emotional exhaustion from prolonged exposure to violence, with one respondent stating, "**There is not a moment of peace… people are very tired**".

Graph 6. Major stress factors

Fear of being killed or injured by armed violence	158	49.7%
Worries about the future	109	34.3%
Worries about the children	92	28.9%
Fear of property being damaged by armed violence	88	27.7%
Displacement related stress	77	24.2%
Lack of access to specialized medical services	26	8.2%
Lack of access to employment opportunities	14	4.4%
Fear of conscription	13	4.1%
Other	8	2.5%
Lack of access to basic services	6	1.9%
Missing family members	2	0.6%
Stigmatization/discrimination	1	0.3%

This mirrors distress reported in Kharkiv and Donetsk, where protracted insecurity, family separation, and social isolation—especially among female-headed households and the elderly—have severely eroded emotional well-being. Across oblasts, recurring themes include disrupted sleep, emotional fatigue, and a lack of clear coping mechanisms or support networks.

Particularly vulnerable groups including women, children, persons with disabilities (PwDs), the elderly, and IDPs, face compounding stressors that exacerbate mental health risks. In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, analysis from FGDs indicates that women the burden of caregiving, economic responsibilities, and lack of support as key drivers of psychological distress. Children and adolescents are also reportedly exhibiting signs of psychological trauma, particularly in Kharkiv, where KI reports indicate that temporary psychological support interventions have not been sustained due to funding cuts. In Chernihiv, IDPs reported facing unique challenges tied to housing insecurity and the constant threat of eviction was noted as key factor contributing to psychological distress. One displaced woman stated, "**I live in constant fear that I will be evicted**", reflecting how insecure living conditions amplify psychological harm, especially for the elderly, PwDs, and women who can be disproportionately affected by the consequences of repeated displacement. Despite these documented needs, stigma around mental health—particularly among men—and systemic barriers such as financial limitations and lack of awareness continue to limit service uptake across all oblasts.

While community-based initiatives and resilience centres offer promising models of psychosocial support, gaps in coverage, staffing, and outreach remain significant as noted by assessment participants. In Dnipropetrovsk oblast, Resilience Centres like the one in Kamianske provide targeted mental health and social support to vulnerable groups, including youth and families affected by conflict. However, these centres face persistent challenges including limited funding, insufficient specialized staff, and low awareness of availability of services among the affected populations, resulting in high variability in service availability and sufficiency across facilities. Assessment participants identified a critical unmet need remains in Pavlohradskyi raion, where large numbers of IDPs from Donetsk oblast have strained the already weak psychosocial infrastructure. Elsewhere, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services were noted as remaining sporadic or under-resourced;such as in Kharkiv where mobile MHPSS services rarely reach remote areas. While some locations in Kharkiv were reported to benefit from sporadic visits by MHPSS actors, gaps in service provision persist, particularly in hard to reach or remote locations. A KI participant from Kharkiv oblast noted, "**Children are depressed… a psychologist from….X organisation came several times. No work is being done now"**. In Chernihiv, despite clear psychological needs among IDPs, a combination of stigma, logistical barriers, and resource scarcity limits access to consistent care. Across all oblasts, the fragmented nature of MHPSS programming highlights the urgent need for scalable, community-anchored interventions that prioritize vulnerable groups, integrate mental health into broader protection responses, and address the systemic issues which drive emotional distress such as housing insecurity and displacement trauma.Across Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, children were consistently identified as among the most affected groups in the community. This was stated in nearly every FGD and KII, where participants described a combination of psychosocial distress, disrupted routines, limited educational engagement, and long-term uncertainty shaping children's lives. As one FGD participant from Berestyn, Kharkivska oblasts said, "**The children are scared because they witnessed strong fighting. The emotional state has deteriorated. The kids had to grow up quickly**." Participants also reported that many children have been separated from their fathers due to mobilization, or from their mothers who moved abroad leading to separated family units and reduced emotional support at home. FGD participants from Kharkiv noted growing concerns about teenagers engaging in substance use and even violence. One FGD participant from Kharkiv oblast reported a severe incident: "**A group of teenagers beat a man to death**," highlighting the deterioration of peer influence and lack of structured activities.

Civil status, access to remedies and justice

Barriers to accessing documentation

Access to civil, legal, and housing documentation continues to remain a widespread protection concern across all monitored oblasts, with displaced persons, people with disabilities (PwDs), and the elderly disproportionately affected. In Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Chernihiv oblasts, assessments participants noted that the destruction or loss of documents during emergency evacuations and shelling has created significant barriers to accessing basic services, humanitarian assistance, and legal entitlements. Respondents in these oblasts reported frequent challenges in restoring critical documents such as passports, IDP certificates, and property ownership records. In Chernihiv, the inability to document new residence status or provide proof of property ownership has hindered access to compensation and assistance, particularly for IDPs housed informally. Participants described the impossibility of meeting rigid evidence requirements, such as photo documentation of destroyed property, due to security concerns in front-line communities. Meanwhile, in Sumy, respondents shared that PwDs and their caregivers are caught in complex bureaucratic procedures to obtain or renew disability status or guardianship, which limits access to social benefits and legal protection. Across these regions, legal exclusion is being deepened by administrative burdens, financial constraints, and lack of information—factors that especially impact individuals in remote or rural areas.

Southern and southeastern oblasts (such as Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizka) show similar trends of, documentation loss or inaccessibility undermining protection outcomes for conflict-affected populations. In Mykolaiv and Kherson, the primary concern lies in the loss of housing, land, and property (HLP) documents which impedes access to housing compensation, inheritance claims, and inclusion in state recovery programs. Nearly 40% of respondents reported administrative delays and high costs as the main obstacles to document restoration, while distrust in public institutions further dissuaded individuals from engaging with authorities. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka, lack of identity documents and unregistered IDP status affects more than 20% of surveyed households, particularly recent arrivals from active conflict zones. Older persons, PwDs ace unique barriers due to physical inaccessibility of service centres. While men of conscription age face barriers in accessing documentation due to concerns regarding mobilisation. A striking 67% of individuals facing documentation issues in these oblasts attributed it to being unable to physically access administrative offices, underscoring the importance of mobile and decentralized service delivery models. The absence of valid documentation in these areas not only blocks access to social protection schemes and humanitarian aid but contributes to long-term invisibility within administrative systems, undermining pathways to durable solutions.

Despite geographic and contextual differences, recurring barriers—including bureaucratic complexity, lack of information, and centralization of services—are consistently preventing vulnerable individuals from exercising their rights. Across all oblasts, services remain overly centralized in urban hubs, making access difficult for those in rural or front-line communities. In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, transportation costs and the limited reach of state services were repeatedly cited as critical barriers, with some individuals even refusing to engage due to personal or religious beliefs. In Sumy, the reported failure of some medical professionals to proactively support PwDs in navigating documentation procedures was highlighted as a key gap in service provision. These layered bureaucratic and logistical barriers compound protection risks by reinforcing exclusion, deepening poverty, and prolonging displacement. There is an urgent need across all regions for simplified administrative procedures, legal assistance tailored to vulnerable groups, and expansion of mobile documentation and outreach services to ensure equitable access to rights and support systems.

Access to housing, land and property documentation and compensation

Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights violations remain a significant protection concern across conflict-affected oblasts, with widespread loss of documentation, destruction of property, and barriers to compensation persisting throughout the reporting period. In frontline oblasts such as Sumy, Kharkiv, and Donetsk, there has been a marked increase in households without proper HLP documentation, rising to from 24% to 34% in Sumy and from 16% to 62% in Kharkiv. This increase was reportedly driven by displacement, occupation, and the destruction of archives. Many affected individuals are unable to access state compensation due to a lack of ownership documents or because their homes remain inaccessible due to security conditions. Meanwhile, IDPs face a distinct intersection of barriers, as they not only do they lack legal proof of property ownership or residence, but the evidentiary requirements imposed by compensation mechanisms, such as providing photographic proof of destruction are often impossible to fulfil.

In Nikopol and Barvinkivska hromadas in Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, respondents highlighted how decades of informal tenure remain unrecognized by state systems, limiting eligibility for state support. Vulnerable groups such as elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and those living near the frontlines face particularly steep barriers due to their limited mobility, legal knowledge, and administrative reach. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka, these challenges are reportedly compounded by high housing demand, rising material costs, and administrative delays. While some progress has been made e.g., 2,065 compensation approvals in Zaporizka under the eVidnovlennia program, destruction continues to outpace reconstruction, and systemic issues undermine impact. IDPs in these oblasts often lack formal rental agreements, with over 40% fearing eviction, and inheritance or registration issues continue to block access to compensation. Delays by the Bureau of Technical Inventory (BTI), limited inspection capacity, and compensation amounts that do not cover actual reconstruction costs have left many internally displaced persons (IDPs)—especially the elderly and those with limited mobility—living in unsafe or inadequate shelter. Despite these challenges, local actors and humanitarian partners have initiated promising practices, including legal aid for document recovery, advocacy for improved administrative responsiveness, and the piloting of digital solutions like the 'yeZhyttia' platform.

In contrast, oblasts such as Chernihiv, Mykolaiv, and Kherson highlight how structural and geographic disparities exacerbate HLP challenges, particularly for IDPs renting in host communities or living in highly insecure areas. In Chernihiv, the absence of formal lease agreements leaves IDPs exposed to evictions and exploitation, with landlords imposing arbitrary restrictions and price hikes. Meanwhile, in Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, respondents reported uneven access to eVidnovlennia compensation, particularly in frontline settlements where some Commissions refuse to conduct assessments, citing ongoing insecurity as the reason. Although drone-assisted assessments have been introduced in some areas, improper practices—such as requiring individuals or NGOs to purchase the drones—have undermined the intended equity of this innovation. In both oblasts, the complexity and cost of restoring lost documentation remain primary barriers, and compensation amounts are often insufficient to meet basic repair needs. These disparities underline the need for a more inclusive and conflict-sensitive HLP response, particularly for those in informal housing, frontline zones, and vulnerable rental arrangements.

Non-discrimination and equality

Monitoring data from the reporting period indicates that while overt incidents of discrimination remain limited, persistent systemic and structural barriers continue to undermine equal access to rights and services for some populations, including people with disabilities, persons from the Roma community and IDPs. These challenges are compounded by conflict dynamics, resource constraints, and fragmented implementation of inclusion measures.

People with Disabilities (PwD) remain among the most visibly excluded, with physical inaccessibility constituting a primary barrier to participation and protection. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts, PwDs reported experiencing obstacles accessing administrative offices, health services, education, and public spaces due to non-compliant

infrastructure and accessibility standards. While in Mykolaiv Oblast, transportation limitations were frequently cited. These shortcomings to broader protection risks, including psychosocial distress, economic marginalization, and health hazards from unsafe infrastructure for PwD. Importantly, some progress is being made through advocacy, including the planned introduction of a social taxi service in Mykolaiv, though access will be prioritized for children and limited to a specific route.

PwDs and their caregivers reported in Sumy Oblast face significant barriers in realizing their broader economic and social rights, including access to state assistance, rehabilitation, cultural and information about entitlements. Many FGD participants noted a lack of clear communication and outreach from social protection services, leading to missed benefits or burdensome procedures. Even when aware of their entitlements, PwDs often face complex and exhausting procedures. For example, to receive reimbursement for a talking watch, a blind man had to repeatedly bring in receipts only to be told they were not the correct type. "**How do I know what the right check looks like?**" he asked. It was reported that some services, such as orthopaedic footwear or vouchers for sanatorium treatment, are no longer accessible, or are poorly adapted—leading to long delays and low-quality outcomes. "**I received the last pair of orthopedic shoes five years ago… they mixed up the shoes for my right and left feet**", said a woman in Krolevets. These challenges underline the urgent need for improved communication and increased services for PwD to ensure that individuals—particularly those with limited mobility or information access—can realize their rights in practice.

The Roma community continues to face discrimination and exclusion in several oblasts, particularly in Mykolaiv and Kharkiv. While Roma families in some areas, such as Berestyn (Kharkiv Oblast), are reportedly engaged with social services and possess complete documentation, this has not translated into reduced stigma. It was reported that communities continue to view Roma populations with suspicion, perceiving them as a risk or as separate from the local population. In Mykolaiv oblast, assessment participants advised that Roma communities remain socially segregated and are often not included in local initiatives to reduce discrimination or improve service access. Unlike PwDs, whose marginalization is often linked to structural barriers, the Roma face intersectional discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and displacement history, underscoring the need for community-level anti-discrimination strategies that go beyond service provision to tackle deeply rooted social stigma.

Integration of IDPs into the host community

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Dnipropetrovsk, Chernihiv, and Mykolaiv Oblasts, report varying degrees of social exclusion and service access barriers. In Dnipropetrovsk, IDPs, especially elderly individuals, report a lack of integration and limited participation in community life, which increases their vulnerability to psychosocial distress.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk, social attitudes between IDPs and host communities are positive, however there are challenges with access to economic opportunities. According to IDP FGD participants in Berestyn, Donetska oblast, the host community first welcomed them with open arms as the local authorities and communities offered assistance. However, this assistance has decreased over time as the conflict continues, and economic inclusion barriers continue to pose challenges to integration efforts. FGD participants indicated that employers are hesitant to recruit them because they believe they will eventually return home. Despite these challenges, some IDPs, especially those whose homes had been destroyed, expressed their desire to rebuild their lives locally. In Izium, Kharkivska oblast, FGD participants described the relationship with the host community as "**quite good**." Many IDPs who internally relocated within the same hromada think that it helped them to easily integrate in the community. However, participants highlighted lack of employment and poor access to information about available services. "**Unfortunately, people are not well aware of the issues of where to turn for help**," one participant from Berestyn noted. Tensions were also reported between host communities and IDPs, particularly around perceptions of unequal humanitarian aid distribution.

It seems to be a shared belief within some host communities that displaced people receive disproportionate support. Humanitarian food package is reportedly received only once per month in Savynska hromada, Kharkiv oblast, and not all eligible individuals benefit equally, causing further dissatisfaction. Also in Berestyn, it was reported that tension arises during the distribution of humanitarian aid, when it was reported that IDPs registered for support in the village but no longer reside there. In resource-constrained communities where aid deliveries are infrequent and expectations are high, these dynamics have the potential to undermine social cohesion if left unaddressed. Similarly in Chernihiv, respondents advised that IDPs are prioritized for humanitarian aid, creating tension and a perception of inequality among vulnerable host populations, including PwDs. Overall this points to a need for improved practices regarding communication with communities (CwC) and accountability to affected populations (AAP), and more vulnerability vs. status based targeting of support.

Basic Economic and Social Rights

Right to Housing

Across all monitored oblasts, access to adequate, secure, and affordable housing remains one of the most pressing protection concerns for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected populations. A total of 49% of respondents surveyed across all oblasts reported concerns related to their accommodation; an increase of 13% in comparison to the previous reporting period. Poor condition of the accommodation, security and safety risks, as well as concerns regarding the risk of eviction, continue to be the main challenges reported.

Graph 7. Concerns about the current place of residence

Accommodation's condition	84	53.2%
Security and safety risks	43	27.2%
Risk of eviction	22	13.9%
Lack of support for damaged housing	21	13.3%
Lack of functioning utilities	18	11.4%
Overcrowded/Lack of privacy	4	2.5%
Lack or loss of ownership documentation	3	1.9%
Lack of connectivity	3	1.9%
Not disability inclusive	3	1.9%

Despite variations in experience depending on geography, housing arrangements, and available support, the situation remains precarious, with displacement continuing to erode housing security and undermine prospects for durable solutions. In multiple oblasts, displaced individuals reported relying heavily on personal networks including friends, family, or acquaintances to access temporary shelter. In areas such as Chuhuivskyi and Izium rayons (Kharkivska Oblast), and Pryvillia village (Donetska Oblast), many IDPs advised that they are lived rent-free in inherited homes, dachas, or with relatives. These arrangements, while financially relieving, often lacked formal contracts or legal protections. Participants expressed anxiety over the potential loss of housing if interpersonal relationships changed or homeowners returned. Similar verbal or informal agreements were reported in Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts, where displaced persons sometimes entered into undocumented rent-to-own agreements. Despite making significant investments—such as utility hookups or repairs—tenants often faced the risk of sudden eviction without any legal recourse.

Housing insecurity is compounded by the widespread absence of affordable rental options. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka Oblasts, over 40% of IDPs surveyed expressed fear of eviction, a concern echoed by participants in Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Sumy oblasts. While in some urban centers like Kharkiv city, residents of collective centers (CCs) raised concerns over unclear payment structures and the lack of transparency around service charges, many in rural areas across Chernihiv and Zaporizka oblasts reported overcrowding or residing in damaged or unsafe homes due to a lack of viable alternatives. In Mykhailo-Zavodske, Shyrochany, and Synelnykove hromdas (Dnipropetrovska Oblast), residents described living in housing with broken windows, exposed wiring, and no heating or sanitation. Similarly, in Chernihiv Oblast, FGD participants noted that some houses often lacked running water or indoor plumbing, and repairs were typically shouldered by tenants without support from landlords or local authorities.

Legal and bureaucratic barriers further obstruct access to safe and secure housing. In Zaporizka and Sumy oblasts, residents cited difficulty accessing compensation mechanisms due to unregistered ownership, inheritance disputes, or missing documentation—a situation often worsened by displacement. Even IDPs who obtained housing certificates under state programs frequently reported an inability to utilize them due to a lack of available funds or housing stock. In Chernihiv and Sumy, landlords were often unwilling to sign formal leases, and IDPs were unaware of their rights to request one, leaving them exposed to the risk of arbitrary eviction. The experiences of specific vulnerable groups—particularly persons with disabilities, older persons, and women-headed households—point to heightened risks. Across all regions, participants noted that IDPs with low mobility or disabilities struggled to find accessible housing. In Dnipropetrovsk and Sumy oblasts, it was reported that the absence of adapted infrastructure or ground-floor units rendered many homes effectively uninhabitable. Female-headed households, especially in Chernihiv and Mykolaiv oblasts, reported discriminatory treatment in the rental market, where landlords perceived them as less financially stable and were less likely to accommodate their housing needs.

Collective centers offer temporary shelter for many displaced persons, but the conditions are variable and frequently inadequate. In Kharkiv, residents placed into CCs from transit centers by volunteers expressed concerns over unclear management structures and fears of eviction, especially among households whose homes were destroyed. In Sumy, one participant reported paying over 2,700 UAH for a room, despite a total income of less than 5,000 UAH per month. Many described the psychological strain of short-term lease renewals and the inability to plan for the future. Across oblasts, evictions from both formal and informal settings were frequently reported after residents invested in improving the premises, indicating an ongoing pattern of exploitation and legal vulnerability.

At the policy level, some positive developments were noted. As highlighted above, in January 2025, the Ministry of Social Policy launched a rental subsidy program for IDPs that includes financial assistance, legal protections against eviction, and safeguards for landlords. Additionally, local authorities in Zaporizhzhia announced the establishment of two modular housing sites with support from the Red Cross Society. However, concerns were raised regarding the safety and long-term viability of modular housing in areas subject to aerial bombardment.

Across all monitored oblasts, a pattern emerges of displaced persons relying on informal arrangements, lacking

legal protections, and bearing the cost of housing-related repairs and utilities in the absence of institutional support. These trends collectively point to the urgent need for upscaling the availability of legal assistance, shelter programming that includes accessibility considerations, and expansion of state and municipal support mechanisms tailored to the evolving housing needs of displaced populations. Without timely interventions, the continued lack of access to adequate housing will further erode protection outcomes, increase risks of eviction and exploitation, and compromise the resilience and recovery of displaced communities.

Right to Education

Access to education remains a critical concern across all monitored oblasts, with conflict-related risks, displacement, and infrastructure damage significantly affecting children's ability to participate in safe, quality, and inclusive learning environments. While each oblast reflects context-specific challenges, common trends include disruptions to educational continuity, gaps in inclusive services, and the psychosocial toll of isolation, particularly among internally displaced and conflict-affected children.

Across Chernihiv Oblast, it was reported that children with disabilities face persistent barriers to full participation in school life, despite the existence of inclusive education policies. Key constraints include the lack of specialized support services, inaccessible school infrastructure, and insufficient transportation options. Long waiting times for rehabilitation and medical support—such as orthopaedic equipment—are reported to exacerbate exclusion. In parallel, children affected by conflict, including those who have experienced school disruptions or displacement, are at increased risk of psychosocial distress, including trauma, anxiety, and depression, which further impedes their educational engagement.

Similarly, in Kharkiv and Donetska Oblasts, ongoing hostilities have led to widespread school closures and significant displacement of both teachers and students. Where education is available, it is often limited to remote modalities, which disproportionately affects vulnerable groups—especially children in frontline or rural areas, those living with elderly caregivers, and families with limited internet connectivity or access to devices. Focus group participants in Kharkiv reported a marked deterioration in children's social and communication skills due to the prolonged absence of in-person interaction, noting that "**children have very poor communication skills, some of them don't have them at all due to lack of live communication**".

In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, extensive damage to educational infrastructure has forced most students into online learning modalities. Although blended learning is used where shelters are available, frequent power outages and poor internet access—especially among economically vulnerable families—continue to disrupt the learning process. FGD participants shared that children experience isolation, spending prolonged periods in front of screens with limited peer engagement. As one participant from Mykolaiv stated, "**Children perceive trips to the hospital or the store as a kind of adventure, since this is the only opportunity to change the situation**". While the construction of modular schools in some areas (e.g., Mykolaiv) offers hope for a partial return to in-person learning, safety concerns persist. In frontline communities of Kherson, caregivers remain hesitant to send children to school due to fears of sudden shelling, with limited confidence in the adequacy of evacuation time and shelter access.

Despite these challenges, notable efforts are underway to adapt and strengthen the educational response in conflict-affected oblasts. In Zaporizka Oblast, the construction of underground schools presents a significant innovation in ensuring safe, uninterrupted access to education in high-risk zones. As of early 2025, six such schools are operational, with 15 total planned by September, aiming to serve up to 10,000 students. Dnipropetrovsk Oblast has taken complementary steps to reinforce educational infrastructure, with all schools in Synelnykove now equipped with operational shelters, supported through joint efforts of state and humanitarian partners.

Additionally, inclusive education is being strengthened in select areas. In Novomykolaivka in Zaporizka Oblast, the Inclusive Resource Centre delivers early intervention services, developmental assessments, and access to specialist professionals—offering a promising model for replication. Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations are playing a key role in maintaining educational continuity and addressing psychosocial needs. Initiatives such as *BeThere*, *ReachNow*, and *TeamUp*—implemented by War Child and local partners—combine structured recreational and psychosocial support to promote mental health and social integration among displaced and war-affected children in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka Oblasts. Other activities reported during protection coordination meetings include mine risk education, psychoeducational sessions, and early learning programs targeting displaced populations.

Across oblasts, a significant divide is evident between urban and rural areas, as well as between regions with stronger institutional presence and those closer to the frontlines. While Zaporizka and Dnipropetrovsk show examples of systemic resilience building, including inclusive service models and reinforced infrastructure, oblasts such as Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kherson, and Mykolaiv face more acute educational disruption, with greater reliance on virtual modalities and less consistent access to mental health support or inclusive education services. Children with disabilities remain one of the most excluded groups across all locations. While isolated models of inclusive service provision exist, such as in Zaporizka, many children continue to lack access to necessary educational accommodations and rehabilitation support, particularly in Chernihiv and Kherson Oblasts. Furthermore, displacement-related workforce shortages, particularly in Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv, continue to undermine the quality and consistency of education, especially in remote communities where teacher recruitment and retention remain challenging.

Right to Health

Similar to previous reporting periods, access to health remains a significant challenge for households across the surveyed oblasts, with 59% of those surveyed reported experiencing barriers in accessing health services. The most common challenges reported include lack of specialised health care services (50%), cost of the services provided/ medication (46%)—this is an increase from the previous reporting period, and costs associated with transportation to facilities (27%).

In Kharkivska and Donetska Oblasts, healthcare access is severely limited due to the destruction of facilities, displacement of medical personnel, and the reduced functionality of primary healthcare services. Residents—particularly the elderly, PwDs, and those in frontline or hard-to-reach communities—are often dependent on mobile medical teams that operate sporadically or not at all. Local informants consistently report self-medication and reliance on neighbours, especially for elderly persons living alone. Assessment participants shared that confidence in the health system remains low, driven by chronic shortages of staff, medications, and reliable care pathways. Similar trends are reported in Chernihiv Oblast, even where rehabilitation facilities technically exist, it was reported services are not operational due to staff shortages. Long queues, geographical barriers, and insufficient medical supplies—ranging from MRI access to assistive devices—further restrict access. The lack of transparency in the distribution of essential medical items contributes to public distrust, with PwDs sharing that they often waiting months or years for basic mobility aids, or being forced to share devices within households.

In Sumy Oblast, the scale of need is similarly acute. Protection monitoring data indicates a sharp increase in reported barriers to healthcare access, with 70% of the general population and 80% of IDPs citing such obstacles. Financial hardship, the absence of public transport, and geographic isolation are recurring themes. Respondents shared that access to the Affordable Medicines program is constrained by limited local availability and incompatibility between available medications and patients' actual needs, particularly for those requiring imported drugs. Rehabilitation services, although nominally available, are reported as functionally inaccessible—due to lack of adapted infrastructure, inadequate provider training, and poor coordination among health actors. Delays in receiving essential equipment, coupled with poor awareness of entitlements and referral pathways, compound the structural exclusion of persons with chronic conditions and disabilities.

Graph 8. Barriers to access to health services

Lack of specialized health care services	112	59.9%
Cost of the services provided/medication	85	45.5%
Cost associated with transportation to facilities	51	27.3%
Lack of available health facility	47	25.1%
Distance—lack of transportation means to access facilities	37	19.8%
Lack/shortage of medication	18	9.6%
Not accessible for persons with disabilities	10	5.3%
Long waiting time	10	5.3%
Safety risks linked with access to/presence at facilities	8	4.3%
Discrimination/restriction of access	1	0.5%

In Dnipropetrovska and Zaporizka Oblasts, health infrastructure has not collapsed to the same extent as in front-line areas, but access remains uneven and frequently interrupted. In places like Synelnykove and Novomykolaivka, investment in specialized rehabilitation centers represents a positive development. However, access gaps persist in surrounding rural hromadas where residents face long distances, unaffordable transport, and the absence of pharmacies or local clinics. The withdrawal of mobile clinics due to funding constraints as a result of the USAID changes has removed a key lifeline for isolated or vulnerable groups. PwDs in these oblasts face compounded access barriers due to poor physical accessibility, discontinued home-based services, and architectural constraints in existing facilities. In Volodymyrivka, fear of military mobilization has discouraged some men from undergoing medical evaluations necessary to confirm disability status and access related benefits—highlighting how conflict dynamics intersect with health access and civil-military policies in practice.

The situation in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts is similarly complex, shaped by infrastructure destruction, logistical constraints, and significant service gaps. Over two-thirds of respondents report limited or no access to specialized medical services, with nearly half citing unaffordable costs of medications and services—representing a substantial increase since the previous quarter. FGD participants describe long delays in emergency response, infrequent visits by family doctors, and instances where health centres are co-located with other public services or lack basic infrastructure like heating. Pharmacies, particularly in rural areas, are often closed or open only a few days per week, with prices considerably higher than in urban areas. The absence of public transport and the high cost of private transport make access to even basic care prohibitive for many. PwDs and elderly individuals are particularly affected by these mobility constraints. Low awareness of humanitarian and government support programs exacerbates existing inequities, with respondents describing situations where health services are theoretically available but functionally inaccessible due to financial, physical, or bureaucratic barriers.

Collectively, the data underscore that while some localized investments in healthcare infrastructure are underway, these remain insufficient in the face of systemic service disruptions, staffing shortages, and logistical challenges. The protective environment for at-risk populations is further compromised by limited outreach and service delivery models that fail to reach those in remote or insecure locations. Sustained investment in mobile health units, targeted support for PwDs and elderly populations, and improvements in transport and referral systems are urgently needed to uphold the right to health and prevent avoidable morbidity and mortality in affected communities.

Right to Work

Similar to the previous reporting period, social protection payments continues to be reported as the main source of income. Of the IDPs surveyed, 70% of them report receiving the IDP allowance, however despite access to this social protection payment 80% of IDP respondents report gaps in their basic needs. This highlights that while the IDP allowance can serve as a valuable support mechanism- the amount provided is not sufficient for many vulnerable households.

Graph 9. Main sources of income

Social protection payments	235	73.0%
Salary—Formal Employment	80	24.8%
Humanitarian Assistance	45	14.0%
Casual (Temporary) Labour	28	8.7%
Assistance from Family/Friends	10	3.1%
No resources coming into the household	8	2.5%
Other	4	1.2%
Business/Self Employment	4	1.2%
Savings	3	0.9%
Debt	1	0.3%

Access to employment remains a pressing concern across all monitored oblasts, particularly for internally displaced persons (IDPs), persons with disabilities (PwDs), and rural residents. In Sumy Oblast, the combination of limited job opportunities, health-related restrictions, and caregiving responsibilities makes sustainable employment especially difficult. Respondents across both urban and rural areas reported widespread unemployment, with PwDs and those with chronic illnesses facing discrimination or physical exclusion. A man with cancer and a disability from Sumy noted, “**They don't want to employ me because I have this disease and can’t do heavy work**”.

IDPs, especially single mothers, face additional barriers related to childcare and geographic isolation, forcing reliance on pensions or state allowances and increasing vulnerability to negative coping strategies like debt accumulation or reduced spending on healthcare.

In Chernihiv Oblast, the sudden disruption of livelihoods due to displacement has pushed many IDPs into the informal economy. Key informants described difficulties accessing employment without proper documentation, which leads to exclusion from formal job markets and increased risk of exploitation. As one IDP stated, "**Without the proper documents, I can't apply for any formal jobs. It's like being invisible**". Discrimination against IDPs by employers was also reported, with a participant from an FGD noting, "Employers don't want to hire us because they think we are troublemakers." Furthermore, skills mismatch exacerbates the issue—rural professionals, such as displaced farmers, struggle to adapt to urban job markets, limiting access to sustainable livelihoods.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, lack of employment opportunities (86%) and physical limitations (33%) remain the top barriers, particularly in rural areas where local businesses have closed. Transportation challenges further compound the problem, making it nearly impossible for residents to seek work in neighbouring areas. Where jobs are available, wages are typically insufficient to meet basic needs, with nearly half of households reporting incomes between 3,001 – 6,000 UAH and over 87% below 12,000 UAH per month. Most residents (70%) rely on social protection payments, while humanitarian aid remains limited in reach. This dependency on low and unstable income sources highlights the fragility of livelihoods in these regions, and the potentially severe impact of reduced assistance for those depending on humanitarian support to cover subsistence needs.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, the destruction of local industry, limited job openings in rural or frontline areas, and employer bias against IDPs and returnees severely limit employment prospects. Many households depend on pensions, informal labour, and humanitarian support. Employment centres offer temporary roles primarily in urban areas, but these are low-paid and largely inaccessible to those in remote communities. Digital exclusion and lack of transport limit access even further. While there is clear interest in vocational training and guaranteed-employment programs, opportunities remain scarce. One FGD participant in Kharkiv oblast emphasized, "**IDPs should be offered jobs or retraining courses with subsequent employment. Having a job would guarantee a steady income and minimize the risk of utility arrears**." These intersecting economic constraints reinforce protection risks such as exclusion, exploitation, and long-term dependency.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, formal employment is rare, with only 11% of households reporting official income. Informal, seasonal, or subsistence-based work is the norm, particularly in rural or frontline-adjacent areas. Outmigration is increasing due to limited job options, further weakening local economies. IDPs are particularly affected by documentation barriers, skill mismatches, and disrupted career paths. Local authorities and NGOs have initiated employment initiatives, including job fairs, grant schemes, and retraining programs, but these efforts lack scale. Among IDP respondents, 52.9% had no active coping strategies, and 12% resorted to cutting essential expenditures like food or healthcare. Female IDPs shared that they face heightened challenges due to caregiving burdens, limited mobility, and outdated skills. Though some NGOs offer targeted support, coverage remains insufficient. While no widespread reports of labour exploitation were recorded, the persistent scarcity of decent work continues to undermine resilience and hinders long-term recovery for conflict-affected communities.

Access to services (water)

Access to safe and sufficient water remains a pressing concern in several communities across Dnipropetrovska Oblast, particularly in areas affected by the long-term environmental consequences of the Kakhovka Dam destruction in mid-2023. Despite ongoing mitigation efforts, water insecurity continues to impact the health, dignity, and well-being of affected populations, especially in rural and hard-to-reach settlements.

Communities in Myrivska and Tomakivska Hromadas (Nikopolskyi Raion) and Apostolivska Hromada (Kryvorizky Raion) report that as of early 2025, access to clean drinking water remains limited. Focus group participants from Myrivska Hromada Dnipropetrovska Oblast emphasized that despite various interventions including the installation of osmosis filtration systems and well drilling access to potable water remains unreliable and uneven.

For residents of more remote settlements, the cost of water delivery ranges from 450 to 800 UAH per cubic meter, an amount considered prohibitive for most households, particularly those already affected by displacement or limited income. This economic barrier results in forced reliance on wells or surface reservoirs, many of which do not meet potable water standards and are used primarily for technical or hygiene purposes.

Compounding the issue is the limited access to private wells, creating disparities in water availability even within affected communities. In households without access to clean sources, waterborne health risks, daily survival stress, and reduced dignity are ongoing concerns.These challenges highlight a critical protection risk: the denial or inaccessibility of safe drinking water undermines not only the right to health but also limits children's ability to attend school, hampers household food preparation, and increases the burden on women and girls who often bear responsibility for water collection in low-resource settings.

Recommendations

To the authorities

Improve Access to Civil Documentation and Compensation

- Simplify and decentralize documentation and compensation procedures, accepting alternative evidence (e.g., witness testimony, drone footage).
- Ensure safe, non-discriminatory access to documentation services, especially for men of conscription age and those in insecure areas.

Expand Inclusive Public Infrastructure and Social Services

- Invest in accessible transportation, barrier-free buildings, adapted shelters, and inclusive community spaces for PwDs, elderly persons, and veterans.
- Operationalize and maintain key infrastructure (e.g., Synelnykove Transit Center, resilience hubs) to support evacuation, shelter, and psychosocial recovery.

Strengthen Social Protection and Information Access

- Streamline social benefit processes and ensure timely, regular payments with reduced documentation burdens.
- Appoint focal points in Social Protection departments to support immobile or vulnerable residents, including through proactive outreach.
- Improve communication on available services and rights using accessible formats and channels.

Expand Health and Education Access

- Strengthen mobile and community-based healthcare services, with emphasis on chronic care, specialist access, and mental health.
- Support safe and resilient education infrastructure and staffing in areas affected by displacement or conflict.

Support Inclusive Housing Solutions

- Accelerate housing compensation procedures and ensure market-aligned payments.
- Promote formal rental agreements and ease legal barriers to renting (e.g., reduce reporting burdens for landlords).
- Transform underused or inherited properties into social housing stock by clarifying inheritance procedures and property rights.

Enhance Livelihood Opportunities and Local Integration

- Promote community-level job creation, retraining programs, and micro-grants tailored to IDPs and PwDs.
- Implement inclusive labour policies with incentives for employers hiring vulnerable groups.

To the humanitarian community

Strengthen Access to Services and Protection in Hard-to-Reach Areas

- Expand mobile outreach services (e.g., legal aid vans, mobile clinics, social support teams) to overcome access barriers in rural and displacement-affected areas.
- Prioritize transportation support (e.g., social taxi services) for persons with disabilities (PwDs), older persons, and caregivers.
- Reinforce protection presence and risk communication through community-based teams and inclusive awareness-raising campaigns.
- Advocate for safe and principled service access for men, particularly regarding healthcare and civil documentation, while monitoring protection risks linked to enforcement policies.

Scale Up Legal Aid and Documentation Assistance

- Support mobile legal aid and administrative support for civil documentation (ID cards, disability certificates, property claims) and social benefits navigation.
- Advocate for simplified administrative procedures in frontline or de-occupied zones, where documentation is often lost or destroyed.
- Promote awareness of and access to the eRecovery system and rental subsidies for IDPs and potential landlords.

Expand Mental Health, Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and GBV Services

- Integrate MHPSS into collective centers, rural areas, and schools through mobile teams and community-based programs.
- Invest in GBV response services, including mobile units, safe spaces, and survivor-centered legal and medical support.
- Raise awareness of rights and services to reduce GBV stigma and promote help-seeking through targeted information campaigns.

Support Inclusive Education and Child Protection

- Increase access to safe, inclusive learning environments (e.g., underground schools), trauma-informed education, and child-friendly spaces.

Promote Livelihoods and Economic Resilience

- Support vocational training, cash-for-work, entrepreneurship, and job matching platforms for IDPs, women, and PwDs.
- Advocate for policy changes and awareness on landlord taxation/reporting to incentivize formal rental arrangements.

Strengthen Coordination and Local Capacity

- Engage communities in participatory assessments, planning, and feedback mechanisms.
- Support local authorities to better understand and apply legal frameworks (e.g., inheritance law, eRecovery system).
- Disseminate key protection materials (e.g., evacuation guidance for Kherson Oblast) to frontline staff and community members.

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