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DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

DRC Quarterly Protection monitoring Report

April–June 2025

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Contents

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Introduction

This report summarises the findings of DRC protection monitoring conducted in Ukraine across Sumy in the North, Kharkiv, and Donetsk Oblasts in the East, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia in the Southeast, and Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts in the South, between April 1st and June 30th, 2025. This report seeks to identify trends in protection risks and rights violations, challenges facing conflict-affected populations, and barriers on access to services (particularly for the most vulnerable) across surveyed oblasts during the reporting period. Findings inform ongoing and planned humanitarian responses, enable identifying vulnerable people for tailored 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

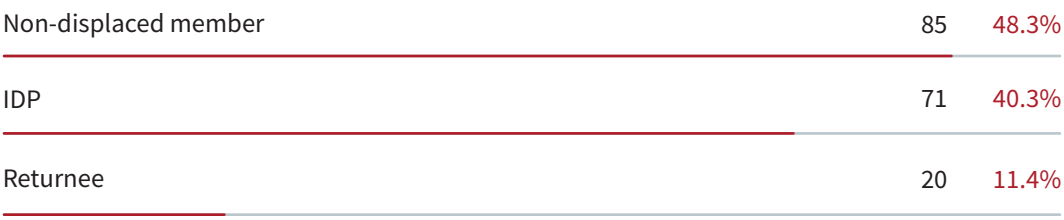
- **Civilians' safety and wellbeing continue to be undermined** by persistent hostilities. While some oblasts reported improved perceptions of security, the normalisation of conflict, unequal demining, inadequate evacuation procedures, and rising tensions between IDPs and host communities maintain both physical and psychological risks.
- **Veterans and their families face serious reintegration challenges**, with widespread mental health distress compounded by stigma, insufficient tailored support, and mistrust in institutions.
- **High numbers of evacuations were recorded** across conflict-affected oblasts. Elderly people and persons with disabilities experience the greatest difficulties and reluctance to evacuate. Despite modest improvements in coordination, evacuees frequently reported emotional distress, unclear procedures, and significant logistical barriers.
- **Recent return movements remain mostly informal, short-term, and in decline** nationwide, constrained by insecurity, damaged housing, and lack of basic services. Many IDPs opt for local integration.
- **Access to civil and legal documentation remains a major barrier**, especially for IDPs, elderly persons, veterans, and rural residents. Challenges include inaccessible service locations, digital illiteracy, legal complexity, inconsistent administrative practices, transport difficulties, and limited free legal aid.
- **Housing support and property compensation are limited by ongoing legal, procedural, and financial obstacles**. Informal rentals, misinformation, and digital barriers exclude many from state programmes. Compensation remains insufficient, repairs are delayed by labour shortages, and restitution is blocked in occupied territories due to legislative delays.
- **Insufficient access to adequate, secure, and affordable housing** for IDPs and conflict-affected populations, with over half of protection monitoring respondents reported accommodation-related challenges.
- **Critically constrained healthcare** including shortages of specialised services, unaffordable costs, and lack of transportation—especially in rural and frontline areas. Despite some localized improvements (e.g., telemedicine, rehabilitation centres), systemic service gaps, logistical obstacles, and financial constraints continue to undermine the right to health for conflict-affected populations.

Methodology

Overview

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 Protection Cluster level, which, alongside other protection partners, DRC supports by using structured KI interviews. The diversity of data collection methods allows for gaining holistic 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 the local, regional, and national levels. DRC protection monitoring activities target a variety of groups, including IDPs, returnees, and non-displaced people directly exposed to and affected by the current armed conflict in both rural and urban areas.

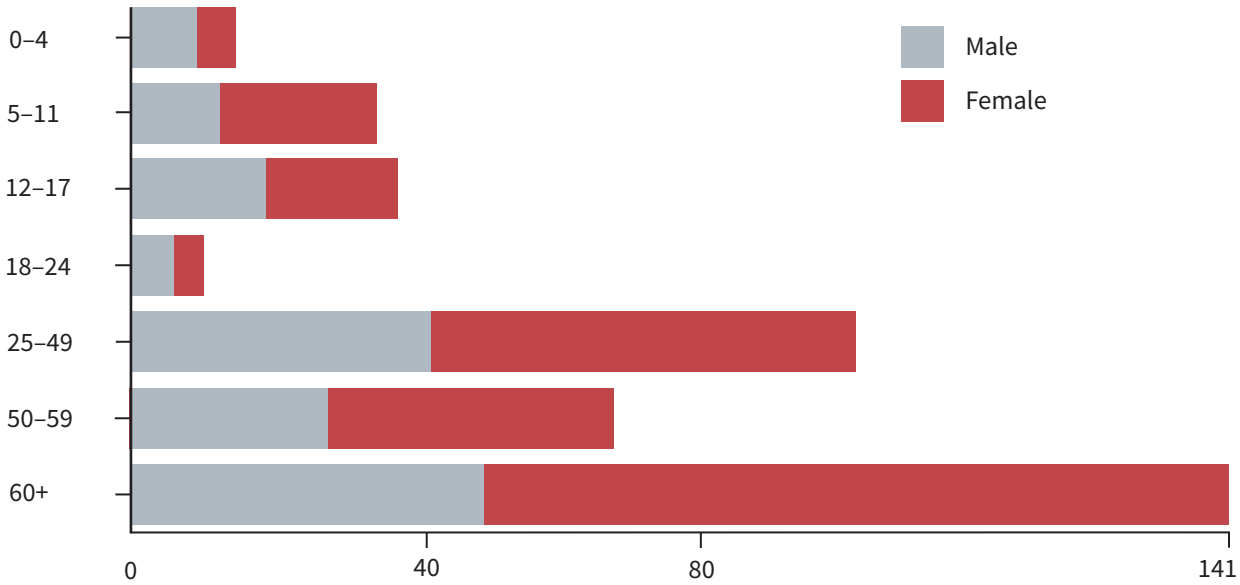
Graph 1. Person of concern



Between April 1st and June 30th, 2025, DRC Protection teams surveyed 176 households corresponding to 383 individuals. Of the surveyed households 48% (85 individuals) conflict-affected non-displaced,40% were IDPs (71 respondents) and 11% were returnees (21 respondents). A total of 99% of the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, of whom 61% were females. The average age of surveyed individuals was 47 years old. The average household size of those surveyed was 2.2 people.

To complement quantitative data collection, key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs were conducted across all regions. A total of 142 KIIs were conducted, the KIIs targeted representatives of local authorities, community group representatives and community leaders, collective/transit site staff, social workers, humanitarian aid workers, and veterans. DRC also conducted 62 FGDs reaching 508 participants from the wider community, including 335 female and 173 male participants. Specific thematic area-level topics were held in the North, conducting protection monitoring with Veterans, and the Southeast honing a thematic focus on Evacuations.

Graph 2. Surveyed households per age and gender groups



Context Update

The reporting period saw a marked escalation in hostilities across Ukraine, with intensified military activity along multiple fronts and a significant rise in civilian casualties. Nationally, at least 1,491 air strike incidents were recorded—a 20% increase from Q1 2025—resulting in 255 civilian deaths and 1,865 injuries, compared to 96 deaths and 705 injuries in the previous quarter. This spike was driven by high-casualty events, such as the 13 April missile strike on Sumy, and combined strikes on Dnipro and Kyiv. The aerial threat environment grew increasingly complex, with expanded use of missiles, drones, glide bombs, and combined attack tactics targeting both military and civilian infrastructure well beyond frontline areas.

In Sumy Oblast, border areas continued to face regular shelling and drone strikes, with occasional use of larger missile systems that, while primarily aimed at military targets, also impacted residential areas. Civilian infrastructure—including rail links to Kyiv—was disrupted by strikes. Sumy City saw reduced incidents of shelling compared to earlier in the year but continued to be affected, with the April 13 combined strike on its centre as a key example.

In Donetsk Oblast, intense fighting persisted, with Russian forces making limited territorial gains west of Avdiivka and Marinka, while Ukrainian forces maintained defensive positions around strategic locations such as Chasiv Yar. Heavy artillery, missile, and drone strikes targeted logistics hubs, rail infrastructure, and energy facilities in Pokrovsk, Druzhkivka, Sloviansk, and Kostiantynivka, causing power outages and damage to warehouses and housing. In Kharkiv Oblast, fighting along the Kupiansk–Svatove line intensified, with repeated strikes on Oskil River crossings and periodic missile and UAV attacks on Kharkiv City, disrupting industrial and transport operations.

Frontline fighting in Zaporizhzhia remained concentrated around Robotyne, Orikhiv, and Hulyaipole, with frequent artillery, drone, and missile strikes damaging homes, schools, and energy infrastructure. Zaporizhzhia City was regularly targeted at night, including strikes on industrial sites and the DniproHES hydroelectric plant's auxiliary facilities. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Nikopol faced near-daily shelling from across the Dnipro River, while Kryvyi Rih and Dnipro were hit by ballistic missiles and drone raids, disrupting fuel storage, water supply, and logistics hubs.

Both oblasts experienced sustained attacks from artillery, drones, and missiles. Mykolaiv City faced repeated strikes on industrial zones, warehouses, and port facilities, while coastal settlements such as Ochakiv endured frequent shelling. In Kherson Oblast, communities along the Dnipro River, including Kherson City, Beryslav, and Kozatske, were heavily shelled, often during daylight hours, causing civilian casualties and damage to residential and public infrastructure. Strikes on ferry crossings and temporary bridges disrupted evacuations and aid delivery, while sustained bombardment forced repeated population movements and limited safe humanitarian access.

Across all affected oblasts, the quarter was characterised by increased civilian exposure to indiscriminate attacks, infrastructure damage, and disruptions to transport, power, and essential services. Repeated strikes on populated areas, combined with the persistent threat of night raids and air alerts, compounded psychological distress, constrained humanitarian operations, and heightened displacement risks in both frontline and rear areas.

During the reporting period, several legislative and policy measures were also introduced regarding social protection mechanisms and availability of support for persons of concern which will impact the protective environment. In accordance with recent regulatory changes, the Pension Fund of Ukraine has assumed expanded responsibilities for the administration and oversight of state social assistance, particularly in areas affected by active hostilities and occupation[1]. For example, as of 1 July 2025, the Pension Fund is now responsible for managing four key types of social benefits previously administered by local social protection units[2]: assistance for individuals not entitled to a pension, and persons with disabilities; care-related social assistance; assistance for persons with disabilities since childhood and children with disabilities; and burial assistance. If people wish to continue receiving benefits following September 2025, they are required to go through an identification process which can be done in person or through DIIA. Failure to complete this process will result in the termination of benefits. This applies to individuals who have been receiving assistance since 2022, including caregivers of children under three years old, parents or guardians of children with disabilities or rare diseases, and individuals providing care to persons with Group I disabilities or elderly individuals requiring constant care. Access to the PFU web-portal from occupied areas can be restricted and the internet access in areas experiencing active hostilities also can be interrupted. In addition, there are also concerns regarding lack of information and digital illiteracy among vulnerable groups. The centralization of benefit provision under the Pension Fund may improve efficiency in the long term however, without adequate safeguards and accessible verification mechanisms, there is a heightened risk of exclusion from critical entitlements for those unable to comply.

Recent legal and policy developments in Ukraine have introduced important changes affecting the rights and protection of vulnerable populations during the ongoing conflict. The Verkhovna Rada amended the Law on Free Legal Aid to extend eligibility to close relatives and family members of persons missing under special circumstances[3], removing previous restrictions that limited access unless additional vulnerabilities were present. This marks a significant step toward improving legal support for families of the missing, who often face complex legal and administrative challenges. Additionally, amendments to labour legislation during martial law clarified that employees located in areas of active hostilities cannot be dismissed for absenteeism, including prolonged absence from the workplace, though such periods will remain unpaid and will not count toward service time for leave entitlements[4]. These changes provide partial safeguards for workers unable to access their place of employment due to conflict-related insecurity.

Further amendments enable the State Labour Service to conduct unscheduled inspections into cases of workplace

1 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/765-2025-%D0%BF

2 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/695-2025-%D0%BF

3 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4490-20

4 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4412-20

mobbing (harassment) upon request by employees or trade unions, strengthening protection mechanisms for workers' rights even under martial law conditions[5].

At the policy level, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a new procedure to compensate legal entities for utility costs incurred while accommodating internally displaced persons (IDPs) between January and April 2025. To qualify, entities must submit relevant information on accommodated IDPs by 8 June 2025. This measure aims to support hosting institutions and mitigate the financial burden associated with temporary displacement. Additionally, a pilot project was launched to expand social services for children with disabilities who experience complex developmental disorders and are unable to attend mainstream or specialised education. The service targets children over six years of age and includes family-based or home education models, addressing critical gaps in inclusive care and education during displacement or crisis. These developments highlight a growing focus on institutional accountability, labour protection, and inclusion of vulnerable groups; however, their practical implementation and accessibility—particularly in conflict-affected areas—should be closely monitored by humanitarian actors to ensure they translate into effective protection outcomes.

Main protection risks and needs

Liberty and Freedom of Movement (including displacement, returns and intentions)

Forced displacement

During the reporting period, forced displacement continued to be a significant protection risk across eastern, southern, and northern oblasts of Ukraine, primarily driven by intensified hostilities, shelling of civilian areas, and the destruction of housing and infrastructure. Displacement was most pronounced in Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv oblasts, in communities close to active frontlines.

In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, a notable increase in internal displacement was observed following mandatory evacuation orders in Synelnykivskyi Raion as a result of frontline shifts, which began in April and progressively expanded to settlements in Mezhivska, Velykomykhaylivska, and Malomykhaylivska hromadas by late May. Simultaneously, in Nikopolskyi Raion, including Nikopol, Marhanetska, and Pokrovska hromadas, ongoing drone and artillery attacks further escalated threats to physical safety. Transit centers in Pavlohrad and Stepove reported receiving up to 89 individuals per day at peak times, placing additional strain on local capacities. Evacuation procedures varied considerably across the oblast. While some hromadas provided municipal transport, others lacked coordinated support. According to key informants, people with disabilities, elderly people, and households with limited resources faced the most significant barriers. "***We left on our own. No one offered help. We just hoped we were going in the right direction***." (*KII, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast*). Comparatively in Sumy Oblast, protection risks remained high due to the oblast's proximity to the Russian border and frequent shelling. All IDP household interview respondents cited "shelling attacks on civilians" as the main cause of displacement, representing an increase from 90.9% in the previous period. Other reported drivers included destruction or damage of housing (37.9%) and lack of access to essential services (13.8%).

In Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, displacement patterns remained fluid. According to IOM, 21% of households in Donetsk and 13% in Kharkiv reported recent displacement[6]. FGD and KII findings revealed repeated displacements—often

[5] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4352-20

[6] https://displacement.iom.int/reports/ukraine-displacement-and-return-trends-drivers-and-intentions-june-2025

Graph 3. Factors influencing displacement

Shelling, attacks on civillians	62	87.3%
Destruction or damage of housing, land and/or property due to conflict	38	53.5%
Lack of access to essential services (health, water, education, civil documentation, etc.)	18	25.4%
Exposure to UXOs/landmines	14	19.7%
Occupation of property	14	19.7%
Infrastructure damage/destruction	12	16.9%
Lack of access to safe and dignified shelter	7	9.9%
Lack of access to livelihoods, employment and economic opportunities	5	7.0%
Criminality	3	4.2%
Fear of conscription	1	1.4%

involving families returning temporarily due to economic pressures, only to be forced to flee again when conditions worsened. Access to services, particularly healthcare and shelter, remained limited in newly affected areas.

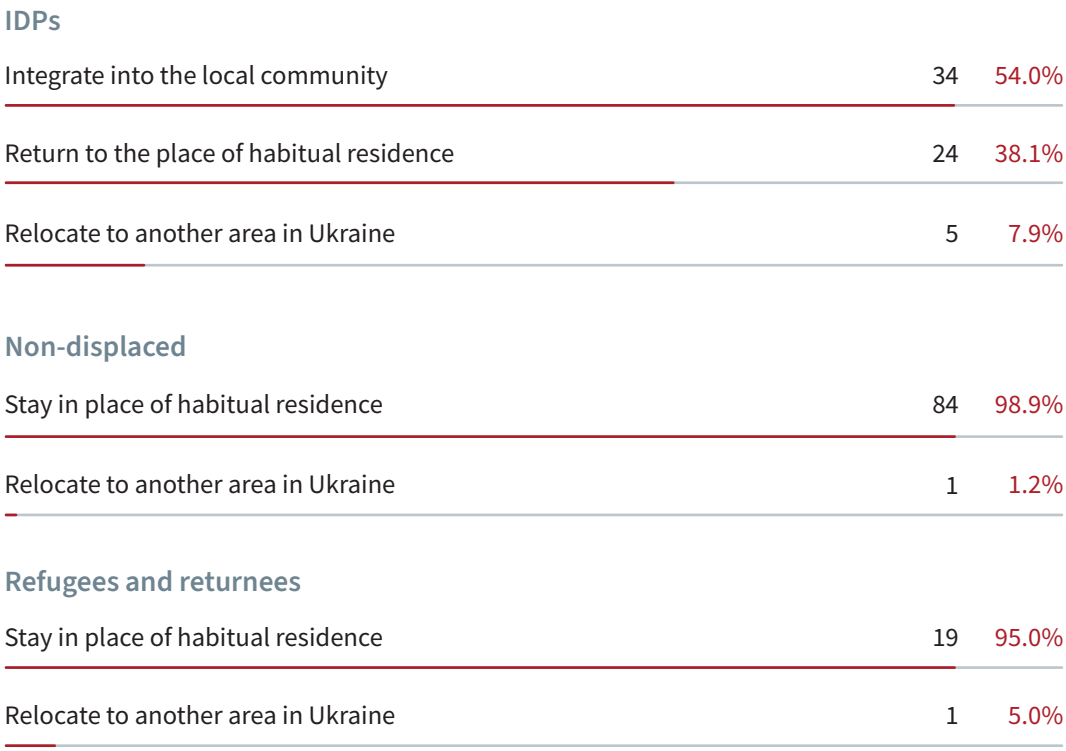
In the southern oblasts, including Mykolaiv and Kherson, 93.8% of household respondents cited shelling and attacks on civilians as the primary triggers of displacement. Notably, 37.5% reported that their homes were significantly damaged or destroyed—an increase of 14% compared to the previous period, suggesting the inclusion of respondents from more severely affected areas. Displacement from Stanislavska to Halitsynivska hromada in Mykolaiv Oblast was reported in both FGDs and a rapid inter-agency assessment[7], identifying severe gaps in local infrastructure and services. Displacement decisions across regions were often made urgently, with respondents frequently selecting host locations close to their homes to allow for occasional return and property maintenance. An FGD participant in Kherson Oblast explained: "***I chose Kryvyi Rih because it's close to home. My house was damaged, so I moved there to be able to return from time to time***." Cross-border displacement into neighbouring countries was reported to be primarily limited to individuals with sufficient financial means. According to FGD respondents, internal displacement was often the only viable option for rural residents due to the high costs associated with international relocation and refugee status procedures.

Intentions

Return dynamics during the reporting period remained largely unchanged at the national level, with most returns

[7] OCHA, Inter-Agency Mission to Halytsynivska Hromada, Mykolaivska Oblast, as of 7 July 2025.

Graph 4. Intentions per displacement status



being limited in number, informal, and short-term. Factors such as continued insecurity, damage to housing, and lack of basic services and livelihoods continued to prevent sustainable returns across all monitored regions.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, no significant increase in return intentions or movements was observed. Approximately 50% of IDP household respondents indicated no intention to integrate in host communities, while new returns were described as isolated and largely informal. Key informants highlighted the destruction of housing, ongoing hostilities, and the occupation of places of origin as primary barriers. Older adults and people with disabilities were particularly affected due to mobility limitations and the absence of tailored support mechanisms.

In Sumy Oblast, intentions to return declined significantly amongst displaced populations. While 54.5% of household respondents previously indicated plans to return, only 17.9% expressed that intent during this period. Instead, 75% of respondents reported a desire to integrate locally, citing destroyed housing and persistent insecurity in areas of origin. Access to safe shelter emerged as a critical enabling factor for integration, cited by 76.2% of respondents—up from 55.6% in the previous quarter. However, access to safe shelter remained uneven. As one respondent explained: "***We cannot rent somewhere safer because we are pensioners... a friend of mine offered me her home in exchange for utility bills***." Similarly, return movements in Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts were limited and often temporary within this quarter's protection monitoring findings. Most returns involved checking on property or retrieving personal belongings due to lack of income to remain elsewhere. As reported in FGDs: "***We returned because we ran out of money. It's still not safe, but we had no choice***." Protection actors noted continued concerns around damaged housing, freedom of movement, and lack of essential services in areas of origin.

Comparatively in southern oblasts, notably Mykolaiv and Kherson, a moderate increase in return movements was

observed according to DRC protection monitoring data, driven by improving security conditions and strong emotional ties to home. According to household survey data, 84.6% of returnees cited cessation of hostilities as the primary reason for return, followed by the need to care for elderly family members or protect property. However, most returnees reported undertaking housing repairs independently, often without financial or technical support. One FGD participant stated: "***We returned as soon as our village came under Ukrainian control. The house was damaged, there was no electricity or water, so we rented in Mykolaiv while we restored it ourselves***."

Economic considerations, such as loss of income, high cost of living in displacement sites, and the suspension of social benefits for certain categories of IDPs, were also reported as key return drivers. Some participants described returning to rural areas to access informal employment or support their families. At the same time, strained social cohesion in host communities—particularly in cases where IDPs were perceived as dependent on state aid—contributed to premature or reluctant returns. A FGD participant from Kherson Oblast shared: "***They told me, 'Go back to where you came from,' not understanding that I don't have a home to return to***."

Evacuations

The evacuation processes across eastern and southern oblasts continued to be driven by escalating security risks, particularly in frontline hromadas under sustained shelling or drone attacks. In Donetska and Dnipropetrovska oblasts, mandatory evacuations were held especially for families with children and vulnerable populations in Synelnykivskyi Raion in April, with villages in Mezhivska, Velikomykhailivska, and Malomykhailivska hromadas mainly affected in May. At peak, transit centres in Pavlohrad and Stepove Dnipropetrovska Oblast received up to 89 new arrivals per day according to information from local authorities. Evacuations, particularly in Donestka oblast, were described as sudden and traumatic, especially for elderly and persons with disabilities; one called it "***chaotic and dangerous***," with people taken without consent. The lack of clear evacuation procedures or designated shelters was also noted in Sumy: "***I would feel more at ease if the hromada had a plan for possible evacuation. If we knew that we wouldn't be abandoned—that there would be transport and support***", said one elderly relocated IDP (*KII, Sumy*).

While evacuations increased in Kherson Oblast, the overall estimated figures remain low in comparison to other regions due to the persistent threat from FPV drones and shelling. Estimates provided by representatives from local authorities suggest that 600 people were evacuated in Kherson region during the reporting period. The evacuations were coordinated primarily by the Oblast Military Administration through a dedicated hotline system. Most evacuees were directed toward relatively safer regions, including Khmelnytska, Mykolaiv, Odesa, and Dnipro. Despite some structural support, the evacuation experience was often characterised by FGD participants as abrupt, chaotic, and emotionally distressing, especially for elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, and families unable or reluctant to leave due to pets, property, or family ties. Additionally, it was observed throughout FGDs that participants regularly voiced how psychological distress was common during such situations, with evacuees reporting high stress, and experiencing emotional exhaustion from displacement.

Across regions, evacuees faced several logistical constraints. Transport limitations and the high cost of self-evacuation were consistent concerns, with many relying on pooled vehicles or local buses. In Donetska and Kharkivska oblasts, shelling forced spontaneous evacuations without sufficient preparation. In Dnipropetrovska, evacuees frequently reported confusion and fear stemming from vague or last-minute communication—"***they said to prepare, but no one told us when or where we were going***" (*FGD participant, Dnipropetrovska Oblast*). FGD participants repeatedly expressed the trauma of displacement and highlighted a sense of abandonment, whilst self-evacuees navigate processes without assistance or clear direction, adding to their vulnerability.

Regarding designated shelter or transit centres, immediate humanitarian support was typically noted to be available in Kerson oblast, including food, hygiene items, medical aid, and psychological first aid. However, serious gaps remain—infrastructure often fails to accommodate people with limited mobility, while overcrowded centres lack gen-

der-sensitive spaces. Bad weather adaptations and sustained child protection monitoring are inconsistent. Critically, the unaffordability of rent in urban centres and limited rural housing options severely constrain onward movement, particularly for those excluded from multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) due to bypassing official registration points.

Efforts to address these challenges include the rollout of evacuation brochures in Kherson, improved coordination between humanitarian clusters, and the identification of specialized facilities for persons with disabilities. Protection monitoring findings show that evacuees across all regions continue to struggle with uncertain futures, strained emotional well-being, and limited integration into host communities. While some are able to adapt well in shelter settings, broader systemic issues such as unclear communication and evacuation procedures, inaccessible infrastructure, and insufficient housing solutions continue to undermine the effectiveness and dignity of evacuation responses in Ukraine's conflict-affected regions.

Identifying the needs and providing a response to IDPs following their departure from temporary transit centres continues to pose challenges to the provision of support through their displacement journey. Protection monitoring data indicates that most evacuated individuals continue their journey onwards to stay with relatives/acquaintances or independent accommodation which can lead to a lack of visibility of IDPs at various stages of displacement and limit the response to immediate needs, risking increasing longer term vulnerabilities. Similar gaps remain for IDPs who have self-evacuated and do not pass through transit centres.

Self-imposed confinement and restrictions of movement

Across monitored conflict-affected regions, fear of conscription and persistent security risks continue to lead to self-imposed confinement, particularly among men of conscriptionage. In eastern oblasts such as Donetska and Kharkivska, household survey data report that 10.8% of respondents observed conscription as a barrier to movement. Similarly to last quarter's protection monitoring results, men attempt to reduce the risk of encountering conscription authorities by continuing to avoid public transportation, medical clinics, and government offices. Not only does this behavior limit access to essential services, but in turn increases social isolation. "***TRC representatives regularly conduct checks in settlements and send summons by mail or hand them out during document checks at checkpoints. As a result, many men consciously limit their movement, avoiding crowded places***" (*KII respondent, Kherson Oblast*). It was reported that the visible presence of Territorial Recruitment Centre (TRC) representatives in rural areas has caused anxiety and behavioral shifts among men. A key informant from Kherson Oblast reported: "***TRC representatives regularly conduct checks in settlements and send summons by mail or hand them out during document checks at checkpoints. Many men consciously limit their movement, avoiding crowded places***". During the reporting period, 60% of male respondents indicated that fear of mobilization had led them to reduce their movements. These dynamics reveal how fear-driven self-confinement is becoming a de-facto barrier to accessing services and exercising basic freedoms in multiple regions across Ukraine.

More severe movement restrictions—due to a combination of security threats and logistical barriers—were apparent in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts during the reporting period. Mine contamination remains a critical factor, with residents continuing to report dangerous conditions in fields, cemeteries, and agricultural areas. This not only affects mobility but also hampers livelihoods and cultural practices such as visiting burial sites. Financial and transport-related limitations exacerbate these challenges; 26.7% of respondents cited such constraints as key obstacles. In many rural areas, poor road conditions and a lack of public transport mean that travel is only possible via private vehicles, which many cannot afford. As a result, access to healthcare, employment, basic services remain both a physical and practical barrier.

Life, safety and security

Sense of safety and security

Ongoing hostilities continue to severely affect the population's sense of safety across monitored oblasts, with 38% of all those surveyed reporting that they feel unsafe or very unsafe. The highest number of respondents reporting concerns regarding sense of safety were located in Sumy and Kherson oblasts, which is likely linked to the increase in attacks on civilians in these locations during the reporting period. Repeated attacks on civilian areas, contamination from unexploded ordnance (UXO), and service access constraints have further compounded both physical safety risks and mental well-being, particularly for vulnerable groups including the elderly, persons with disabilities, (PwDs), and IDPs.

Graph 5. Factors influencing the sense of safety

Bombardment/shelling or threat of shelling	59	89.4%
Landmines or UXOs contamination	14	21.2%
Presence of armed or security actors	7	10.6%
Fighting between armed or security actors	2	3.0%

Many IDPs in monitored oblasts expressed uncertainty about evacuation procedures and fear being abandoned without transport or official coordination. "***I would feel more at ease if the hromada had a plan for possible evacuation... if we knew we wouldn't be abandoned***" (*KII, Sumy oblast*). In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, the percentage of respondents reporting insecurity decreased slightly since the last protection monitoring quarter. However, the perceived level of threat remains volatile—recurring attacks on schools, hospitals, and administrative buildings reinforce a persistent sense of danger, with most fears rooted in bombardment or shelling. "***We are afraid to go outside. Even walking to the store feels dangerous now"***, (*KII, Donetsk oblast*).

By contrast, most respondents in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts reported feeling safe, however 14.3% still expressed a poor sense of security according to household survey data. This reflects the impacts of continued indiscriminate attacks, especially in areas like Synelnykivskyi Raion, Novopavlivska, and Mezhivska hromadas. Major urban centres such as Dnipropetrovsk and Kryvyi Rih have suffered significant civilian casualties. However, protection monitoring findings, continue to observe that the normalisation of war.

According to the majority of HH survey responds in Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, shelling or the threat of shelling was indicated as the main safety risk. The use of Shahed drones, missile strikes, and FPV munitions has created an atmosphere of constant threat. Many young families are reluctant to return due to the absence of shelters and air alarm warning systems. "***There is neither a shelter nor an air raid system. Older people don't get alerts***," (*FGD participant, Kherson oblast*). When shelters are inaccessible, or simply non-existent, people resort to seeking protection in their basements or simply remaining at home.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) continues to be one of the most pervasive and long-term protection threats in con-

flict-affected oblasts, with accidents resulting in 30 casualties, including four deaths, reported in the current reporting period in Kherson and Mykolaiv oblast[8]. The presence of landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war severely limits freedom of movement, disrupts access to essential resources such as firewood, farmland, and water sources, and increases daily risks of injury. UXOs disproportionately impact children, farmers, the elderly, and people with disabilities—groups who often engage in subsistence activities in contaminated areas. In Kherson, for instance, residents report avoiding entire sections of their communities due to visible mines and repeated incidents of accidental detonation. "***Not all residential buildings and yards have been inspected for mines or other hazardous objects. Therefore, we try to stick to known routes and avoid unfamiliar or uncleared areas***",—*FGD participant, Kherson Oblast.* It should be noted that in Kherson oblast, international humanitarian mine action operators are not permitted to operate within the buffer zone and not closer than 15km of the frontline, due to the security situation most would not work this close anymore due to the drone reach. Additionally, humanitarian mine action operators are not permitted to focus on urban areas and infrastructure as these actions are managed by SESU (emergency demining) and military demining.

Gender Based Violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a critical protection concern across Ukraine. Despite increased awareness and monitoring, the capacity to respond effectively remains significantly challenging due to limited-service availability, persistent stigma, and geographic disparities. According to statistics from the National Police, domestic violence remains high in Ukraine, with 53,6060 statements and reports received in the first five months of 2025. These figures should be considered in the wider context that GBV remains vastly underreported.

Protection monitoring findings deduce that intimate partner violence remains the most commonly reported form of GBV in Dnipropetrovska oblast, disproportionately affecting women and children. Key contributing factors include prolonged displacement, overcrowded shelters and housing, economic hardsh through job insecurity, psychosocial stress, and breakdown of social support networks. In Kharkivska and Donetska oblasts, this quarter's protection monitoring highlighted that women face isolation and increased caregiving burdens. Reports from survivors, health providers, and protection actors indicate ongoing instances of sexual violence used as a weapon of war, particularly in areas previously or currently under military occupation. "***Many women are afraid to speak out—they are dependent and isolated***." (*KI, Donetska oblast*). Conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) remains vastly underreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of access to specialized services. Survivors often face re-traumatization when attempting to access legal or medical support. In frontline and hard-to-reach areas, survivors often have no access to confidential support, legal assistance, or healthcare.

The rise of digital platforms during the crisis has introduced new threats, including online harassment, digital stalking, non-consensual image sharing, and extortion. Adolescent girls and LGBTQI+ individuals are particularly vulnerable. While online tools offer opportunities for GBV response, they also expose users to abuse, especially where digital literacy and privacy safeguards are low.

Gender inequality, exacerbated by conflict, reinforces traditional power imbalances that normalize violence against women and girls. The prevalence and continuity of the threat, partnered with the loss of economic opportunities, places women at the margins of recovery efforts, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and limiting access to remedies. Furthermore, the psychological toll of warfare—especially on men and boys—may contribute to increased aggression, substance abuse, and normalization of violent behaviour within households and communities.

[8] Ukraine Mine/ERW Accidents Dashboard, April–June 2025. Information Management System for Mine Action, verified by the Secretariat of the National Mine Action Authority.

Psychological distress

In towns and villages across Ukraine's conflict-affected eastern and southern regions, the psychological toll of war continues to deepen. The emotional burden carried by internally displaced persons, returning veterans, and their families reflects not only the trauma of past experiences, but also the uncertainty of their current situations and futures. Participants of protection monitoring activities express that symptoms ranging from acute stress to long-term emotional fatigue continue to manifest daily and often go unsupported.

Graph 6. Major stress factors

Fear of being killed or injured by armed violence	78	45.3%
Worries about the future	67	39.0%
Fear of property being damaged by armed violence	55	32.0%
Worries about the children	44	25.6%
Displacement related stress	39	22.7%
Lack of access to specialized medical services	12	7.0%
Fear of conscription	10	5.8%
Missing family members	9	5.2%
Lack of access to employment opportunities	8	4.7%
Lack of access to basic services	7	4.1%
Other	3	1.7%
Stigmatization/discrimination	3	1.7%

Signs of psychological distress are reported among displaced families, particularly those arriving from heavily shelled areas in Dniprovsk, Kherson, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. People describe living in a constant state of alertness, unable to relax, always ready to flee. "***We sleep in our clothes, with bags packed, just in case***" (*KI, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast*). Bright lights, sirens, the slam of a door were identified as trauma triggers, compounding stress predominantly for those just arriving from frontline areas. Transit centers, though lifesaving, are often only able to provide basic psychological first aid, with little or no continuity once families move onward. The most vulnerable including children, elderly people, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions, are particularly exposed due to a lack of specialised and sustained mental health services.

Mental health stigma remains deeply entrenched. Protection monitoring findings observe that across nearly every oblast monitored, displaced men and older individuals described reluctance to seek help, seeing psychological support as unnecessary or shameful. Even where psychologists are available, they are often mistrusted, either for their lack of trauma-informed approaches, or because they lack military or personal experience with displacement. "***Psychologists are for those who are not in their right minds***."—(*KI, Sumy Oblast*). Perception and stigma prevent even the attempt of psychosocial support, where then negative experiences and interactions with perceptually mistrusted mental health professionals even further exacerbate arguments against beneficial activities, therefore inducing a vicious cycle perpetuating the taboo of mental health support.

Rural areas are the most underserved according to protection monitoring participants. Communities in northern Sumy, southern Kherson, and central Mykolaiv oblasts often report having no access at all to psychosocial support—formal or informal. In these areas, coping is left to families, neighbours, and informal peer networks, many of whom are themselves in distress.

Veterans and their families face a distinct and complex form of psychological crisis based on protection monitoring findings. In Mykolaiv and Sumy oblasts, family members described dramatic behavioural changes following the return of loved ones from military service. Veterans are often irritable, withdrawn, or overwhelmed by even minor stressors. Many suffer from insomnia, nightmares, or intrusive memories of combat. "***My husband came back a completely different person. I also went through my own war while waiting for him***." (*FGD, Mykolaiv Oblast*). Others cope through avoidance—excessive eating, alcohol use, or emotional detachment. One participant in Sumy oblast shared her husband's fear that he might harm their grandson during a nightmare. Families are acting as emotional buffers and absorb much of this distress, but receive no formal support in return. Veterans consistently expressed a preference for physical, strength-based activities like gym workouts, martial arts, or shooting practice, which they see as therapeutic and identity-affirming. However, access to such activities is limited or non-existent in most communities. At the same time, the stigma surrounding psychological care continues to suppress service use, particularly among men. "***When there's a thunderstorm, everyone lies on the floor. My husband covers us with his body***" (*FGD participant, Sumy oblast*).

Family separation and child protection risks, during this quarter's protection monitoring, were noted to be primarily driven by the ongoing mobilization of men into the armed forces. Approximately 60% of household respondents who reported family separation described immense psychological and practical burdens on spouses and children. FGDs with veterans' families in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast revealed spouses living in a state of chronic stress and "***on the edge of exhaustion***," effectively functioning as single parents while managing persistent fear for their partners' safety. This prolonged strain directly affects children, who show increased anxiety, aggression, and other behavioural issues, compounded by disruptions to education. Many children continue to study online or in shelters, which reduces opportunities for socialization, structured routines, and access to safe learning environments.

Civil status, access to remedies and justice

Barriers to accessing documentation

Across all monitored regions, challenges in accessing or restoring civil documentation remained a key protection risk. This continued to affect people's ability to claim social benefits, access services, register housing damage, and apply for compensation. Internally displaced persons, elderly people, veterans, and residents of rural and frontline areas were most affected. Many male IDPs remained excluded from support due to a reluctance to register for IDP status due to conscription fears; with 20% of males aged between 25 years to 60 years reporting that they are not registered.

While no gaps in IDP certificates were reported during this period in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, access to housing, land, and property (HLP) documentation remains limited. Among those missing HLP documents, 66.7% lacked property ownership certificates and 33.3% lacked inheritance certificates, according to household survey data. The main obstacle (reported by half of respondents with documentation issues), was the inability to physically reach administrative service centres. As detailed above in the context section, the administration of various social services and benefits have been transferred to the Pension Fund of Ukraine. Key informants observed that not only did elderly persons struggle with digital procedures required for document applications, but that guidance from the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) was inconsistent across different branches, creating confusion, and leaving some IDPs unable to proceed with applications.

Legal and administrative difficulties in obtaining military service records, disability status, or other documents for compensation, continue to be reported by veterans and IDPs in Sumy Oblast. The lack of free legal aid was highlighted as a key gap, especially in rural hromadas. Focus group participants described needing to pay out of pocket for legal support or navigating the process alone. Veterans expressed frustration with unclear procedures and conflicting decisions by medical commissions. One FGD participant from Sumy Oblast said: "***We have to fight for everything ourselves, even for what we're entitled to***." IDPs also shared that destruction of homes had resulted in complete loss of documentation, and pursuing legal restoration involved high costs and lengthy court processes.

In Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, many older residents noted lacking the digital skills or internet access needed to submit requests online, and those in remote areas faced additional transport-related limitations. Key informants noted that some IDPs had lost all forms of identification, and personal and communication items such as SIM cards and mobile phones; leaving them completely disconnected from services and unable to restart applications.

A sharp increase in people reporting transportation as a major barrier to accessing documentation was seen in both Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts with 67% of respondents reporting challenges, in comparison to last quarter's protection monitoring findings during which 41% of respondents reported challenges. Many communities lack functioning public transport, requiring residents to walk several kilometers or hire costly private transport to reach administrative offices. While mobile service centers were deployed in some areas, coverage remained inconsistent and insufficient. Key informants also reported severe delays in processing disability status for veterans, with some cases unresolved for over a year due to repeated referrals and lack of institutional follow-up.

Housing, land and property issues linked to documentation and compensation

Access to state housing programs continued to be a concern across all regions. While awareness of the Rental Subsidy Program[9] has increased according to a KII, actual participation remains extremely limited. During the first quarter of the year, the Pension Fund of Ukraine processed 78 applications for the rental subsidy scheme (data for the second quarter has not been released yet)[10].

The Rental Subsidy Programme[11] is widely regarded as important throughout eastern regions but remains largely inaccessible due to several barriers. One of the main issues is the reluctance of landlords to sign formal lease agreements, as they often want to avoid paying taxes or simply do not know how to prepare the necessary documentation. In some cases, landlords are physically absent, living abroad, which makes it practically impossible to arrange official rental contracts. As a result, many IDPs live without formal agreements, often staying with friends or relatives, only covering utility and maintenance costs. An additional challenge of being eligible for the rental subsidy is that IDPs are required to give up the standard monthly allowance (UAH 2,000 per adult and UAH 3,000 per child), which

[9] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1225-2024-%D0%BF#Text

[10] https://www.pfu.gov.ua/2172685-zvit-pro-robotu-organiv-pensijnogo-fondu-ukrayiny-u-i-kvartali-2025-roku/

[11] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1225-2024-%D0%BF#Text

discourages participation in the program. A respondent from Sumy Oblast explained: "***If this subsidy is used to pay for the apartment, then what will I eat***?"

A key obstacle is the requirement for a formal rental agreement, which many landlords refused to sign. Across all oblasts, IDPs reported that landlords either declined to formalize contracts or demanded higher rents when asked to do so. In several locations, landlords lacked formal registration of their property or preferred to avoid tax obligations, relying instead on informal cash-based arrangements. In rural areas and smaller towns, many IDPs lived in housing provided by relatives or acquaintances, or in abandoned buildings, further limiting their eligibility. Respondents also described how landlords' absence, particularly for those now living abroad, made signing contracts impossible.

Even when documentation was available, other factors blocked access to the program. Some households were disqualified due to small income excesses, such as 100-300 UAH above the threshold, or because they owned a used vehicle or had modest bank savings. Many older residents and rural households lacked the digital literacy or Internet access required to complete the application process, particularly in areas where PFU offices required online submission. Several respondents stated they received conflicting information from PFU staff in different locations, contributing to further delays and confusion.

In Sumy Oblast, many IDPs rely on informal housing agreements, which leaves them vulnerable to sudden eviction. For example, some reported being asked to leave on short notice when hosts needed the space for their own family members. About a quarter of respondents expressed concern about poor housing conditions, citing multiple displacement, at times to homes lacking basic amenities such as water and electricity. Across all monitored oblasts, a pattern emerges of displaced persons relying on informal or unstable housing arrangements, lacking legal protections, and bearing the cost of repairs and utilities in the absence of institutional support.

The eRecovery compensation program continues to operate, with some positive examples of access reported in Zaporizhzhia oblasts, where over 1,500 homeowners received assistance by June 2025. However, barriers remain. Even those approved for support were often unable to access the funds due to high associated costs for notary services, pension fund fees, and taxes—reportedly reaching up to 20,000 UAH. Respondents noted that the amount of compensation was rarely sufficient to cover full housing repairs, requiring families to prioritize the most urgent needs. As one participant from Kherson Oblast stated: "***We had to choose between fixing the roof or the windows***."

Additional challenges were reported in frontline and rural areas of Kherson Oblast, where the lack of available contractors delayed repairs. Some contractors were unwilling to travel to remote villages due to security concerns, including military checkpoints and fear of conscription. Respondents noted that they had the materials but lacked labor to carry out the repairs. Furthermore, legal access to compensation for property in occupied territories remains blocked. While a law enabling compensation without physical inspection was passed by the Verkhovna Rada in 2024, it has yet to be signed by the President. This delay continues to prevent thousands of IDPs from exercising their right to restitution, despite clear constitutional timelines[12].

Non-discrimination and equality

Discrimination and social exclusion remain prevalent across all assessed oblasts, particularly affecting veterans, IDPs, people with disabilities, elderly people, and men of conscription age. These groups continue to face barriers to equal treatment in employment, access to services, and community life.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, veterans and IDPs reported persistent stigma, especially in areas where resources are limited. Social tension between IDPs and host populations continues, contributing to negative stereotypes. Veterans described bureaucratic challenges in accessing benefits, lack of public understanding, and distrust

[12] https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/43982

toward civilian psychological services, particularly when provided by professionals without military experience. Mistrust and fear of judgment also discouraged help-seeking in smaller communities. Key informants noted that employers often avoided hiring veterans, viewing them as unstable, which reinforced economic exclusion. Despite this, peer-led initiatives were seen as effective and trusted support spaces.

In Sumy Oblast, participants highlighted growing public indifference toward veterans and ongoing challenges for people with disabilities. Inaccessible infrastructure continued to limit participation in daily life, with buildings and public spaces rarely adapted to their needs. Veterans reported discrimination in the workplace, particularly when disclosing injuries or trauma, which impacted their ability to reintegrate and sustain livelihoods. In Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts, few changes in community attitudes were observed this quarter, with stigma remaining widespread. Veterans were commonly perceived as aggressive or unstable, while IDPs were viewed as outsiders or burdens on local services. Persons with disabilities reported ongoing exclusion due to inaccessible environments and limited inclusive practices.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, veterans reported social distancing and prejudice upon return, which complicated reintegration. Employers were often reluctant to hire them, citing concerns about emotional instability. Some participants noted the use of negative coping strategies linked to social isolation. IDPs also reported stigmatization, including verbal abuse from host community members accusing them of exploiting aid. "***Local residents told us we were freeloaders who came just to ask for humanitarian aid***", shared an FGD participant from Kherson Oblast. In Mykolaiv, frustration grew over perceived unfairness in aid distribution. Individuals who didn't fall within defined categories, such as those aged 45–60 felt excluded, despite clear vulnerabilities. Participants emphasized the need for clearer communication on criteria, to support the reduction of community tensions.

Veterans and their families

Family dynamics are heavily impacted by veterans' mental health conditions. Reintegration is often accompanied by conflict, with partners and children bearing the emotional burden. Some wives described becoming the sole caregivers and emotional regulators, often without recognition or support. Protection monitoring findings revealed that this leads to emotional exhaustion and resentment, especially when veterans exhibit volatile behaviour or complete emotional detachment.

Children are also deeply affected. Family members expressed concerns about veterans accidentally harming children during flashbacks or bouts of irritability. While families, especially wives and mothers, remain the emotional foundation for many veterans, this support is unacknowledged and unsustainable without outside help. The absence of family counselling services, let alone the prominence of socio-cultural barriers such as stigmatisation, increases the risk of intergenerational trauma and long-term psychological harm.

Socio-economic difficulties further exacerbate the challenges faced by veterans and their families. In Berestyn, FGD participants reported that during military service, men received payments, but there are no payments after returning. This forces families to navigate daily financial hardship, prioritising household economic stability after military service, without a financial grace period to gradually re-enter into the responsibilities civilian life.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Among Veterans

Psychological distress is the most prominent and deeply felt challenge among Ukrainian veterans and their families, according to protection monitoring findings this quarter. Across all regions studied (and particularly in Kharkiv oblast). veterans frequently experience nightmares, flashbacks, aggression, hallucinations, emotional numbness, and depression. A critical concern is the normalisation of their state of mental health. Many veterans and their loved ones view the experience of negative symptoms as an inevitable and irreversible consequence of war, rather than

a treatable condition. This belief discourages them from seeking professional mental health support and instead leads to harmful coping strategies such as self-isolation, alcohol abuse, binge-eating, or emotional withdrawal.

Another major barrier is the mistrust of mental health professionals, especially civilian psychologists. Veterans often feel these practitioners lack the lived experience or cultural understanding necessary to provide effective care. In small towns like Vasylkivka (Synelnykivskyi Raion), fear of social stigma and breaches of confidentiality further discourage engagement with formal services. It was reported that efforts by NGOs to provide group psychosocial support have largely failed to gain traction. Most veterans who participated in protection monitoring in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaphorzhizhia oblast reported preferring discreet, individualized support but report that such services are either unavailable, or poorly designed. In the absence of meaningful options, many veterans rely on self-soothing mechanisms that often escalate into destructive behaviour, including widespread alcoholism.

Social interaction and Community

Veterans report that they feel alienated from civilian life and misunderstood by those who did not serve. Veterans from Shahtarske described dissonance on return, feeling that "***civilians do not realize there is still a war***"; which deepens feelings of alienation. Moreover, veterans in several locations reported facing stereotypes of aggression or mental instability, which not only undermines self-esteem, but also restricts access to employment and social services. Families, in an effort to shield veterans from judgment, also withdraw socially. This "second-layer isolation" inadvertently cuts them off from potential community support.

In some regions, especially in Dnipropetrovska and Zaporizka oblasts, tensions have emerged between veterans and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Veterans sometimes view IDPs as competitors for scarce resources or as culturally distant, adding to the stress and fragmentation in already strained communities. Both groups frequently experience systemic discrimination in employment and public services, which risks further social polarization.

Administrative and Legal Barriers

Veterans and their families encounter significant challenges navigating bureaucratic systems. Tasks like securing disability status or survivor benefits are slow, opaque, and emotionally taxing. Many existing social services are perceived as irrelevant, inaccessible, or untrustworthy. For example, in Barvinkove, veterans reported that local social protection offices failed to accommodate physical disabilities or address their specific concerns. The Ministry of Veteran Affairs has created an online platform to facilitate digital access to all veteran related state services and benefits—Головна | е-Ветеран. However, despite this platform, during protection monitoring veterans shared that they are often unaware of what services exist, let alone how to access them. This knowledge gap, combined with distrust and logistical hurdles, results in extremely low service uptake, according to protection monitoring findings.

In general, a recurring sentiment pertaining to administrative and legal barriers is mistrust in local and state authorities. Many veterans feel abandoned by the institutions that once relied on them. This sense of betrayal fuels anger, disengagement, and resistance to reintegration programs. As one FGD participant from Izuimska shared, "***our men are needed by the state while they are fighting, but after their service, the state forgets about them***".

Furthermore, family members also face challenges in terms of administrative procedures. As per the FGD participants from Berestyn, the process of preparing documents after a husband's death to receive benefits is overwhelming. One woman participant said she spent "*a year and a half covered in documents*," forced to handle everything alone. Prolonged, complex procedures during fraught times of emotional struggle only compound the interconnectivity between decreasing individual capacities and cumulative socio-cultural barriers, leading to an increase of protection risks on both individual and collective levels.

Response Opportunities

Despite these challenges, veteran-led peer support initiatives show considerable promise. Projects like "Veteran Space" in Dnipro, as well as grassroots efforts in Kryvyi Rih and Zaporizhzhia, were reported by veterans to be effective because they are trusted, experience-based, and emotionally resonant. Protection monitoring findings indicate that veterans overwhelmingly prefer peer networks to traditional psychological services.

Recreational and structured group activities, such as sports, martial arts, and strength training, are also seen as beneficial. While some veterans reject traditional therapy like art programs, many respond positively to physical activities that align with their military identity. Unfortunately, many communities lack the facilities to provide such opportunities, highlighting a clear area for development in veteran reintegration programming.

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 59% of respondents surveyed across all oblasts reported concerns related to their accommodation; an increase of 10% in comparison to the previous reporting period. Poor conditions of the accommodation, safety and security risks, and risks of eviction continue to be the main challenges reported.

Graph 7. Concerns about the current place of residence

Accommodation's condition	63	61.8%
Security and safety risks	29	28.4%
Risk of eviction	11	10.8%
Lack of support for damaged housing	8	7.8%
Lack or loss of ownership documentation	4	3.9%
Lack of functioning utilities	4	3.9%
Overcrowded/Lack of privacy	3	2.9%
Not disability inclusive	3	2.9%

Despite variations in experience depending on factors such as geography, housing arrangements, and available support, the housing situation for many remains precarious, particularly the displaced. In Dnipropetrovska Oblast, local authorities noted: "**There were cases of damage to civilian infrastructure in the hromada after 2022 (Andriivka).**

The local authorities provided financial support to repair damaged buildings, but not all residents used the funds for their intended purpose and are now applying to various organisations to receive funds for repairs."

In Shyrokivska hromada, Kryvorizky Raion, authorities reported that the destruction of civilian homes had significantly affected the return of their owners. The situation is further complicated by humanitarian assistance bottlenecks, where, as one resident noted, an organisation reportedly registered individuals for housing restoration, "**but the process was suspended, and some people do not know the status of their applications and whether they will receive assistance**".

In Slovyanska hromada, Synelnykivskyi Raion, it was reported that local authorities do not provide social housing to people who have moved to the community. However, protection monitoring noted incidents where landlords in the host community provide housing to displaced persons with the request to pay only for utilities. Such an agreement makes IDPs dependent on goodwill and does not guarantee them the right to housing. In Shyrokivska hromada, a key informant voiced "**Some IDPs were able to evacuate their agricultural equipment, machinery, and livestock and continue to run their farms and provide food for their families**". In urban areas such as Pavlohrad, high rental prices are pushing many IDPs into collective centres, where overcrowding and lack of privacy remain prevalent concerns. On the other hand, in Pokrovska hromada, Nikopolsky Raion, some IDPs "**have managed to buy housing and do not plan to leave**", while others continue to rely on inadequate dormitory-style accommodation, showing a stark economic divide in housing security.

IDPs and individuals whose homes were damaged or destroyed remain the groups most affected by limited access to adequate housing. Contributing factors include large-scale destruction, a concentration of displacement near areas of origin, limited availability of housing, overcrowding or absence of collective centres in displacement locations, and ineligibility for state compensation programs due to documentation issues or legal restrictions (for example, property located in non-government-controlled areas or active combat zones). Similarly in Kherson oblast, it was reported that there is housing shortage caused by large-scale destruction and the concentration of IDPs near their areas of origin. Many areas lack dedicated housing for IDPs, despite high demand for Collective Centres. There were reports of some modular housing is being constructed in Mykolaiv, but these do not always provide a long term solution.

Right to Education

Across all monitored oblasts, access to safe, quality, and inclusive education remains a high concern as conflict-related risks, displacement, and widespread infrastructure damage continue to disrupt learning. Common trends include prolonged reliance on remote modalities, inadequate shelter and safety measures in educational facilities, and limited integration opportunities for displaced children. These challenges continue to have significant impacts on children's social development and psychosocial well-being.

Access to education across the target locations continues to be impacted by lack of shelters. In Dnipropetrovska Oblast, children in frontline areas have faced prolonged interruptions to in-person schooling due to the lack of protective shelters. In some areas, like Slovyanka, education has remained fully remote since the start of the full-scale invasion. In Shyroke, schools were damaged by active combat, while in Lozuvatska Hromada, local budgets cannot cover the high costs of shelter repairs. As a result, protection monitoring findings compared to last quarter suggest that many children continue with online or hybrid learning in unsafe conditions. Despite these challenges, some progress is evident—several settlements offer inclusive classes, and an Inclusive Resource Centre in Lozuvatka supports children with special educational needs, demonstrating that inclusive education can still be maintained during conflict. The Ministry of Education has adopted Order №1112, which sets conditions for the return of as many students as possible to in-person education for the 2025/2026 academic year, provided that shelters are available. In Zaporizka Oblast, authorities are actively investing in safer learning environments By May 2025, the region had opened its eighth underground school, with 17 more planned by the end of the year, as well as Ukraine's first under-

ground kindergarten. These facilities aim to enable tens of thousands of children to study in-person while staying protected from attacks.

In southern oblasts, widespread destruction has forced most children into online learning. In Mykolaiv Oblast, although classrooms have been repaired, schools and kindergartens remain closed due to the lack of bomb shelters, leaving children without safe spaces for education or socializing. In Kherson, it was noted that online education has continued for four years, contributing to children's social isolation. Safety concerns also affect preschool education: in places like Pokrov, the absence of shelters delays evacuation procedures and prevents some parents from returning to work, as they must stay home with their children. In areas where schools operate, they often do so in damaged buildings or basements, with limited access to safe, child-friendly environments and psychosocial support. Another widespread issue is the difficulty displaced children face integrating into local education systems. Many continue to study online through their original schools, maintaining educational continuity but missing opportunities for socialization in host communities. This pattern of isolation is common across several regions, including Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.

Economic challenges are another factor affecting equitable access to education. In Slovyanska Hromada, Synelnykivskyi Raion for example, educational devices such as laptops and tablets are distributed only to "***vulnerable categories of families in need, namely large low-income families***", potentially excluding middle-income families, who are not able to qualify for assistance to receive these devices, but also cannot afford to purchase them independently. Across all regions, the amalgamation of factors such as destroyed infrastructure, insufficient protective shelters, prolonged reliance on remote learning, and unequal access to devices and inclusive services continues to undermine children's right to education. Without expanded investment into safe facilities, psychosocial support for children, and integration measures for displaced learners, educational and developmental setbacks are likely to increase for the most vulnerable children.

Right to Health

Access to healthcare services remains one of the most pressing concerns across all monitored oblasts, with conflict-related damage, workforce shortages, and logistical barriers compounding pre-existing systemic challenges. 65% of surveyed households reported experiencing barriers in accessing health services. The most common challenges reported include lack of specialised health care services (68%), lack of transportation means to access facilities (34%)(which increased from 27% during the previous reporting period), costs of the services provided/medication (31%), and costs associated with transportation to facilities (29%).

While localised improvements are evident in some areas, respondents consistently reported high costs, long travel distances, and a shortage of qualified specialist services—factors that disproportionately affect older people, people with disabilities (PwDs), IDPs, and veterans. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, data from protection monitoring show severe shortages of specialized doctors, particularly in rural hromadas. Dentists, gynaecologists, traumatologists, endocrinologists, ophthalmologists, and orthopaedists were repeatedly mentioned as unavailable, with 68% of respondents reporting lack of specialised health care services as the primary barrier to healthcare.Family doctors often rotate between larger villages and visit smaller settlements only once a week, leaving frontline communities without consistent primary care. Additional barriers include transportation and cost.

According to monitoring data, nearly a third (31.3%) of respondents indicated a lack of transportation to reach healthcare facilities, while half (53.1%) cited unaffordable costs of services and medicines. As one participant in Kherson described: "***There is social transport in the hromada that runs through Bruskynske, Ishchenka, and other villages, but not through Kostromka. Most local residents here do not own vehicles, and those who do often lack driving skills because the men [who traditionally drive] have been mobilized***." Medicines provided through mobile pharmacies were also reported as "significantly higher than average," prompting many to wait for humanitarian medical teams for free consultations and supplies.

In Mykolaiv, services for veterans are formally free of charge, yet in practice many pay for their own treatment during exacerbations of chronic illnesses. A key informant observed: "***Due to the heavy workload of family doctors in the hromada, it is quite difficult to register with them, especially for veterans with injuries or disabilities. In some cases, doctors show disinterest or biased attitudes, which complicates the process of obtaining disability status***." Rehabilitation services are also limited: "***There are only three state or municipal rehabilitation centres in the oblast, which either do not provide inpatient care (forcing patients to travel long distances daily) or are overcrowded with wounded military personnel***." In some areas, telemedicine services have been introduced, but they still require patients to physically visit clinics, limiting their reach for those with mobility constraints.

In eastern oblasts, particularly Kharkivska and neighboring areas, the situation remains strained despite occasional visits by mobile medical units. According to IOM data (June 2025)[13], 22% of surveyed households reported difficulty accessing health services, with the most severe barriers for older persons, PwDs, and low-income households. A respondent from Oleksandrivka, Kharkivska Oblast, explained: "***My mother ran out of medication—she simply stopped taking her pills because she can't get to the pharmacy***." Similarl to last quarter's protection monitoring findings, participants across multiple KIIs continue to highlight mistrust in public health services, long waits for medicines, and a critical shortage of staff and supplies.

Graph 8. Barriers to access to health services

Lack of specialized health care services	77	68.1%
Distance—lack of transportation means to access facilities	39	34.5%
Cost of the services provided/medication	35	31.0%
Cost associated with transportation to facilities	33	29.2%
Lack of available health facility	26	23.0%
Safety risks linked with access to/presence at facilities	20	17.7%
Lack/shortage of medication	9	8.0%
Long waiting time	4	3.5%
Discrimination/restriction of access	3	2.7%
Not accessible for persons with disabilities	1	0.9%

In Sumy Oblast, many rural communities lack even basic outpatient clinics, forcing residents to travel long distances, whilst rehabilitation services for veterans were repeatedly identified as insufficient or unavailable. Barriers to disability recognition were also described. Families frequently reported financial strain: "***The payments we receive are***

[13] IOM, Ukraine—Returning home from abroad—July 2025

very small. We have to buy medicine ourselves… he needs expensive medication that must be taken continuously," noted a participant from Lebedyn. In contrast, respondents in some host communities described more positive experiences, such as in Krolevets: "***The doctors are so responsive, humane, decent… they always stay in touch***." However, others emphasized ongoing safety-related disruptions: "***You have to pay money for everything. And in Sumy, it is very uneasy. There are frequent alarms, doctors do not work during alarms in some clinics***," explained an IDP from Khotynska hromada.

Protection monitoring cross-regional findings shine a light on a health system with variable regional approaches, under acute strain. Infrastructure destruction, inadequate transportation, unaffordable costs, and the withdrawal of some mobile services continue to limit access. PwDs, veterans, and older people face specific barriers, while front-line communities struggle with the absence of permanent facilities. While some localized investments—such as telemedicine and new rehabilitation initiatives—offer promising models, they currently remain insufficient in the face of systemic service gaps, logistical constraints, and financial barriers, further jeopardize the right to health for conflict-affected populations. In addition, the Government of Ukraine also provides support for persons with disabilities through compensation and free prosthetics with maintenance. Although some medical services are officially free, some consultations and tests remain costly. In addition, the growing reliance on electronic services may pose challenges for elderly people and those with limited digital literacy.

Right to Work

Similarly within the protection monitoring findings of the last quarter, Social protection payments continue to be reported by respondents as the main source of income. 89% of households report receiving the IDP allowance, however, despite access to this social protection payment, 67% of respondents still report gaps in their basic needs.

Graph 9. Main sources of income

Social protection payments	134	76.1%
Salary—Formal Employment	37	21.0%
Humanitarian Assistance	16	9.1%
Savings	16	9.1%
Casual (Temporary) Labour	16	9.1%
Assistance from Family/Friends	7	4.0%
No resources coming into the household	6	3.4%
Business/Self Employment	2	1.1%
Debt	1	0.6%

This highlights that while the IDP allowance can serve as a valuable support mechanism, the amount provided is insufficient for many vulnerable households. According to household survey findings, the main factor affecting employment is the lack of available jobs (95%). Respondents also highlighted physical impairment/limitations (19%) and low or off-season employment (17%) among the various factors. Access to employment remains a pressing concern across all monitored oblasts particularly for IDPs, persons experiencing disabilities, veterans, and rural residents.

In Dnipropetrovska Oblast, respondents highlighted the absence of stable work opportunities, with many IDPs in areas such as Slovyanka and Synelnykivskyi Raion resorting to seasonal or hazardous labour, including trench digging. The high dependence on social security payments as respondents' main source of income indicates limited opportunities for formal employment and a general dependence on assistance. Structural barriers—such as poor transport infrastructure and an absence of local businesses—restrict mobility and access to job markets, especially in remote settlements like Karpivka and Pokrov, where participants described economic instability and underdeveloped labour markets. Women with young children face additional constraints due to limited childcare options and scarce flexible work opportunities. In Lozuvatka, local authorities emphasized this gap, while a KII in Zaporizhzhia noted: "***Employers are reluctant to hire them, fearing their psychological state, conflict, etc.***" highlighting how stigma creates significant barriers to veterans' economic reintegration. Coping mechanisms remain minimal. Most households surveyed reported that they had no active strategy other than reducing spending on food or medical services or using personal savings.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, employment challenges have worsened as closed schools, damaged administrative buildings, and shuttered businesses leave few vacancies. One FGD participant shared: "***Previously, there was an opportunity to work remotely at the local school, but now that it is being completely closed, this opportunity has also been lost***." Seasonal agricultural work, previously a fallback, has become unreliable due to poor crop yields and drought. As one participant noted: "***We invested our last funds in planting, and now we have nothing left. Everything burned! We are left with debts***…". Many respondents are affected by physical limitations, chronic illnesses, and disabilities, with veterans facing particularly long waits for combatant status and disability certification, delaying access to benefits. One veteran explained: "***After being injured and discharged from military service, I registered with the Employment Centre. When I finally found a job, the employer refused to hire me upon learning that I had a concussion***".

Comparatively, in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, access to livelihoods remains constrained, with no significant improvements since the previous quarter. Frontline damage to local industry, absence of job openings, and employer bias against IDPs and returnees limit opportunities, especially for women-headed households and low-income families. Reports of underpayment and unsafe conditions in informal construction and agricultural work are increasing. Respondents cited childcare needs, transport challenges, and lack of vocational training as major barriers, with many turning to humanitarian aid or social payments for survival. An FGD participant from Vilhivska hromada noted "***There are no jobs in the village, and I can't leave my children alone to search for work***".

In Sumy Oblast, unemployment rose this quarter, with veterans and persons with disabilities reportedly facing widespread discrimination. A participant in Shostka shared: "***Employers say we're unstable. They don't want to hire former soldiers because we speak up when there's injustice***". Others described exploitative work conditions; one veteran's wife noted: "***He was unable to perform physical labor due to injuries, but they assigned him the hardest tasks and later threatened him with re-conscription when he tried to leave***." Employment remains central to social integration and emotional recovery for both IDPs and veterans. One veteran from Mykolaivka stressed: "**For *military personnel, first and foremost, adaptation is necessary. They need jobs. They won't just come to the community asking to play checkers. They need to integrate into society***." Yet, IDPs in remote settlements described limited transport options and few available jobs: "***There is no work in the village. And public transportation runs only once a week***." Some displaced individuals take temporary public works jobs despite low pay: "***We clean everything, cut branches, take out the rubbish… But we need money. We take on any job***."

Across all monitored oblasts, these intersecting economic constraints—lack of vacancies, physical and administrative barriers, caregiving burdens, and stigma. These reinforce protection risks such as exclusion, exploitation, and dependency on aid. Without targeted livelihood support, improved transport links, and inclusive hiring practices, opportunities for sustainable recovery and self-reliance remain severely limited, continuing to strain people's capacities to mitigate future risks. While opportunities for sustainable recovery and self-reliance remain challenging, it is worth noting that the Government of Ukraine has introduced several employment support programmes. These include grants for starting or developing a business; free re-education with guaranteed employment after short-term courses (with housing provided when training is outside the place of registration); financial support for employers to create workplaces for persons with disabilities; and the "eRobota" initiative for the reintegration and employment of veterans, including grants for veterans' families to start a business. However, awareness and accessibility of these programmes may still be limited in some communities.

Any other economic and social right

Access to essential economic and social rights remains highly uneven across conflict-affected and rural areas, particularly where displaced persons, veterans, and their families face significant barriers to services not due to a lack of eligibility, but due to a lack of information and accessibility. "***We do not know what we are entitled to. Sometimes veterans simply come in with a folder of documents and ask, 'What can I do with this***?" (*KII, Sumy Oblast*). Poor internet connectivity, limited disability-inclusive infrastructure, and minimal public transportation—with buses reportedly running once a week or once a day—severely restrict residents' ability to access administrative, healthcare, and social services. Veterans in particular report confusion over available benefits, and many rural residents must travel long distances—often on foot or with limited support—to attend appointments or collect entitlements, further marginalising groups experiencing vulnerabilities.

In Dnipropetrovska Oblast, the aftermath of the Kakhovka Dam destruction and climate-related environmental degradation has left many rural communities facing acute water insecurity. Poor water quality and high delivery costs, ranging from 450 to 800 UAH per cubic meter, make safe drinking water unaffordable for low-income and displaced households, forcing them to rely on unsafe sources. "***Due to climate change, decreased rainfall, yields have decreased significantly. Poor water quality and these changes create additional costs for farming***" (*KII, Kryvorizky Raion*). This lack of access undermines the right to health, economic rights, threatens food security through declining agricultural yields, and burdens families with added survival stress and reduced dignity. Although local authorities and communities are actively seeking charitable support and funding, these intersecting challenges will continue to contribute to heightened protection risks and deepen social and economic inequalities, particularly in remote or environmentally vulnerable areas.

Recommendations

To effectively address the urgent protection and resilience needs identified, the following targeted recommendations have been identified as priorities:

To the Government of Ukraine

Strengthen inclusive, safe and coordinated evacuation systems

- Prioritize the establishment of barrier-free transit centers and shelters, ensuring accessible transportation for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children.
- Develop clear, multi-channel communication strategies—using community-led, peer-to-peer, and technology-assisted methods like SMS alerts and community radio—to inform communities about their rights, risks, and available evacuation options.
- Expand community-supported early warning systems in rural areas where standard infrastructure is limited, enabling timely and inclusive responses.

Improve Access to Civil Documentation and Compensation

- Deploy mobile, user-friendly documentation services with flexible renewal options to reach the most vulnerable, including men of conscription age.
- Increase public awareness campaigns about documentation rights, simplifying procedures by reducing bureaucratic steps, costs, and legal hurdles—such as lease requirements—that hinder access.
- Explore opportunities for vulnerable individuals to combine social protection benefits, such as IDP rental subsidy and IDP allowance, when individual benefits are below the subsistence minimum. Offer incentives to landlords and property owners to formalize rental agreements, expanding formal housing options for displaced populations.
- Streamline housing compensation and reconstruction processes to deliver prompt, market-aligned payouts, ensuring vulnerable groups—especially in occupied or inaccessible areas—are not left behind.

Invest in Sustainable, Inclusive Infrastructure and Basic Services

- Prioritize large-scale investments in safe, affordable water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly in affected rural and environmentally vulnerable areas, with robust quality monitoring and targeted subsidies.
- Ensure all public buildings, transportation systems, and shelters are adapted for accessibility—facilitating mobility for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and veterans—and include inclusive community spaces.

Strengthen Social Protection and Information Access

- Expand psychosocial services focused on child protection, family reunification, and mental health—delivering trauma-informed, culturally sensitive care both within communities and at collective centers. Integrate these supports into routine services, training providers in gender-sensitive approaches and confidentiality.

- Establish confidential referral pathways and survivor-centered services for gender-based violence (GBV), including safe spaces and legal aid—proximity to where affected populations live.

Enhance Livelihood Opportunities and Local Integration/ Social Cohesion

- Develop targeted livelihood programs—like vocational training, small enterprise grants, and public works—that prioritize inclusion of IDPs, veterans, and persons with disabilities. Programs should focus on sectors with identified labour supply gaps.
- Promote employment opportunities linked to community recovery and reconstruction, including through public works and small business support.
- Provide incentives for employers to hire veterans, persons with disabilities, and displaced individuals, and address barriers such as lack of childcare or skills mismatch.

To the humanitarian community

Expand tailored protection support for veterans and their families

- Invest in specialized, trauma-informed mental health and psychosocial support tailored to veterans and their families, including mobile outreach, community-based services, and confidential counselling options—kindling community acceptance and reducing stigma.
- Invest in capacity development initiatives for veteran support staff to ensure specialist care is implemented. Additionally, this includes the meaningful involvement of veterans in the design, implementation, and evaluation of relevant programmes.
- Strengthen social cohesion and reintegration of veterans and other conflict-affected groups by supporting peer-led networks, facilitating community dialogues, and ensuring active participation of affected populations in the design and monitoring of local programs.

Strengthen support for Inclusive Evacuation Systems

- Coordinate closely with authorities to improve evacuation protocols—ensuring dignity, safety, and psychological support at transit points—by deploying protection staff trained in safeguarding and inclusive practices.
- Support in the dissemination and regular updating of evacuation information products including leaflets, awareness of radio messaging, QR codes etc. developed by Oblast Military Administrations.
- Coordinate closely with authorities to improve evacuation protocols—ensuring dignity, safety, and psychological support at transit points—by deploying protection staff trained in safeguarding and inclusive practices.
- Invest in expanding accessible shelters and transitional accommodations tailored to diverse needs.

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

- Strengthen Child Protection MHPSS activities through trauma informed educational programming for displaced children, and hybrid modalities for support for separated families. Continue restoring and maintaining safe third spaces/ child-friendly spaces for children and youth to access support in secure, inclusive environments.

- Explore opportunities for peer-to-peer support, communities of practice, and specialized clinical programming to consult with international trauma-informed mental health professionals or combat stress specialists.
- Scale up GBV prevention and response by advocating for privacy and safe spaces for women and girls in shelters, expanding mobile teams to strengthen case management for hard-to-reach populations and confidential referrals.

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

- Continue to strengthen and expand demining efforts, particularly in rural areas and on small farms where small businesses and livelihoods initiatives have been affected.
- Expand mobile services, especially CNAP and mobile healthcare services, to rural villages, micro-raions of hromadas not reached, and ensure mechanisms and capacities are in place to regularly support communities.
- Explore creative modalities for the improvement of information dissemination on available service, for example, with associated QR codes or radio transmissions, considering hard-to-reach populations, including reaching men of conscription age for specialist services.

Strengthen Coordination and Local Capacity

- Strengthen coordination between Health and Protection actors to ensure efficient referral mechanisms are in place, and render more accessible information regarding Health Service Providers, selection criteria, referral focal points, and any other necessary information to ensure Protection actors can effectively refer to Health Actors.

Promote Livelihoods and Economic Resilience

- Strengthen livelihoods programming by expanding skills training, microenterprise support, cash-for-work opportunities, and job matching services. Simultaneously, promote accessible childcare and transportation solutions to enhance women's economic participation and reduce discrimination against job seekers who are veterans and persons with disabilities.
- Support local authorities in creating inclusive, accessible community spaces—such as sports fields, cultural centers, and safe meeting places—that foster connection, reduce social isolation, and counter stigma toward IDPs, veterans, and persons with disabilities.

Scale Up Legal Aid and Documentation Assistance

- Expand civil documentation support through mobile outreach teams, community awareness, legal counselling on HLP and inheritance, and particularly with a strong monitoring focus on barriers faced by men of conscription age.
- Support equitable housing recovery through legal assistance for IDPs on compensation, restitution, and rental subsidies, including advocacy for renters and informal occupants.
- Continue expanding legal aid and accompaniment services to support individuals navigate complex processes for documentation, disability status, and compensation for destroyed housing. Mobile legal clinics and information days could bridge gaps in remote areas.