



HUMANITARIAN
IMPACT INSTITUTE
Inclusive Learning

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT UKRAINE RESPONSE

Depaul & CAFOD

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The HII evaluation team would like to thank all the staff at Depaul Ukraine, Depaul International and CAFOD for the professional way in which they engaged in this evaluation and all the support provided throughout.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors.



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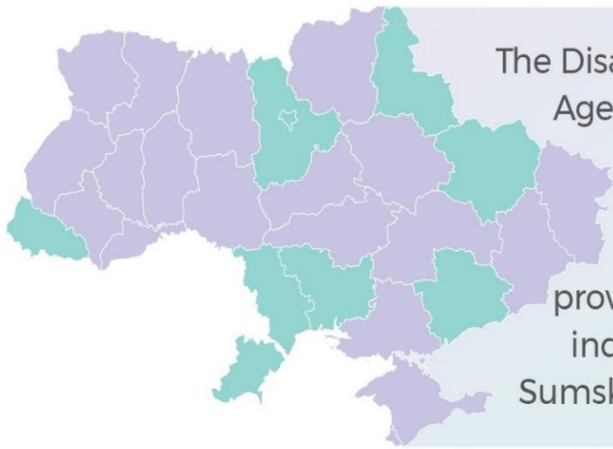




Acronyms

CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DPI	Depaul International
DPS	Depaul Slovakia
DPU	Depaul Ukraine
ET	Evaluation Team
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HII	Humanitarian Impact Institute
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
R2P	Right to Protection
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure





The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) funded the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), in collaboration with Depaul Ukraine (DPU) and Depaul International (DPI) to implement three projects in response to the Ukraine crisis. The Ukraine CAFOD programme team provided remote support to DPU, reaching a total of 130,876 individuals across Kyivska, Odeska, Kharkivska, Mykolaivska, Sumska, Zaporizka, and Zakarpatska oblasts from March 2022.

Project's three phases

March 2022 **Phase 1** August 2022

September 2022 **Phase 2a** August 2023

September 2023 **Phase 2b** February 2025

Evaluation Objectives



Assess the engagement and adherence to Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)



To assess project outcomes to inform Phase 2b programming



Identify best practices, challenges, lessons learned, and gaps



Provide lessons for future programs by CAFOD, DPI, DPU, and broader humanitarian efforts

Evaluation Activities



Desk review



Key informant interviews with 26 staff



Key informant interviews with 16 key stakeholders



8 Focus group discussions with clients



8 Structured observation visits

Executive Summary

The Humanitarian Impact Institute (HII) was commissioned to conduct this independent, external evaluation of the Crisis Response Programme funded by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), led by Depaul Ukraine (DPU) across Kyivska, Odeska, Kharkivska, and Zaporizka oblasts. The Crisis Response Programme covers multiple projects over three phases/projects: Phase 1 (complete), Phase 2a (complete), and Phase 2b (ongoing to February 2025). The evaluation aimed to inform Phase 2b programming and assess the performance of Phases 1 and 2a, with a focus on learning outcomes.

The objectives were methodically designed to evaluate engagement and adherence to Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS); scrutinize programme outcomes for effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact; identify practices, challenges, and lessons learned; and provide insights for future programmatic efforts by CAFOD, Depaul International (DPI) and Depaul Ukraine.

Adhering to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria and CHS quality commitments, the evaluation team (ET) used desk reviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and structured observation visits.

The findings present a narrative of DPU's resilience and collaborative efforts within an international network, which significantly influenced its impact and community resilience

in crisis situations.

DPU promptly adapted operations to address evolving crisis needs, supported by collaborative initiatives that facilitated cross-border operations and robust safeguarding measures. However, challenges in accessibility persisted, hindering aid's reach to specific groups. This highlighted the need to address barriers affecting assistance to vulnerable populations effectively.

While there was evidence of commitment to client engagement, obstacles such as social stigma and limited awareness posed challenges. Proposed strategies to enhance involvement included group activities and intensified outreach efforts. Nonetheless, DPU's services received positive feedback, particularly in critical areas, such as financial aid, food distribution, and psychological support.

There were coordination efforts between governmental bodies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, coordination challenges emphasized the need for capacity-building initiatives and role clarification within collaborative frameworks.

In summary, this evaluation acknowledges DPU's contributions to Ukraine's humanitarian landscape and offers insights to strengthen future endeavours, ensuring efficacy, sustainability, and inclusivity in humanitarian initiatives.



Introduction

Programme Overview

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) funded the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), in collaboration with Depaul International (DPI) to implement three projects in response to the Ukraine crisis. The Ukraine CAFOD programme team provided remote support to DPI, reaching a total of 130,876 individuals across Kyivska, Odeska, Kharkivska, Mykolaivska, Sumska, Zaporizka, and Zakarpatska oblasts from March 2022.

The projects unfolded in three phases, with the first phase taking place between March 2022 and August 2022. The phase underwent adaptations based on monitoring needs, resulting in changes outlined in the interim report. CAFOD and DPI significantly increased the budget and outputs in Ukraine for food and hygiene distribution, recognising the urgent concerns in operational areas. Geographically, the project expanded its reach, including Mykolaivska and Zaporizka oblasts. It also intensified efforts in Kyivska, Kharkivska, Odeska, and Zakarpatska oblasts.

The main intended outcomes of Phase 1 were to ensure:

1. Affected populations had access to food assistance;
2. Affected populations had access to vital social services;
3. Affected populations had access to medicine and hygiene products;
4. Capacity strengthening of local staff in humanitarian response; and
5. Trauma-informed approaches improved.

During Phase 2a, from September 2022 to August 2023, the project maintained its emphasis on adaptability while building on the groundwork laid in Phase 1. The primary objective was to deliver holistic assistance to the most vulnerable individuals and families, encompassing both emergency aid and winterisation support.

The main intended outcomes of Phase 2a were to ensure that affected populations had access to:

1. Food assistance,
2. Basic hygiene assistance,
3. Winterisation support,
4. Holistic support services, and
5. Accommodation services.

Phase 2b, from September 2023 to February 2025, continues building on learning from Phases 1 and 2a. Due to a budget reduction (of around two thirds), the interventions were revised. The main intended outcomes of Phase 2b were to ensure that affected populations had access to:

1. Food assistance;
2. Basic hygiene assistance;
3. Holistic support services;
4. Accommodation services;
5. Multi-purpose cash assistance; and
6. Safe and dignified feedback mechanisms.

Evaluation

Objectives

This is a learning-focused evaluation of the DEC-funded programme in Kyivska, Odeska, Kharkivska, and Zaporizka oblasts. HII conducted the evaluation, covering the two phases of the intervention, with specific emphasis on the learning for Phase 2b, while including a performance review for Phases 1 and 2a.

The evaluation objectives were:

1. To assess the engagement and adherence to Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS);
2. To assess project outcomes and evaluate effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact to inform Phase 2b programming;
3. To identify best practices, challenges, lessons learned, and gaps; and
4. To articulate lessons for CAFOD, DPI and DPU's future programmes and broader humanitarian efforts.



Evaluation Approach

The OECD DAC criteria form the evaluation framework, with criteria and evaluation questions (EQs) aligned to the CHS quality commitments. Annex A contains the evaluation matrix that aligns EQs, DAC criteria and methods for answering each criterion and EQ.

Methodology

The data collection phase of the evaluation included both in-person and remote data collection methods, as follows:

1. Desk review
2. Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with staff n=26
3. Semi-structured KIIs with key stakeholders n=16
4. Semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) with clients n=8
5. Structured observation visits n=8.

Desk Review

A HII team conducted a comprehensive desk review, encompassing an extensive array of documents and literature relevant to the project. The following project documents and related literature were reviewed:

1. Proposals (each phase) narrative plan, interim report, final report, finance reports and logframes (Phase 1, Phase 2a, Phase 2b);
2. Needs assessment (May 2023);
3. Mid-term review (August 2023);
4. Scheme of delegation for the DPU humanitarian programme;
5. DPU humanitarian response: programme management structure (April 2022);
6. Safeguarding assessment and workplan,
7. SADI assessment and workplans;
8. Updated Feedback, Complaint, Response Mechanism (FCRM);
9. Updated cash Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) data;
10. Ukraine Accompanier Review (Final); and
11. Final Consultancy Report March 2022 - September 2023.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The HII team conducted 26 KIIs with programme staff within the DPU, DPI and CAFOD teams. The evaluation team (ET) involved staff members who have worked in different parts/phases of the programme. These interviews provided valuable insights into the programme design and intended outcomes, including the actual outcomes and achievements. The purpose of these KIIs was to capture feedback on the achievement of outcomes based upon the OECD DAC evaluation criteria. Furthermore, 16 KIIs were conducted with stakeholders, selected from a longer list that the DPU and CAFOD provided.

The purpose of these KIIs was to interview stakeholders who engaged and coordinated with DPU, DPI and CAFOD in different areas and in the different phases of the intervention to capture feedback on achievement of outcomes. These interviews provided valuable insights into the programme design, intended and actual achievements, and triangulation of the findings with the 26 staff KIIs.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The ET also conducted eight FGDs with consenting clients (37 participants in total - 27 women and 10 men), selected on-site from the longlists provided by DPU. FGDs were conducted across outcome areas of project intervention and included a diverse array of participants of varying gender, age, and displacement status.

A semi-structured discussion format was used to identify intersectional inequalities faced by individual community members, concentrating on the multiple dimensions of accessibility of services. The FGDs also gathered feedback on the level of participation allowed throughout the project cycle.

The FGDs were conducted in:

- **Odessa** (Depaul all day centre for homeless)
- **Kyiv** (day centre)
- **Kharkiv**
- **Zaporizhzhia**





Structured Observation Visits

The HII conducted eight structured observation visits of project activities and facilities. The observations were conducted in line with the existing activities on the ground. The following locations were visited by the teams:

- **Odessa** (Depaul IDP assistance centre Starossiona and Depaul All Day Homeless Centre Dalnytska)
- **Kharkiv** (Day Centre on the territory of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Social Patrol "Meals on Wheels" in three different locations and Shelter for the Homeless)
- **Kyiv** (Day Centre and Shelter for the Homeless)
- **Zaporizka** (Catholic Church Distribution of food parcels)



Findings

Relevance

Key Findings Relevance and Sustainability

DPU's foundational work supporting vulnerable populations prior to conflict escalation in Ukraine demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt operations to meet evolving needs of the crisis. Moreover, DPU's collaborative efforts within an international network amplified its impact, enabling efficient cross-border operations and robust safeguarding measures. This integrated approach not only enhanced DPU's responsiveness to crises but also fostered resilience within communities by providing comprehensive shelter services and optimising resource usage.

EQ1: What are Depaul Ukraine's strengths and added value as a national homelessness organisation (part of the international group) working in a humanitarian context? How can this approach be most used in the future?

DPU had a longstanding establishment in Ukraine and had supported 8500 people experiencing homelessness prior to the outbreak of the war.¹ Leveraging their enduring presence, DPU cultivated an extensive network within the country, enabling effective communication and outreach to those impacted by the conflict. Through the collaboration between CAFOD, DPI, and DPU, the programme was guided by six core principles, each of which reflected DPU's strengths. The evaluation specifically examined how DPU's national context enhanced the implementation of these principles.

Adaptiveness: Given the dynamic nature of humanitarian crises, DPU recognised the importance of adaptability. The program flexibly responded to the changing needs and access routes. Interviews with the staff further affirmed the organisation demonstrated flexibility in budgeting, planning, and capacity-building efforts. The project adapted evolving needs and challenges over time, including transitioning from the reactionary to the stabilisation phase of the project.

Targeting: Leveraging its deep understanding of communities and years of working with the individuals experiencing homelessness in

Ukraine DPU was committed to targeting support to the most vulnerable. Through this principle, provision was based on genuine need, ensuring that aid reached those who needed it most. Interviews with stakeholders and clients affirmed that DPU's personalised approach and their commitment to preventing homelessness set them apart. Their client-focused approach involved conducting personalized assessments and detailed case management to identify and address the unique needs of each individual. This allowed for tailored assistance, ensuring that the support provided was relevant and effective, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Cross-border collaboration: As part of an international group, DPU recognised the value of cross-border collaboration in humanitarian efforts. With existing operations in both Ukraine and Slovakia, DPU was well-positioned to facilitate logistical operations across borders. Communication flows and transportation routes, tested and refined, ensured efficient purchasing and transportation of aid to where it was needed most.

Preparedness: All interviewed stakeholders and clients confirmed that DPU displayed a swift response to the crisis. DPU quickly established operations and delivered aid to areas in urgent need, such as Kyiv and Kharkiv. Understanding the urgency of

¹ DPU, DPI & CAFOD, Phase 1 Proposal, 2022.



reaching key cities while access remained possible, DPU remained vigilant in identifying and seizing opportunities to deliver aid. With branches strategically located, DPU was able to scale up their response quickly, delivering aid to a wide area within Ukraine. The organisation had strong connections within the communities DPU served, which facilitated access to areas that were otherwise difficult to reach. This integration enabled DPU to operate effectively, even in the face of initial scepticism from military and police forces.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults: Building on the expertise of its international counterparts, DPU prioritised safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in conflict-affected areas. By drawing on the knowledge and best practices of specialists from CAFOD and DPI, DPU refined approaches to safeguarding in the context of conflict, including protection against sexual violence—a significant risk during times of war.

Security: Recognising the paramount importance of security in humanitarian operations, DPU took proactive measures to ensure the safety and security of beneficiaries, as well as national and international staff. With the guidance of a dedicated security advisor, the organisation developed and implemented standard operating procedures (SOPs), provided training, and distributed necessary equipment to mitigate risks and safeguard all involved in its operations.

In addition to these six principles, clients and stakeholders highlighted various of areas where DPU demonstrated its strengths as a national homelessness organisation. The provision of shelter services extended beyond mere accommodation to include offering essential facilities for personal hygiene. DPU supported with documentation, thereby promoting the well-being and dignity of clients². Representatives from the Food Bank

noted that, according to their “cost-per meal” indicator, DPU had the most optimised cost amongst all partners in meal provision.

With multiple permanent locations, DPU provided comprehensive services tailored to individual needs, fostering inclusivity and equity in service delivery. By serving underserved regions and tailoring assistance, the organisation demonstrated its commitment to addressing diverse community needs. Stakeholders also appreciated DPU’s role as a referral point for individuals in crisis and its collaboration with medical professionals, enhancing overall well-being. Additionally, subsidising transportation costs and providing facilities (such as hostels or day centers) underscored the organisation's responsiveness to community needs, striving to create sustainable impacts in the communities served.

DPU can continue to leverage these strengths by maintaining adaptability, targeted assistance, cross-border collaboration, preparedness, safeguarding, and security measures. The organisation can also enhance the provision of shelter services and optimising resource usage to create sustainable impacts in the communities.

² Documentation is essential for IDPs in Ukraine to access basic necessities during the conflict, its importance extends far beyond the immediate crisis. In the aftermath of the war, documented IDPs will be better positioned to

participate in reconstruction efforts, reclaim property and land rights, and integrate into new communities. This empowers them to rebuild their lives, seek employment, and contribute to a stable and democratic future for Ukraine.



Key Findings Relevance and Effectiveness

The programme demonstrated strong alignment with government initiatives and NGO efforts, fostering collaborations with local authorities, NGOs, churches, and volunteer groups. These partnerships significantly enhanced DPU's ability to reach and engage with the most vulnerable and at-risk populations, leveraging extensive local knowledge and networks. However, certain groups, such as people with disabilities, people of working age, local residents and those residing in conflict-affected areas faced challenges in accessing aid. Nevertheless, DPU actively sought client engagement, particularly during the planning and implementation stages of the programme. Clients were given ample opportunities to provide input and feedback through various channels, including in-person consultations and phone surveys. DPU has explored strategies, such as psychosocial support group meetings and strengthening outreach efforts to improve community involvement. There is potential for further systematising existing practices and tools, emphasising face-to-face interactions, and leveraging client volunteerism to deepen community ties and raise awareness of DPU's work. All this aims to bring everyone on board, including those who might have limited knowledge on the organisation's work or those who might be hesitant to join in.

EQ2 What are Depaul Ukraine's strengths and added value as a national homeless organisation (part of the international group) working in a humanitarian context? How can this approach be most used in the future?

The DPU Crisis Response Programme was aligned with government efforts in serving the affected populations³. Close collaborations with local authorities, NGO and church partners, and voluntary groups on the ground positively affected DPU's effectiveness in reaching the most vulnerable and at-risk groups of the population. Extensive local knowledge and previous work experience were another crucial factor, especially during the first phase of the programme. The local connections and networks established by DPU proved to be invaluable for reaching and engaging with communities in need.

From September 2022, a more targeted process of formal needs assessment, coupled with close cooperation with local stakeholders, and enhancing communication between branches, allowed for more evidence-based targeting and planning. According to DPU staff, these factors contributed positively reaching to the most vulnerable at each stage of the programme.

Respondents of all categories believe that no specific population groups were intentionally excluded from the programme. However, certain

criteria played a pivotal role in determining the reach of the programme. Specific demographics, notably people of working age and local residents (as opposed to IDPs) were named as overall having the least access to aid from any humanitarian organisations.

"All our projects are designed first of all with families and older people in mind. But if it's a single 53-year-old woman, we can miss her with our aid, unless she comes to us herself and tells us about her situation."

– KII with DPU staff, Kyiv

Due to security concerns, DPU staff and some stakeholders named smaller communities in the eastern and southern regions as sometimes challenging to reach. Security concerns were also mentioned in Kharkiv as preventing some clients from attending DPU services.

Disability and overall limited mobility, absence of a mobile phone, poor adaptation to the urban environment, or acute emotional trauma were mentioned by some staff members and individual FGD participants as other potential limitations preventing clients from reaching DPU services.

³ CAFOD Ukraine, Phase 2a, Interim Narrative.



EQ3 To what extent did clients/communities feel that they were consulted in monitoring the programme and encouraged to provide feedback?

DPU actively pursues engagement with new clients, striving to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the project's life cycle. At the planning stage of the project, communities were involved in the process through DPU's cooperation with local government agencies and civil society organisations and volunteers. Active consultations with clients continued during the implementation stages.

Feedback from FGDs indicates that the majority of clients in all regions were able to give their input on multiple occasions and via different methods. Clients reported that they were encouraged by DPU staff to share their opinions and report their needs. Many clients also reported being contacted by phone (as part of the DPU's post distribution monitoring (PDM) mechanism) and asked for their opinions and satisfaction regarding the services they had received from DPU. This gave the clients the feeling that their input was valued and considered in project activities.

However, those clients, who had only received food or hygiene kits, showed limited knowledge of DPU services. Additionally, there were some clients who admitted to not reporting some of their needs and problems to the staff in order not to appear greedy or ungrateful. The overall client's belief that their situation was not bad enough compared to other people in the community was also cited

by FGD participants as a barrier to seeking support.

"I didn't apply for assistance for a long time because I thought there were people who needed it much more, and I felt like I would be stealing from them. I'm an able-bodied adult. I have a job! I was ashamed to ask for help. But the social workers from Depaul convinced me to do it. And I am extremely grateful for that."

– FGD participant, F, Zaporizhzhia

The majority of DPU staff across offices noted that one of the primary challenges in community consultations lay in the sheer magnitude of need, which had surpassed their capacity to address effectively. According to the DPU field staff, this issue had occasionally resulted in a fragmented and poorly coordinated response, leaving many needs unmet. Despite joint efforts with local actors, engaging with mobile populations had proved challenging, hindering effective consultation and participation. Confirmed by both the clients and staff, despite efforts to solicit feedback, there was limited engagement from the clients. This suggests that barriers, such as lack of motivation or perceived relevance may have hindered individuals from actively participating in the feedback process.

EQ4 What opportunities are there to enhance client and community participation and involvement?

Discussions with clients revealed that project participants generally found the existing channels easy to use and appreciated the responsiveness and quality of assistance provided by DPU personnel. Some have used these mech-

anisms to provide feedback or express appreciation for the assistance received, reporting positive experiences with prompt resolution of concerns. Others, satisfied with the project's services, have not felt the need to use feed-



back channels. Interestingly, participants preferred giving feedback in person, highlighting a desire for direct communication with project staff and emphasizing the importance of personal interaction in expressing opinions or concerns. There are possibilities for further systematisation of existing practices and tools across all branches, stronger accent on face-to-face interactions with clients, and strengthening the outreach component.

DPU staff in Kharkiv and Odesa highlighted volunteer work of the clients in their communities as a positive example of deepening the community's ties with DPU and raising awareness of the organisation's work.

"We did not stop working in the early months of 2022 when many people left Odesa. We have also been trying to help people in other cities. We were sending bread to Kharkiv by trains. Our clients were helping with that."

– KII with DPU staff, Odesa

For further involvement of clients, activities such as psychosocial support group meetings were also mentioned by staff as having a potential to enhance community engagement. Both staff and clients said that such meetings create the sense of community among clients by motivating them to be more active.



Effectiveness

Key Findings Effectiveness

Early on, the programme focused on providing in-kind food distribution to as many communities and clients as possible, employing grassroots methods, such as social media, word of mouth, and referrals. As the conflict continued, DPU's approach evolved to include more coordinated efforts, incorporating needs assessments and tailoring services to meet the evolving needs of clients. DPU services were consistently found to be relevant and highly valued by clients, especially financial assistance, food and hygiene products, temporary accommodation, day centres, legal support, document restoration, psychological support, services for children, and employment courses. Depaul established an extensive system for gathering and processing feedback from clients, using hotlines, face-to-face consultations, monitoring visits, and social media platforms, which were regularly reviewed and refined to ensure their effectiveness. However, the programme faced challenges in meeting the increasing demand for services, particularly financial assistance, which strained DPU's ability to address clients' needs adequately.

Q5 To what extent has this programme engaged with the clients and affected communities, individuals and evolving needs?

At the start of the conflict, DPU focused its efforts on providing in-kind distribution of food to the largest possible number of communities and clients. Information about DPU and its services was primarily disseminated through social media, by word of mouth, and with referrals often coming from public institutions or partners. This grassroots approach facilitated community outreach and engagement. DPU staff recognised the critical role those strong relationships with communities and local partners played at the initial stage of the project. However, some of the staff pointed out the downside of heavy reliance on local knowledge, as it sometimes led to delays in introducing changes and following the shifting needs (such as being slow in exiting some communities, particularly in the west of Ukraine).

Overall, the DPU staff members involved in the evaluation were satisfied with how the response evolved over time, pointing out the shift to more complex and formal needs assessment methods, increasing the variety of services according to clients' needs, and gradually focusing on more

comprehensive assistance, while continuing crisis support in the areas where it was still needed. According to the DPU staff, the ongoing changes within the project were relevant to the changing needs of clients and were swiftly introduced. As examples of such changes, as attacks intensified, DPU redirected additional funding to support house repairs. The Kakhovka dam explosion called for an allocation of both financial and people resources, as well as designing new a new project that offers a 100-bed accommodation, not funded by DEC.

"The initial need was much more practical. But over time, people started adjusting to the situation. Afterwards, people started to cope and adjust to living in the context, living with the trauma, adjusting to the new reality. Depaul was able to support psychosocial needs, case management, and working around employment, helping people to make a new life for themselves. In each location, the phase is different, and it changes quite fast:



general trends and changes - and you can easily leap back."

– KII with DPI staff

The DPU staff actively monitors changes in the needs of the population. The staff needs assessments match those offered by stakeholders as noted by FGD participants. Respondents of all categories indicated an overall increase in needs against the background of a significant decrease in available assistance. The need for finance was the most urgent for most clients - mainly for rent, medical treatment, and other household needs.

Both staff and stakeholders reported that recent changes in state support available for IDPs (withdrawing some IDPs' payments) introduced new challenges for the clients, since the beginning of spring 2024. These regulatory changes have increased levels of housing and food insecurity among the clients. They have impacted the project's ability to effectively address the needs of affected communities. The resulting renewed need for in-kind food assistance remains a significant concern across all project locations.

DPU staff and stakeholders also observed a general increase in the need for psychosocial support among different groups of population, both children and adults. This growing

demand was reported for overall mental health support and specific need for trauma and grief counselling. At the same time, stigma around psychological support that exists in Ukrainian society requires additional efforts in introducing clients to this service.

The need for assistance with employment, social support, and overall adaptation to life in a new place was noted as growing in all regions. Adaptation issues are particularly challenging for clients who have moved from rural areas or small towns to cities.

Another growing need that DPU staff and most stakeholders identified was related to assistance with document restoration for people experiencing homelessness, IDPs, and sometimes, for local residents. This indicates ongoing challenges faced by affected individuals in rebuilding their lives and accessing essential services. Instances of discrimination, mentioned by several clients across locations (when communicating with state services or other charitable organisations), point at the need for further advocating the rights of both people experiencing homelessness and IDPs. All DPU services were found to be relevant for their target audiences and were valued by the clients as shown below.

EQ6 Which programme interventions were perceived as the most valuable by clients and why?

Financial assistance: Most clients across locations reported having financial constraints (needing to rent accommodation, having health complications and needing expensive care etc.). All types of cash assistance were mentioned as extremely relevant. However, the specifics of Ukraine's health care system, particularly the widespread practice of informal payments, somewhat reduces the effectiveness of individual financial assistance for treatment (e.g., surgery).

Food and hygiene: All clients named food and hygiene products as highly relevant in

Zaporizhzhia, where this type of assistance is still being provided at the time of this report. Clients especially praised the quality and variety of products, the regularity of assistance, and the absence of delays in its provision. Clients across all locations pointed out that this type of assistance had become highly relevant for them again, due to the decrease in state support. Sixty percent (60%) of FGD participants mentioned having to save on food and hygiene products from time to time or constantly.



Participants who received the food parcels described them as necessary, of high quality, and exceeding initial expectations. FGD participants from Zaporizhzhia noted that the distribution of food parcels not only meets basic nutritional needs but also alleviates financial pressures associated with purchasing food. Participants in other locations noted that the food is still a need

“Food is so welcome! My husband and I live alone, our daughter and her family support us a little, but their life is also hard. We have a huge debt because I had several surgeries, so we save on everything. We eat only the cheapest cereals, no butter, no nothing. A food parcel helps us a lot.”

– FGD Participant, Client, F, Zaporizhzhia

“We really hope we can get packages again (refers to food and hygiene assistance) as they have distributed before. I don't know if it is possible.”

– FGD Participant, Client, F, Odesa

Hygiene services, such as washing and laundry, are also highly relevant in all three regions. In Kharkiv, clients specifically noted the additional relevance of these services due to the active shelling of the city, which causes damage to house and power outages. In Kyiv, the poor conditions of the premises where the services are provided, and problems with access to sufficient hot water, somewhat reduce their effectiveness.

Temporary accommodation: Temporary accommodation was mentioned as equally highly relevant by the clients in Kharkiv, Odesa, and Kyiv. High cost of renting accommodation and the possibility of receiving other services from DPU while staying in the hostel, increase the relevance of this service for IDPs. The main disadvantage was the relatively short duration of hostels. According to clients and DPU staff, not all clients manage to adapt to life in a new place in three months. Single mothers with young children, in particular,

face additional problems with finding employment and accommodation.

For the homeless persons, lack of access to alternative shelters makes accommodation services especially crucial. Low-threshold, free overnight DPU-operated shelters are relevant and effective said both clients and other categories of respondents. According to stakeholders who provide assistance to the homeless, the availability of these shelters has reduced the number of homeless people who suffer frostbite and other injuries related to sleeping on the streets in winter.

Day centres: These and the services they offer are also relevant in all three regions for all categories of clients.

Legal support: Legal support, and especially support in document restoration, was named as extremely relevant by both IDP and homeless clients, especially considering additional restrictions they face since the introduction of martial law. Most problems arise with the restoration of documents (identity cards, housing documents, etc.) of people who lived in the currently occupied territories. These problems need to be addressed at the state level. Joint advocacy efforts by DPU and other stakeholders may be useful in resolving the issues.

Employment assistance was mentioned by clients as very relevant. CV writing services, online job search in a large city, computer literacy and assistance with starting or restoring a business are relevant in all regions. However, the success of this type of assistance also depends on several external factors that Depaul cannot influence. First and foremost, these include the availability of jobs or retraining opportunities in the region or locality, the security situation, as well as the age, gender, physical and psychological capabilities of the client and other circumstances (such as online learning and child-care). Despite these challenges, two participants from the FGDs in Kyiv noted that because of the information they received from



the job centres, they were successful in finding a job.

Psychological support: Clients also acknowledged the need for psychological support, although they did not always feel personally ready to seek it. Participants in the FGDs in Kyiv showed the most interest in these services, in particular, group sessions and psychological support for children. In general, all activities for children were highlighted by clients in Odesa and Kharkiv as extremely relevant. Educational support and a safe place for children and adolescents to socialise and interact are particularly needed in Kharkiv.

Repairs: Repairs of damaged windows and financial support for housing reconstruction were noted as extremely relevant for residents of Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia regions. At the same time, some respondents additionally noted the importance of not only the material aspect of such reconstruction, but also the psychological one – as noted above.

“Donors in general are not very keen on supporting repairs. It’s understandable; the windows you restore today may be damaged again tomorrow. Should we restore them again? I’d say, yes, we should. Because these windows do not only give people warmth. They give hope; they give confidence that this city is still their home; that there is life and there is a future here for them.”

– Stakeholder, M. Kharkiv

According to most clients interviewed, when first contacting DPU, they did not have specific expectations and only hoped to be able to get at least some help from the organisation. Many of them simultaneously applied to other organisations in the region that they knew about. Clients across regions reported that the aid and services they received exceeded their expectations. This sentiment was especially strong in Kharkiv.

The variety of services provided in one place, timeliness and convenient procedures were mentioned by clients in all locations as significantly adding to the relevance and value of DPU services.

The majority of clients noted the positive aspects as the absence of queues, the possibility to make an appointment by phone at a convenient time, and the predictable frequency and provision of available times. Some clients noted that these increased their ability to discuss their problems with a staff member in person, in a confidential atmosphere. Monitoring visits and interviews with several stakeholders confirm this observation.

Most clients also highly praised the overall respectful, attentive and warm attitude of DPU employees. The fact that the staff or volunteers include representatives of vulnerable groups is perceived by clients as a factor that has an additional positive impact on the quality of services.

“People here are very polite, nice, and everything is so well organized.”
– FGD participant, F, Kyiv

EQ7 How can feedback, and the complaints mechanism, be improved (emphasis on how feedback is used by programme staff)?

According to the staff KIs, DPU, with the support and guidance from CAFOD and DPI, has designed and implemented an extensive system for receiving and processing feedback

from clients. This includes the hotline, PDM system, personal face-to-face surveys, and monitoring visits. DPU also collects feedback and statistics from project pages on social



media. The early availability of hotlines has enabled clients to reach DPU with critical feedback or need for a service. The mechanisms are regularly reviewed, and changes are introduced if needed. The hotline structure, for instance, was revised during the implementation and it was seen as a positive development. Additional personalised needs assessment and child-friendly feedback mechanisms are being developed. The feedback is disaggregated across different locations and targeted groups.

However, despite DPU's efforts to solicit feedback, the level of reporting remains relatively low, due to the reluctance of clients. This indicates a potential gap in capturing the full range of client perspectives and experiences. Face-to-face interactions and the PDM phone-collected feedback mechanism emerged as the most preferred methods for

clients to provide feedback, highlighting the importance of direct and personalised communication channels. Conversely, the complaints box was cited as the least preferred method, suggesting a need for alternative approaches to encourage feedback provision.

Further improvement of the Feedback, Complaint, Response Mechanism (FCRM) could be achieved through the use of client preferred methods, standardisation across partners and further community engagement. Establishing mechanisms for better communicating how feedback has been received and used by project staff, providing regular updates, feedback reports, or community meetings to close the feedback loop could enhance the community engagement and encourage clients to provide feedback more actively and regularly.



Coherence

Key Findings Coherence

DPU offered a comprehensive array of services encompassing cash assistance, shelter, food distribution, legal aid, and employment services, often synergising with and augmenting the efforts of governmental bodies and international NGOs. Coordination was facilitated through various mechanisms, leveraging pre-existing relationships with social service entities, local partners such as religious groups, and NGOs such as R2P or Caritas. Collaborative efforts with other NGOs were fostered through platforms and working groups, ensuring the provision of complementary services and efficient client referrals. Nonetheless, challenges in coordinating efforts persisted, particularly due to limited engagement from state entities.

EQ8 To what extent did the programme coordinate with and was complementary to other relevant social support (including Depaul's other services) and aid efforts?

The programme has provided a wide variety of services, ranging from distribution of several types of cash assistance, shelter, legal and employment advice to distribution of hot food (Kharkiv, Odesa) and food parcels (Zaporizhzhia). The interventions consistently aligned with and complemented other services provided by the government and various NGOs in Ukraine.

Especially in the first phase, the programme predominantly relied on pre-existing relationships with social services, local partners, including NGOs and religious actors, for coordination. DPU actively collaborated with local authorities and community leaders to identify clients in need of specific services and assistance. In addition, especially in the first phase of the programme, DPU actively cooperated with civil society groups and engaged DPU clients as volunteers.

The programme established various types of coordination with other service providers. DPU was an early member of the Cash Working Group under the humanitarian cluster system that was formed by UN and international NGOs in Ukraine at the start of the conflict. DPU Kharkiv has also become a member of the Rapid Response Group. This group was created by several volunteer or-

ganisations to quickly address the challenges of providing assistance to victims of shelling, preserving damaged buildings and other relevant services. Additionally, at all phases of the programme, DPU tried to seek new contacts to establish cooperation, both through official and personal channels.

According to the final report of the Phase 2a,⁴ DPU had various coordination mechanisms with the local government actors in different regions. Coordination has continued during Phase 2b. Local authorities, (for example, in Kharkiv) often facilitated access to affected communities and provided advice on potential areas of need.

Examples of successful cooperation include DPU's collaboration with the Kharkiv Aviation Institute to establish a partnership aimed at supporting families in the bomb shelter located beneath the university's main building, and cooperation with employment centres in Kyiv to provide respective services. In Mykolaiv oblast, DPU worked closely with local authorities in both the city of Mykolaiv and in Bashtanka, where the local authorities assisted in targeting and identifying locations that

⁴ DPU, DPI & CAFOD Final Report, Phase 2a, 2023.



needed support. Local authorities also facilitated access post-de-occupation. Furthermore, occasional memorandums of understanding (MoU) were signed with state entities, such as in Kharkiv.

Despite this, the DPU staff noted that coordination with local entities was not streamlined due to a lack of engagement and reluctance of state bodies. Accordingly, coordination with certain state agencies (especially at the stage of establishing cooperation) often depended on personal DPU staff connections with representatives of these agencies. Such reliance on personal contacts underscored the informal nature of these partnerships, potentially limiting the scope of engagement.

In addition, some representatives of state institutions had biased attitudes towards clients, such as homeless people or representatives of the Roma community, which sometimes hindered fruitful cooperation. This required additional DPU efforts to advocate for the rights of clients and to support them.

The staff further noted that establishing partnerships with state institutions in Odesa had been contingent upon the attitudes of local leadership, highlighting the variability and unpredictability of such collaborations.

EQ9 How well has the programme built upon and strengthened existing local capacities and structures?

DPU partnered with local organisations in each location. The partners involved in DPU's response in Ukraine primarily included church associations, charities, NGOs, local volunteer groups, and other Vincentian/Catholic Church actors. These partnerships were crucial for delivering aid, particularly in contested territories or areas where DPU did not have a presence. The project aimed to leverage existing networks and resources within the community to provide assistance and support to those in need. In Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Odesa, DPU used the existing capacities and connections of the church and local charities to share or coordinate the use of assistance. DPU further collaborated with local charities and public health services to provide specialised services for clients with disabilities or living with chronic diseases. In areas where DPU had little expertise, the organisation strived to establish collaborations with experienced local actors, such as working with an organi-

sation advocating zero tolerance to violence, or one supporting LGBTQ+ community.

The HII team interviewed stakeholders to understand the coherence of the programme from the point of view of other NGOs and charities, representatives of state institutions, and of religious communities and organisations. Overall, all stakeholders expressed positive views on the programme's alignment with other interventions within a similar context. All interviewed stakeholders emphasised DPU's reliability and responsibility as a partner, attentiveness to the needs of partners and customers, proactivity and willingness to help solve arising problems or improve joint services.

Stakeholders in Odesa also highlighted the importance of networking among partner NGOs in facilitating provision of swift direct assistance, particularly when resources are limited. They emphasized the mutual contribution of organisations to each other's work,



demonstrating effective coordination and resource sharing.

Stakeholders with the opportunity to observe DPU staff on a regular basis also emphasised DPU's respectful, client-based approach, which they believe helps to build rapport with vulnerable clients. Despite having some initial uncertainties regarding DPU's religious affiliation, stakeholders found this to be no hindrance to their cooperation.

At the same time, cooperation with the interviewed stakeholders was often limited to referrals of clients (for example, for assistance in restoring documents or providing pre-hospital or basic medical care). Accordingly, the ET found certain gaps in terms of awareness among the stakeholders concerning DPU's activities, services and targeted client groups. In all regions, there were stakeholders who, despite having long term partnership with DPU, had little to no knowledge of its activities beyond the specific services they jointly provided or referred to.

Additionally, two different stakeholders noted that establishing cooperation with humanitarian organisations, including DPU, could be time-consuming due to lengthy decision-making processes. Nevertheless, they emphasised that the project's logic was in line with the Vincent de Paul's principles of assisting those who cannot obtain help from other sources.

"It took us three months to establish cooperation. In humanitarian organisations, decision-making processes take longer. Even to organise this interview, our management had to reach an agreement with DPU. That's why sometimes the resolving of one issue can take weeks."

– KII with stakeholder, NGO representative, Kharkiv

Despite the visible efforts and alignment with existing services, collaboration efforts remained primarily at the DPU level. CAFOD and DPI frequently lacked awareness of these initiatives, indicating a need for improved communication and coordination among all stakeholders involved in the project. By knowing the stakeholders involved in, CAFOD and DPI could technically support DPU on engagement forms and strategies. Furthermore, enhanced communication would facilitate the identification and dissemination of crucial information necessary for the program's coherence and effectiveness. The consortium can benefit from stronger information sharing amongst its partners. The international actors, DPI and CAFOD, could support the in-country DPU efforts through advocacy with international bodies outside Ukraine.

Continuous and more systemic work with local authorities, NGOs, and voluntary groups was recognised by staff and highlighted by stakeholders as essential for understanding the needs within specific communities. Some stakeholders also advised DPU to advertise its services more actively within the communities. This could engage and attract potential local donors. Involving community figures of trust in promoting cooperation was additionally mentioned.

Coordination between DPU, DPI and CAFOD

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, DPU staff had limited experience in the provision of humanitarian response, despite the organisation's active presence in Ukraine. For the technical points, DPU heavily relied upon CAFOD's technical expertise. Support in areas like Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL), safeguarding, and logistics significantly bolstered the programme's operational capacity. CAFOD's expertise enhanced the robustness of pro-



programme implementation, ensuring effectiveness of its interventions.

The partnership with DPI and CAFOD additionally provided access to a higher level of resourcing, including funding from the DEC and other donors. This allowed for a more comprehensive and impactful response to the conflict situation in Ukraine. Working with funders like DEC, through CAFOD, additionally involved regular meetings and comprehensive assistance to address more specific issues, such as environmental impact assessments and contract management. Overall this was seen as a useful practice by the interviewed staff.

Adapting to new approaches, such as cash-based assistance and comprehensive case management, required significant changes in how programmes were designed and implemented. Staff, who were used to handling physical distributions, found it challenging to manage cash transfers due to different logistics, risk management practices, and accountability measures. Technical difficulties also arose in establishing and managing these cash transfer systems, ensuring aid reached the right beneficiaries without misappropriation.

Moreover, confusion surrounded newly introduced roles such as safeguarding managers and monitoring and evaluation officers to support these approaches. These roles necessitated extensive training and clear communication, which were not always consistently provided according to the DPU staff. For example, frontline staff needed to learn how to develop business plans for beneficiaries, a task requiring skills distinct from physical distribution. This shift underscored the need for improved internal communication, ongoing training, and support to help staff effectively adapt to new methodologies.

Overall, with the support of CAFOD and DPI, DPU has undergone rapid growth and change in its operating practices. Though overall very effective, this process is still ongoing with need for further learning and support to the staff as well as deeper internal coordination between branches. While capacity-building efforts were ongoing, there were opportunities to better integrate lessons learned into ongoing operations. This includes improving feedback loops and incorporating local insights to refine strategies and improve effectiveness continuously.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Resource and enhance the community feedback mechanism (CFM) to ensure that there is a full feedback loop that includes:

- informal/verbal feedback is captured in the CFM;
- a plan for capturing more feedback in deliberate ways (e.g., focus groups) including with clients of high vulnerability (e.g., marginalised groups and clients displaced multiple times);
- standardised (as far as possible) CFM tools across all local/national partners to generate comparative and traceable data; and
- that responses to feedback are communicated to the communities.

Recommendation 2

DPU should enhance internal information sharing, learning and ways to respond to internal feedback through the introduction of new or improved tools/approaches, selected by a taskforce of team members from across DPU and potentially including:

- developing a more tailored and structured internal communication plan including how meetings are used to communicate information; and/or
- an internal communication platform to support two-way dialogue; and/or
- implementing an internal feedback mechanism with the same aims as a CFM that supports inclusive decision making; and/or
- structured experience exchange between teams.

Recommendation 3

Develop a proactive stakeholder engagement plan that includes objectives, roles, resources, timelines and collaboration/information approaches for each identified stakeholder groups by priority. This will enhance coherence, efficiency and sustainability of the response.

Recommendation 4

Continue to provide the *combination* of services to clients in Ukraine if the Response continues, as this range of services is helping meet client needs while they are living insecurely.

Recommendation 5

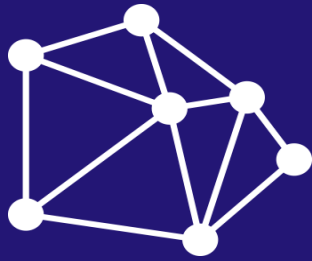
Explore opportunities to resource and enhance advocacy for specific issues of concern to Depaul's mandate in Ukraine (e.g. those excluded from receiving support and documentation for displaced people from occupied regions).

Recommendation 6

Develop a localisation plan with an aim to increase the shift in power to local/national partners, including:

- deliver training to all core project staff in the consortium on what localisation is and what it means in order to develop a common understanding and language on the ambition and scope of localisation.
- mapping all local/national partners involved in the Response in Ukraine;
- facilitating capacity assessments of each local/national partner; and then
- developing and delivering tailored and unique development plans that recognise each local/national partner's individual capacities and objectives towards local humanitarian leadership and the ways in which the consortium can support this; and
- measuring progress on localisation.





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