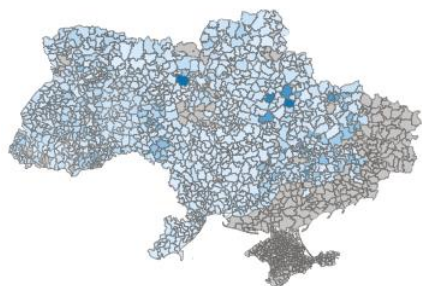


## Protection Monitoring Findings

### 1 January-31 December 2023



#### Background

This is an overview of key protection risks in Ukraine based on the Protection Cluster's revised Protection Monitoring Tool (PMT). The revised PMT is built upon 14 protection typologies, including: safety and security; right to life, physical and mental integrity; liberty and movement; civil status and documentation; protection issues for elderly persons; protection issues for people with disabilities; social cohesion; gender-based violence; child protection; housing, land and property; standard of living; access to remedies; return and displacement; trafficking in persons. The PMT was

launched at community (hromada) level and information presented in this document reflects data collection completed by 19 protection partners **from 1 January to 31 December 2023** – based on 20,024 Key Informant (KI) interviews in more than 1,217 communities (hromadas) in 24 oblasts of Ukraine.

#### Safety and security

In the second year of the full-scale invasion, 6% of KIs assess the security situation as bad or very bad, mostly in Donetsk, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Zaporizka oblasts and in those hromadas of Chernihivska, Sumska, Dnipropetrovska and Mykolayivska oblast that border the Russian Federation and the front line. In the center and western part of the country, the situation was reported unsafe only in the months when specific locations were hit by missile strikes – Cherkaska, Khmelnytska, Kyivska, Odeska and Poltavska oblast. In Rivnenska and Volynska oblasts, northern hromadas near the Belarus border are reported to have mine contamination and significant military presence as particular concerns, limiting access to the forest and thus impacting access to livelihoods for these communities. Almost 20% of KIs across the country assess the situation as sufficiently safe, however the fact that this assessment is made by KIs in some of the most severely affected hromadas of Donetsk and Mykolayivska oblast shows a certain level of desensitization to the conflict. The **most frequently reported security issues** are (1) destruction of civilian property caused by the war; (2) destruction of public infrastructure; and (3) exposure to mines and UXO contamination. In 180 hromadas, KIs report concerns around mine and UXO contamination, and civilian death or injury caused by UXOs or landmines are reported in 144 of those hromadas. Relations between the civilian population and security actors are reported overall as good, while incidents reported in central and western oblasts are attributed to military conscription.

#### Right to Life, Physical and Mental Integrity

The main violations reported include mistreatment including verbal and/or physical assault and theft and robbery. The results indicate high levels of trust of State law-enforcement actors, with violence and violations reported to (1) police – 90%; (2) local government – 68%, with a lesser proportion reporting engagement with (3) community leaders – 18%.

#### Liberty and freedom of movement

Among the most important barriers to freedom of movement, the results show (1) lack of resources; (2) cost of transportation; and (3) risk of family separation and unwillingness to leave their family members behind. Older people are mentioned by KIs as one of the most affected groups, with the main barrier (after lack of resources) being health issues and disability. Fear of conscription was mentioned mostly in Chernivetska, Odeska, Sumska and Kharkivska oblasts. Almost 53% of respondents reported on safety issues, physical roadblocks, and time restrictions of when to leave and return in addition to the key barriers reported above.

## **Civil Status**

The main protection risks related to lack of legal documentation are (1) inability to apply for official employment; (2) denial of access to government assistance and services; (3) denial of access to government social benefits (e.g. pension). Denial of access to humanitarian assistance was mentioned by 30% of KIs, which requires humanitarian actors to revise the procedures for provision of assistance and make those flexible enough to ensure access for people who have lost identity documentation. While overall level of access to Civil Registry is reported as good (with 72.4% of responses), the main barriers to obtaining new, or replacement of lost and damaged legal documentation reported are (1) the relevant civil registration office is not accessible due to distance and transportation cost (7.7% of responses); (2) the office is destroyed, closed or lacks sufficient operational capacities (1,6%); (3) the administrative process is complex, lengthy and costly (1,3%). Access to death registration is also problematic due to the cost of the administrative procedure, including transportation costs and emotional difficulties.

## **Social cohesion**

Most of the KIs ranked relationships between non-displaced communities, IDPs and/or returnees as “good” (almost 72%). However, 3% of KIs report frequent tensions between individuals and groups in the communities and 20% report occasional tensions. Mostly, tensions and disputes are observed over (1) access to assistance and (2) access to livelihoods or other financial resources and were mentioned by the KIs in almost all oblasts of the country. The most affected groups were IDPs, non-displaced and returnees, with returnees reporting disputes over ethnic, political or social issues as the second reason for tensions after access to assistance. The impact of social tensions on people with disabilities, demobilized servicemen and persons with specific gender and sexual identity is also mentioned, but by fewer KIs, reflecting that KIs are likely less cognizant of the challenges faced by these particular groups.

## **Gender-based violence**

As ranked by KIs, women and girls face two key protection issues: (1) lack of independent access to livelihoods and opportunities and (2) violence, harassment, and abuse within the household. Additionally, lack of access to specialized services, including for sexual and reproductive health is mostly reported in Donetsk, Zaporizka, Chernihivska, Sumska and Khersonska oblasts. Lack of privacy is reported in IDP collective sites in central and western oblasts.

## **Child protection**

Psychological trauma, stress and anxiety has been ranked as the key protection issues affecting children, followed by access to education and pressure or peer violence. Separation of children from parents or caregivers was reported by 5% of KIs in hromadas affected by hostilities in Donetsk, Zaporizka, Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, Sumska oblast, as well as in IDP-hosting areas in Chernivetska, Vinnytska, Poltavska and other regions. Overall, the situation of children is described as bad or very bad by 2% of KIs, predominantly in hromadas affected by hostilities in Donetsk, Kharkivska, Zaporizka and Khersonska oblasts, as well as hromadas on the Russian border in Chernihivska and Sumska oblasts. In other locations, deterioration in the situation of children is reported in months when missiles strikes hit civilian infrastructure objects (e.g. the school in Romny park in Kolomiya and multiple locations in Odeska, Kharkivska oblasts).

## **Housing, land and property**

The major protection issues related to housing, land and property as ranked by KIs are 1) damage or destruction of housing, land and property; 2) lack of financial resources to afford accommodation; 3) lack of financial compensation or rehabilitation for damage or destruction of housing, land and property and 4) lack of financial resources to afford utility costs for IDPs. Lack and loss of ownership documentation of land and property and ownership documentation not being recognized or renewed by authorities are mentioned as a major concern by a lower number of KIs, but was reported in 200 hromadas, predominantly in rural areas which requires a stronger outreach with HLP legal assistance. Throughout 2023, people become more aware of the compensation mechanisms for damage and/or property destruction due to the active conflict, with the length, cost and complexity of legal processes mentioned as the main barrier for people to enjoy their HLP rights followed by lack of information about legal processes, lack of disbursement of compensation grants (mentioned by 6,6% of KIs) and lack of legal assistance (6,7%).

Lack of access to land due to mine contamination was mentioned by almost 2,5% of KIs, mostly in Kharkivska, Zaporizka, Chernihivska and Khersonska oblasts.

In IDP-hosting areas in the West, the situation reported with regards to the length, cost or complexity of legal processes as the main barriers to enjoy HLP rights is not better. In these locations, IDPs reportedly face the most barriers to apply for compensation for damaged/destroyed property located in their areas of origin. In Lvivska oblast, 13,5% of KIs report this problem, in Zakarpatska – 68% and in Volynska – almost 35%. There is a lower number of partners providing HLP assistance in these areas, and authorities have less experience in issues related to compensation and support for renewal of lost property documentation. More work needs to be done to better understand the barriers faced by IDPs to restore lost property documentation and access compensation.

### **Protection issues for older people and people with disabilities**

As ranked by KIs, the findings show that older persons and persons with disabilities face similar protection issues in terms of safety, well-being and access to services and opportunities, including (1) lack of access to specialized services; (2) lack of independent access to livelihoods and financial resources; and (3) lack of safe space and privacy. Abandonment by family members is mentioned as a protection issue by 1,4% of KIs for older people and 1,1% of KIs for people with disabilities. This problem is reported both in hromadas affected by the active conflict and IDP hosting areas in Chernivetska, Lvivska, Rivnenska and Poltavska oblasts. Restrictive social and cultural norms particularly affect people with disabilities, and are reported by 14% of KIs, which calls for more targeted action on disability inclusion activities at the community level.

### **Standard of living**

The top three essential services for which people face barriers and restrictions on access are **livelihoods, shelter and health**. The following obstacles to access were ranked in order of importance by the KIs as: (1) lack of financial resources; (2) lack of available services; (3) distance and cost of (or lack of) transportation to relevant facilities. IDPs and people with disabilities are reported as groups most affected by barriers to access essential services. Lack of access to livelihoods is reported by KIs as particularly severe in Kharkivska and Khersonska oblasts, where there are both returns and new displacement due to mandatory evacuations announced in several raions in 2023. The capacity of people to meet their basic needs was reported as “bad” or “very bad” mostly in Kharkivska, Khersonska and Donetsk oblasts. KIs report about returnees residing in destroyed, unfinished or uninhabitable buildings mostly in Kharkivska, Khersonska and Kyivska oblasts.

### **Access to remedies**

35% of KIs reported overall low awareness of the specific mechanisms for remedies/compensation for conflict-related injuries among the population. Demobilized servicemen and IDPs are the groups facing the most challenges in accessing specific mechanisms for remedies/compensation for conflict-related injuries. Among IDPs, the share of people unaware about access to remedies and compensation is higher – 34%; and they are more likely to report that they face barriers in accessing these mechanisms in Zakarpatska – 72%, Lvivska – 52%, Ternopil'ska – 50%, Volynska – 41%, and Khmelnytska – 76%.

### **Returns and displacement – IDPs**

Secondary displacement movements among newly returned IDPs were observed across different geographical areas. The main reasons for departure from the place of displacement reported are: (1) lack of access to livelihood, employment and economic opportunities; (2) lack of access to safe and dignified shelter; (3) shelling/attacks on civilians; (4) exposure to UXOs and landmines; (5) lack of restitution or compensation mechanisms for damaged or destroyed housing, land and property.

*For more information, please visit Protection Monitoring Tool Dashboard by the link [here](#)*