

Humanitarian and Social Protection Nexus Forum

Leveraging the Social Protection System for Humanitarian Cash Programmes in Ukraine

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The document serves as a summary of the *Humanitarian and Social Protection Nexus Forum* from 5 August 2024, which delved into the topic of “Leveraging the Social Protection System for Humanitarian Cash Programmes” in the humanitarian response in Ukraine. The document is based on presentations and a panel discussion which brought together various stakeholders to explore effective strategies for utilizing Ukraine’s social protection system to facilitate cash transfers. The discussions and findings presented in this document underscore the importance of integrating humanitarian efforts with existing social protection mechanisms to enhance the impact and reach of aid in times of crisis, ensuring that support is delivered efficiently to those most in need.

1. Context

Ukraine’s social protection system stands as a cornerstone in the nation’s efforts to combat poverty and mitigate vulnerabilities faced by its citizens due to the full-scale invasion.ⁱ Prior to the onset of the recent conflict, this system was recognized as notably advanced, reflecting a robust commitment to safeguarding the welfare of over 70 per cent of the population.

Since the full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukraine’s social protection system has faced significant challenges. The conflict has led to a sharp increase in unemployment from 9.8 per cent to 21.1 per centⁱⁱ, and a rise in poverty levels from 5.5 per cent to 29 per centⁱⁱⁱ.

The real GDP has plummeted by 29.2 per cent^{iv}, inflation has soared to 26.6 per cent, and the budget deficit has reached 26.5 per cent of gross domestic product. In 2024, defence and debt servicing consumed 51 per cent and 13 per cent of the state budget^v, respectively, limiting the capacity for social spending without increased budget support.

Despite these challenges, the Government of Ukraine, bolstered by the support of international donors, has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to maintaining its social protection measures. This commitment is aimed at strengthening the system to become more adaptive and shock-responsive, especially in the face of current challenges.

Overall, Ukraine operates a comprehensive social protection system which has been adapted to the war, covering life-cycle risks^{vi} as well as risks such as displacement and disability resulting from the war.^{vii} While precise data on effective coverage is difficult to obtain due to the full-scale invasion, available indicators suggest a high level of effective coverage, where 73 per cent of the population are covered by at least one social protection programme as per the International Labour Organization (ILO) World Social Protection Report from 2019.^{viii}

2. Theoretical Framework

There are several ways to leverage social protection systems to implement humanitarian cash transfers more effectively. This specific Forum focused on the humanitarian expansion strategies colloquially termed as ‘top-ups’ throughout the forum. Top-Ups are a method of expanding social protection programs to reach vulnerable populations with humanitarian assistance. They have been implemented in various contexts, such as Armenia during COVID-19 pandemic and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and Kenya and Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic^{ix} and they constitute a recommendation by the PeReHID initiative for Ukraine^x.

Integrating social protection systems into humanitarian response can significantly expedite assistance delivery, reduce redundancy, and strengthen national capacities. Top-ups are a cost-effective method to reach large parts of populations that are directly affected by the full-scale invasion. For instance, in the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines, providing shock-responsive top-ups through the national Pantawid programme proved to be more cost-efficient than parallel humanitarian programmes. The use of existing systems reduced transaction costs and lead times. As a result, 23.53 per cent more households were reached. During the response to the 2011 Ethiopian food crises, similar benefits were seen using the national Productive Safety Net Program, which reduced the cost per beneficiary by 68.64 per cent. It ensures beneficiaries maintain dignity and choice, supports local economies, and provides a sustainable exit strategy. Ultimately, this approach enhances the overall value and lasting impact of the assistance provided.^{xi}

Top-ups sit between traditional spheres of humanitarian and development assistance within the humanitarian-social protection nexus. However, they may be designed to directly achieve humanitarian goals. In order for top-ups to qualify as humanitarian, they need to offer a sound humanitarian targeting strategy which applies both socio-economic and shock-responsive criteria and provide a humanitarian expansion strategy linking transfer amounts to humanitarian objectives.

The development process for top-ups – e.g. expansion of social protection programmes involves several steps once the objective and the target groups are defined:

1. **Selection of Carrier Programmes:** This involves choosing either a shock-responsive or life-cycle social assistance programme. Shock-responsive social assistance programmes do not need an additional shock-related criterion as its recipients are already directly affected by idiosyncratic war-related shocks.
2. **Filter of Vulnerable Socio-Economic Population Group:** Specific socio-economic population groups (such as elderly, families with many children, families with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minorities) could be targeted in line with intersectional vulnerability profiles.
3. **Establishment of Shock-Responsive Criteria:** For life-cycle programmes, shock-responsive criteria should be identified for those that include large population groups. Shock-related criteria could include IDP status, proximity to the frontline, intersectoral severity, etc.
4. **Determination of Expansion Strategy:** The top-up strategy defines whether social assistance programmes are vertically or horizontally expanded – or both.
 - a. **Vertical Expansion:** Social assistance benefit levels are increased through a top-up. This top-up could be either a percentage or flat amount, or a top-up to fill the gap to a certain threshold.

- b. **Horizontal Expansion:** Social assistance programmes could be horizontally expanded by enrolling or assisting additional beneficiaries. This could involve extending the duration of time-limited programmes or easing eligibility criteria to assist populations that do not normally qualify for a social assistance programme, for example, by raising the household income threshold of a means-tested programme.

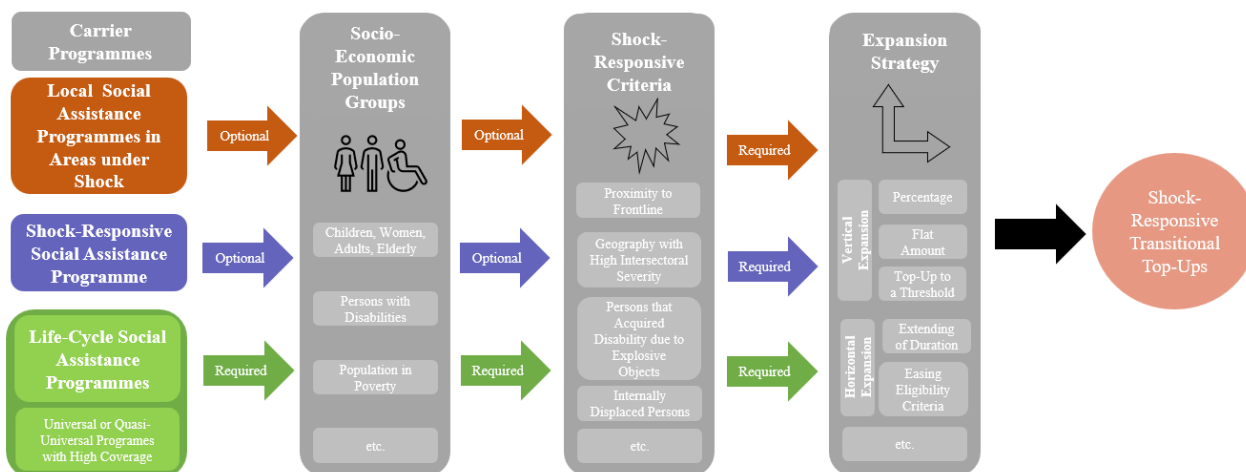


Figure 1 Strategies for Vertical and/or Horizontal Expansion of Social Assistance Programmes^{xii}

For Ukraine, several social assistance programmes^{xiii} and social insurance^{xiv} programmes could be utilized according to the population group, the objective of the intervention, and the available data in the respective registries of the Ministries.

The following table offers entry points for the analysis of potential carrier programmes. However, an in-depth analysis of the different social protection programmes is required in order to target the intended population group and to avoid unintended exclusions.

Social Protection Programmes (Selection)	Benefit Levels	Number of Recipient (Budgeted for 2024) ^{xv}	Target Groups	Characteristics	Possible Expansion Strategies
Childbirth Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-off: UAH 10,320 Monthly: UAH 860 	754,200 ^{xvi}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children < 36 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal coverage (+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering children of 36 months and older
Childcare for Large Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly: UAH 2,100 	259,000 ^{xvii}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd and subsequent children of a family under 6 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal coverage (+) Going to be replaced by Basic Social Assistance (+/-)^{xviii} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering children of 6 years or older / all children of a HH
Social Assistance to Persons and Children with Disabilities Injured as a Result of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-off: UAH 7,083 - UAH 11,805 Annual: UAH 	965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons with disabilities from explosive objects (war/non-war related) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long and complex application process (-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering all persons or children of a HH

Explosive Objects		826.35 - UAH 944.4				
Social Assistance to Persons with Disabilities from Childhood or Children with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly average: UAH 3,430.1 	470,236	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long and complex application process (-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering all persons or children of a HH 	
Assistance for Low-Income Families (GMI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average (per household): UAH 7,147.9^{xix} 	234,600 households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low coverage (-) Poverty targeted (+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering additional populations above income threshold 	
Housing and Utilities Subsidy (HUS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average: UAH 1,639.9^{xx} 	1,539,300 ^{xxi}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High coverage (+) Poverty targeted (+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: covering additional populations above income threshold 	
Pension (Old-Age) Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly: UAH 2,361 – UAH 23,610 	7,408,015 ^{xxii}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very high coverage (+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels 	
Social Pension: Social Assistance to Persons Not Entitled to a Pension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average: UAH 2,361.0^{xxiii} 	193,040 ^{xxiv}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old age populations without Old Age Pension Persons with Disability without Old Age Pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to be replaced by Basic Social Assistance (+/-)^{xxv} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels 	
Allowance for IDPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons with disabilities and children: UAH 3,000 monthly Other persons: UAH 2,000 monthly 	<p>724,925 – persons with disabilities and children</p> <p>1,214,106 – other persons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently displaced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-limited for certain population groups (+/-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical expansion: Increasing benefit levels Horizontal expansion: extending the eligibility period 	

Figure 2 Entry points for the Selection of Social Assistance Programmes (Selection)

3. Best Practices of Leveraging the Social Protection System of Ukraine^{xxvi}

As of August 2024, several humanitarian organisations are topping up separate Government programmes or working directly with the Government to implement SP programmes. The four programmes below only represent the programmes discussed during the Forum.

Ukrainian Red Cross Society

From September 2022 to December 2023, the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) implemented, via a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MOU) between URCS, the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine (MCTD) and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the *Prykhystok* program which supported hosts around the country providing free accommodation for IDPs from eligible frontline or occupied areas with cash payments. The hosts had to apply each month and bring the relevant supporting documentation (host and IDPs hosted) and the amount of cash support was calculated based on the number of hosted IDPs per day and meant to cover the additional utility consumption costs. This program was regulated by the corresponding MOU and as the ownership of the program moved across three different ministries in 2023 (from MCTD to MCTID to Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories), with required time to develop new relationships and the required enabling legal framework (i.e. Decree updates, new MOUs, etc.). The program supported around 100,000 hosts per month who provided free accommodation to around 270,000 IDPs from frontline and occupied areas.

The ministry Government was responsible for registration, verifying and sharing the data plus conducting complementary monitoring exercises. URCS was responsible for verifying data, validating, making payments and monitoring the program (via post-distribution monitoring surveys and focus group discussions with IDPs where URCS disseminated information about services related to protection, access to health and other government and humanitarian services available in their areas) and for reporting back both the Government and donors on progress and payments. The selection of the verification cases was done within the URCS' Cash Platform where an automated script would spot outliers (such as non-personal IBAN numbers, high number of hosted IDPs, etc.) with an additional a selected representative sample size, including all those that received more than UAH 5,000 and randomly selecting the rest from hosts receiving lower amounts. These cases would then be verified via SMS containing a link to an online survey, and when needed (no answer or further information was needed) follow-up was done via phone calls from the URCS Info Centre operators. Host payments were approved if the information was verified, if not they were returned to the ministry for verification. Data protection laws were adhered to as the hosts provided explicit consent for their personal data to be shared with URCS and third party (FSP) at their monthly registration stage.

Consent for accessing IDP data was not provided (as they did not receive directly the cash assistance) but the URCS and ministry agreed on protocols to implement regular focus group discussions with IDPs hosted by the program across the different oblasts to gather information and feedback. Monitoring was done using post distribution monitoring with hosts using representative sampling size, focus group discussions with IDPs and complementary monitoring activities were conducted by the ministry at community level with home visits and reports shared with URCS.

World Food Programme (WFP)

In August 2023, the World Food Programme (WFP) launched a partnership with the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) and the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) to provide financial support to vulnerable pensioners. The most vulnerable pensioners were selected through the Pension Fund's automated electronic database, leveraging the Unified Information System of Social Sphere (UISSS). Specifically, it identified pensioners

living in regions most affected by the war and who received less than UAH 3,000 (increased to 3,250 in November 2023) in pension insurance payments from PFU (not including those without the right to receive a pension and therefore receiving MoSP social allowance) and who have not received any other forms of Government social protection cash transfers (e.g. Allowance for Internally Displaced Persons). Under the agreement, the PFU generates the lists of recipients and top-up amounts as anonymized data with linked bank accounts or addresses of residence. WFP then issues direct monthly payments to the approved recipient with an existing bank account designated to receive their pension or instructs Ukrposhta to deliver cash entitlements at the specific addresses of the pensioners. Individuals were assigned this top-up without having to apply or register and as a result, 404,000 unique beneficiaries received top-ups by December 2023. The list is verified and updated monthly to deduplicate against any other social protection payments by the Pension Fund. WFP has completed the baseline assessment through calls (to 700 beneficiaries) and intends to conduct post-distribution monitoring. The transfer is individualised and equal to the difference between the 3,250 UAH threshold and the recipient's current social benefit. The transfer is around UAH 600 on average.

In 2024, the World Food Programme also started a new top-up to Government social assistance for persons with disabilities since childhood and children with disabilities^{xxvii} on 2 February 2024 through the adoption of the Cabinet Decree №110^{xxviii}. Under this programme, additional social support is provided automatically to persons with disabilities from childhood and children with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria:

- Persons are current recipients of state social assistance to persons with disabilities since childhood and children with disabilities;
- The amount of social assistance provided to them is less than UAH 3,250; and
- They are living within Ukrainian government-controlled areas (GCA).

Payments were made for three months over the winter period. A new wave of the same programme is currently at the planning stage for the upcoming winter period. The amount is determined as the difference between UAH 3,250 and the amount of social assistance received by the person. Current recipients of targeted financial support from other international organisations and recipients of "Allowance for IDPs" are not eligible for this programme.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

In December 2023, UNICEF, in collaboration with the MoSP, began topping up recipients of the Government's "Assistance for Low-Income Families" (GMI) programme with a cash-for-winterization package that consisted of (a combination of) MPCA and Cash for Winter Clothes for children (in line with Shelter Cluster recommendation^{xxix}). The assistance was only provided to recipients of the Government programme who were living in districts (*Raions*) determined as "cold spots" based on a REACH assessment^{xxx} (certain areas of the Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Donetsk regions) and who are also either large families (three or more children) or families with children with disabilities. The cash transfer consisted of the MPCA transfer of UAH 3,600 per month for three months for every household member, with a maximum of two adults, and an additional UAH 6,660 for each child to cover winter clothing expenses. In terms of deduplication, UNICEF ran recipients of the MPCA transfer through Building Blocks (a humanitarian platform operating independently from national social assistance infrastructure to deduplicate MPCA recipients between humanitarian organisations, which is managed by WFP), but not the cash for winter clothing amount as Building Blocks was unable to deduplicate winterisation programmes at the time of implementation. The programme reached 7,182 households (31,297 individuals, including 22,414 children) with a total budget of approximately USD 13 million from December 2023 to April 2024. The transfer of beneficiary data from the MoSP to UNICEF was enabled through a Government decree, which was approved by the Parliament in December 2023 (for eligible recipients of the regions of Dnipro, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia), and subsequently amended (and approved by the Cabinet) in February 2024 to additionally include eligible recipients from the Donetsk region. Between May to July 2024, UNICEF, in collaboration

with the MoSP, supported vulnerable households with children affected by ongoing intensified hostilities and the corresponding mandatory evacuations. A humanitarian 'top-up', in the form of MPCA, was provided to affected households with children living in areas affected by the recent escalation of fighting and evacuations in Kharkiv and Sumy, and who were recipients of the following State social protection programmes:

- Low-income families
- Large families
- Child support for single mothers
- Adopted children
- Caring for a sick child
- Children with disabilities

UNICEF worked with the MoSP on obtaining relevant household data on the vulnerable populations in line with the government's social protection system. In order to enable the transfer of cash recipient data from the MoSP to UNICEF, a Government decree was drafted by the Ministry and approved by the Government of Ukraine in May 2024.

In this programme, UNICEF provided MPCA (in the amount of 10,800 UAH per person for three months of support) to the eligible families, with a maximum of two adults per household with no cap on number of children per family. Overall, 9,731 households (31,509 individuals including 19,840 children) were assisted with a total cost of more than USD 8 million.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

During the 2023/24 winter season, UNHCR partnered with the Ministry of Social Policy and the Pension Fund of Ukraine to assist over 80,000 households with cash assistance for additional energy needs. In October 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in collaboration with the MoSP and the Pension Fund, began covering part of the Government's expanding "Housing and Utilities Subsidy" (HUS) caseload. This subsidy programme was meant to enable families heating their homes with solid stove fuel to cope with increases costs during the heating period. To this end, the subsidy increased the amount of maximum support for heating from UAH 6,973 to UAH 16,234 per year. UNHCR's additional transfer amount of UAH 6,660 was determined by averaging the cost of different heating sources analysed by the Shelter Cluster. UNHCR provided this assistance up to a maximum of UAH 19,980 per household, with the Government covering any additional entitlement through their own funds. UNHCR received access to relevant recipient data (full names, family size, banking information, etc.) through a passed decree with the additional safeguard of the Government calling each recipient of the UNHCR programme for specific consent. Beneficiary data were deduplicated through UNHCR's own database, so as to avoid beneficiaries receiving double winterization assistance. UAH 2.2 billion was allocated for this project, of which UAH 945 million was covered by UNHCR Ukraine. UNHCR also worked with Right to Protection (R2P), a local NGO, to raise awareness about the Government programme and encourage registration.

For the 2024/25 winter season, UNHCR will support over 57,000 households alongside the Ministry of Social Policy for a total of 30 million USD. In a change to the 2023/24 winter season, winterization assistance will be provided on a household level. Every household will receive 21,000 UAH, regardless of family size. The cash assistance amount is based on the caloric standards of Pension Fund's Solid Fuel Subsidy and on the price of the corresponding volume of firewood as the most common energy source. The resulting amount of 21,000 UAH/525 USD was set by Shelter Cluster in coordination with other humanitarian actors including the Cash Working Group.

4. Key Areas of Discussion throughout the Forum

Positive Collaboration between the Government and Humanitarian agencies: First and foremost, the programmes discussed during the Forum demonstrated the great flexibility and openness of the

Government of Ukraine to closely collaborate with humanitarian agencies to deliver humanitarian cash transfers while facilitating adaptations to their social protection system.

Deduplication: Deduplication of beneficiaries through existing humanitarian deduplication platforms were complicated by different methodologies of setting transfer values and programmatic limitations imposed by Building Blocks. There was a clear call for the deduplication for future top-up programmes which could be facilitated if there is an agreed upon methodology for the determination of the transfer value.

Data protection and data accessibility: These case studies highlight different levels of data accessibility as well as different methods of navigating the current restrictions imposed by existing data privacy laws. Looking forward, enhancing humanitarian agencies' access to the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS) with advanced functionality and improved interoperability protocols, along with reform in data privacy laws allowing access to information by humanitarian agencies who have proper data privacy protocols in place, could further bolster the efficiency of aid distribution and ensure adherence to humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality in assistance.

Transfer values: Moreover, there are different approaches with regard to the calculation of the transfer values. WFP provides an individually calculated top-up to the threshold of UAH 3,250 per person. The amount has been negotiated with the Government and aims at reflecting an amount that is considered fiscally sustainable for the Government and that meets a rising subsistence minimum. The Ukrainian Red Cross supported the implementation of a program where the transfer amounts were defined by the ministry and Decree but it was able to negotiate doubling the amount during the winter months to account for the increase in utilities expenditure.. On the other hand, UNHCR and UNICEF have implemented programmes where the top-up amounts were derived from cluster recommendations.

Effective communication: Due to the decentralisation of the social protection system and the vast geographic reach of the system in Ukraine, it is important for organisations doing top-ups to also ensure proper communication of their top-up programmes to recipients or to government implementation staff. Several lessons learnt were undertaking their own socialisation workshops, making sure the government hotlines were properly informed and able to communicate about the top-ups and working with UkrPoshta workers who are key communication channels within communities. The Prykhystok program communication campaigns included Government, URCS, Privat Bank, DIIA websites as well as URCS Info Centre and social media and SMS campaigns.

5. Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt

In the forum, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society shared their challenges and lessons learnt from leveraging the social protection system. Hereby advantages such as probable cost-efficiency gains^{xxxix}, implementation speed, alignment and strengthening of Government systems have to be weighed against disadvantages such as high coordination efforts, difficult process to obtain a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, challenging data management, and access to personal data to ensure monitoring. Moreover, it was acknowledged that Government beneficiary lists reach their limit where populations are to be assisted that are not enrolled in Government social protection programmes. Such factors have to be considered when deciding on whether vertical or horizontal expansion of social protection programmes are the instruments best suited to cover intended needs. Furthermore, working with Government systems is very novel in Ukraine and requires time investments in building the experience through pilots before the approach can be gradually expanded and mainstreamed.



Chatham House Rule. In order to ensure an open discussion about challenges of leveraging the social protection system in Ukraine, it was agreed to hold the forum and the report under the Chatham House Rule where participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. ^{xxxix}

Programme Design

- **Multi-Entity Coordination:** Collaborating with multiple Government entities requires significant coordination investments. Understanding political interests, but also available data is essential to design and target programmes effectively and to develop MoUs and data sharing agreements.
- **Intersection of Needs and Priorities:** Balancing humanitarian needs with the Government of Ukraine, donors, and agencies' priorities and mandates requires careful navigation to meet diverse objectives.
- **Decree from the Cabinet of Ministers:** Due to the current data protection laws in Ukraine, official decrees from the Cabinet of Ministers are required to navigate the current data sharing legal framework and permit the sharing of Government beneficiaries lists with humanitarian organizations.^{xxxiii} These decrees outline the timeframe, purpose, caseload, and targeting criteria which build the base for the Government lists and the cash programmes. Once approved, humanitarian actors cannot deviate which limits possible changes of the programme design without a new decree.
- **Targeting and Assistance:** Understanding the implicit categorical targeting of the different social assistance programmes such as covered/excluded population groups but also means-testing and affluence testing (see table above) is key to design programmes that reach the intended beneficiaries without excluding the most vulnerable. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that most social protection benefits are often individual entitlements whereas humanitarian cash transfers often use the household as a reference.
- **Inclusion of Excluded Populations:** Providing top-ups/vertically expanding social assistance programmes can be an efficient way of reaching those that are already enrolled, but at the same time it cannot reach those that are not enrolled. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the carrier social assistance programmes is necessary to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities due to exclusion of vulnerable population groups. At the same time, it emphasizes the need for information provision, legal support, case management, and referrals to include vulnerable populations in relevant social assistance programmes. It also emphasizes the need for coordination with other humanitarian organisations who may be able to meet the shortfalls of vertical top-up programmes by targeting the excluded groups.
- **Supporting the Unbanked:** Approximately 20 per cent of social benefit recipients are unbanked, requiring alternative delivery mechanisms such as UkrPoshta.
- **Exit strategy:** A top-up programme's design can also depend on its exit strategy (where feasible) of either being a temporary short-term top-up meant to provide a quick boost in resilience or a vertical or horizontal top-up meant to be taken over by the Government at a specific time (by the Government raising the general transfer value of the SP programme to the topped-up value or by taking on the caseload of the new recipients). Moreover, the adequacy of social assistance benefits remains limited which calls for continuous support.

Data Sharing

- **Legal Frameworks and Consent:** Navigating the legal framework for data sharing, drafting and finalizing decrees and MoUs, and obtaining beneficiary consent for data transfer is complex and time-consuming especially when different Ministries and other Government entities are involved. Development of a standardized MoUs and a revised data protection law could facilitate the process. The revised data protection law offers a good opportunity to facilitate data sharing between the Government and humanitarian organisations.
- **Cooperation for Data Sharing:** Data handling varies considerably across the different Government entities. Obtaining the required data for humanitarian programming and establishing smooth data sharing necessitates ongoing collaboration with Government counterparts.
- **Adherence to Legislation and Ensuring Data Protection:** Complying with Ukrainian legislation on personal data protection is imperative for program legitimacy and beneficiary privacy. Robust data protection procedures and systems are crucial as such programmes operate with large volumes of personal data.

- **Data Granularity:** Varying granularity of data from the Government presents challenges in targeting and reporting to donors. Understanding what level of granularity different Government entities can provide is essential to develop programmes.
- **Mass Communication:** Up-to-date contact details including mobile phone numbers are required for mass communication which informs recipients of their benefits, grievance redress mechanisms, and other relevant information. However, contact details are not always up-to-date or available which poses a challenge for accountability.
- **Data Verification and Correction:** Addressing questions around the verification and correction of Ministry data to maintain accuracy and trust.

Coordination

- **Avoiding Duplication:** Benefiting from several social protection programmes is not an issue of duplication as the different programmes address different needs and the receipt of one is considered in the income calculation of eligibility into another. However, as humanitarian vertical top-ups have different methodologies to establish the transfer value and generally address the same humanitarian needs, proper coordination between agencies is needed to avoid duplication of recipients. Moreover, as vertical top-up programmes can have the same transfer values as MPCA or winterisation cash programmes, it is imperative that these be deduplicated within existing cash deduplication platforms. Ensuring alignment and coordination among agencies to prevent aid duplication and optimize resource utilization.

Funding and Programme Expansion

- **Funding Uncertainty:** Managing the uncertainty of funding for the expansion of social protection programs is a key concern for sustainability. Considering the protracted nature of the crisis in Ukraine and at scale needs it is key to secure predictable funding as the initial set up/investment in relationships, systems, process and tools might be high. Predictable year/multi-year funding resources and the need to engage more effectively with nexus programs and funding streams to enhance sustainability or a feasible exit strategy.

6. Way Forward

The Forum reflected the interest of humanitarian cash actors in leveraging the social protection system in future cash transfer programmes. The forum further showed the need to continue the conversation on harmonised methodologies for identifying carrier programmes for the vertical and/or horizontal expansion of social protection programmes, feasible targeting strategies that take into account war-related needs, Government priorities, mandates of the different agencies, donor requirements and the availability of sufficiently granular data (esp. vulnerability data). This further includes the development of assistance packages for the vertical expansion of social protection programmes (top-ups amounts/thresholds, duration etc.), and harmonised data sharing agreements and decrees. While organisations have gained considerable experience in obtaining such decrees regulating their collaborative programmes with the Government and allowing the sharing of data, the process is not overly flexible as they are tailored to specific programmes and programme designs. In the future a more streamlined process for obtaining beneficiary lists would be critical to further scale top-up programmes in a timely manner.

Moreover, through the offline groupwork after the panel discussions on how to leverage social protection systems and other humanitarian programmes, the forum also highlighted the need for further inter-sector coordination and for strategic targeting and sequencing of aid to ensure complementary programming instead of overlapping ones. While the number of top-up programmes is still limited, it can be expected that such programmes are further scaled which will require a proper coordination mechanism, a system to identify beneficiary overlaps between different top-up programmes, but also humanitarian cash programmes that implement multi-purpose and sectoral cash in line with Cash Working Group and Cluster recommendations.

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Annex 1 – Agenda

Annex 2 – Presentations

- ⁱ Throughout this text, the period from 24 February 2022 to the present is referred to as the “full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation” and “full-scale war”, used interchangeably. Also, the period from 2014 to 23 February 2022 is called “the armed conflict 2014–2022”.
- ⁱⁱ National Bank of Ukraine, *NBU Expects Inflation to Slow Significantly, Economy to Return to Recovery This Year – Inflation Report, 2023*, Link: <https://bank.gov.ua/en/news/all/natsionalnyy-bank-prognozuye-znachne-zniyennya-inflatsiyi-ta-povernennya-ekonomiki-do-vidnovlennya-v-tsomu-rotsi-inflatsiyiv-zvit>
- ⁱⁱⁱ World Bank, *Listening to Citizens of Ukraine: Poverty and Human Impacts of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, 2024*, Link: <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/16b4751f03b60617311a782c10cc34d3-0080012024/original/Listening-to-Ukraine-Survey-Poverty-Note.pdf>
- ^{iv} UNICEF, *Ukraine's State Budget 2024, 2023*, Link: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/media/38981/file/National%20Budget%202024.pdf>
- ^v *Ibid.*
- ^{vi} See chapters “Children”, “Adults”, “Adults and Children with Disabilities”, and “Old Age Persons” at PeReHID, *Mapping and Analysis of Life-Cycle and Shock-Responsive Social Assistance Programmes in Ukraine*, Forthcoming
- ^{vii} See chapter “War-Affected Persons” at PeReHID, *Mapping and Analysis of Life-Cycle and Shock-Responsive Social Assistance Programmes in Ukraine*, Forthcoming
- ^{viii} See <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/qess/ShowCountryProfile.action?iso=UA> “Data and Indicators”
- ^{ix} See PeReHID, *Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and Recommendations for the Transition*, Forthcoming
- ^x See chapter “Transitional Top-Ups” at PeReHID, *Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and Recommendations for the Transition*, Forthcoming
- ^{xi} European Commission, *Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26: Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises*, 2019, Link: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/86c78afa-3a41-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>
- ^{xii} PeReHID, *Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and Recommendations for the Transition*, Forthcoming.
- ^{xiii} Social assistance is non-contributory and financed through the general taxation. Social assistance provide support for vulnerable individuals or households during life-cycle events or shocks. This includes the Childbirth Grant and shock-responsive programs like Allowances for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI).
- ^{xiv} Social insurance programs require contributions from participants to cover life events such as maternity, unemployment, or illness. These programmes include Old Age Pension, Maternity Benefits or Unemployment Insurance.
- ^{xv} Ministry of Social Policy, *Budget Program Passports for 2024*, Link: <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/23452.html>
- ^{xvi} Average monthly amount.
- ^{xvii} Average monthly amount.
- ^{xviii} While means-testing comes with challenges related to access barriers and non-take-up (see Chapter “Targeting Approaches” at PeReHID, *Mapping and Analysis of Life-Cycle and Shock-Responsive Social Assistance Programmes in Ukraine*, Forthcoming, means-testing can be consciously utilized to assist of economically vulnerable groups.
- ^{xix} Ministry of Finance, *Expenditure on Social Assistance, 2024*, Link: https://mof.gov.ua/uk/expnditures_on_social_assistance
- ^{xx} Ministry of Social Policy, *Budget Program Passports for 2024*, Link: <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/23452.html>
- ^{xxi} Average monthly number of recipients.
- ^{xxii} Pension Fund of Ukraine, Report on the I quarter, 2024, Link: <https://www.pfu.gov.ua/2165273-zvit-pro-robotu-organiv-pensijnogo-fondu-ukrayiny-u-i-kvartali-2024-roku/>
- ^{xxiii} Ministry of Finance, *Expenditure on Social Assistance*, Link: https://mof.gov.ua/uk/expnditures_on_social_assistance
- ^{xxiv} Average monthly number of recipients, who reached old age but are not entitled to pension.
- ^{xxv} While means-testing comes with challenges related to access barriers and non-take-up (see Chapter “Targeting Approaches” at PeReHID, *Mapping and Analysis of Life-Cycle and Shock-Responsive Social Assistance Programmes in Ukraine*, Forthcoming, means-testing can be consciously utilized to assist of economically vulnerable groups.
- ^{xxvi} Also see chapter “Case Studies: Effective Collaboration between United Nations Agencies and the Government of Ukraine” in PeReHID, *Alignment and Complementarity Between the Humanitarian Cash Transfer System and the Social Protection System in Ukraine*, Forthcoming
- ^{xxvii} Danish Refugee Council, *DRC Legal Alert: Issue 102 (1 February – 31 March 2024)*, 2024, Link: <https://pro.drc.ngo/media/0cjsjshst/legal-alert-issue-102.pdf>.
- ^{xxviii} Cabinet of Ministers, On the implementation of a joint project with the United Nations World Food Program on additional measures for social support for persons with disabilities from childhood and children with disabilities, 2024, Link: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-realizatsiiu-spilnoho-iz-vsesvitnoiu-prodovolchoiu-a110>
- ^{xxix} Shelter Cluster, *Shelter Cluster Winterization Recommendations 2023/2024, 2023*, Link: <https://sheltercluster.org/ukraine/documents/shelter-cluster-winterization-recommendations20232024>
- ^{xxx} REACH, *Factsheet - Ukraine: Cold Spot Risk Assessment Winterisation 2023/24 (August 2023)*, 2023, Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/factsheet-ukraine-cold-spot-risk-assessment-winterisation-202324-august-2023>
- ^{xxxi} European Commission, *Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26: Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises*, 2019, Link: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/86c78afa-3a41-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>
- ^{xxxii} Chatham House, *Chatham House Rule*, Link: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>
- ^{xxxiii} See Cabinet of Ministers, *On the implementation of a joint project with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on additional measures for social support for families with children*, 2024, Link: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/584-2024-%D0%BF#Text> and Cabinet of Ministers, *On the implementation of a joint project with the United Nations World Food Program on additional measures for social support of certain categories of the population*, 2023, Link: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/781-2023-%D0%BF#Text> and Cabinet of Ministers, *On the implementation of a joint project with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society to provide support to persons with disabilities as a result of the war*, 2022, Link: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1393-2022-%D0%BF#Text> and Cabinet of Ministers, *On the implementation of a joint project with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on additional measures for social support for internally displaced persons*, 2022, Link: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/445-2022-%D0%BF#Text>