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1. ACRONYMS

ВНА	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CWG	Cash Working Group
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMI	Guaranteed Minimum Income
HC/RC	Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HUS	Housing and Utilities Subsidy
ICRC/URC	International Committee of the Red Cross / Ukrainian Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced people
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MDT	Ministry of Digital Transformation
MOSP	Ministry of Social Protection
MPC	Multipurpose Cash
UAH	Ukrainian Hryvnia
UISSS	Unified Information System of the Social Sphere
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme





2. INTRODUCTION

For both the humanitarian and development communities, the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine is an unprecedented scenario. The large-scale, intrastate war is causing frequent, unanticipated, and uneven shocks to people throughout Ukraine.

Unlike many other settings in which humanitarian and development actors respond to conflict-related needs on a large scale, Ukraine has a highly digitalised and industrialised economy. The government has a comprehensive set of social protection institutions that have been coping with the conflict displacement crisis since 2014. However, due to the ongoing conflict and the magnitude of people's needs, the government's capacity to meet all lifesaving needs remains constrained.

As a result of the conflict, Ukraine's humanitarian sector has expanded dramatically to assist displaced persons and host communities around the country. In locations where it is practicable and suitable, multipurpose cash has been deployed as a default response mechanism for lifesaving basic needs assistance – in close conjunction with the Ukrainian government's social protection programmes.

The purpose of this paper is to offer an **overview of the existing situation regarding the establishment of links between humanitarian cash initiatives and government social protection systems**. It does so via providing an overview of the social protection systems of the government of Ukraine, identifying who is being covered and who is not, and then assessing the current alignment of humanitarian and social protection programmes.

This paper is part of a series, which also provides a detailed assessment of the Housing and Utilities Subsidy (HUS) programme, the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) programme, IDP Social Assistance programmes and the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS) and eDopomoga systems of the Ministry of Social Protection (MOSP). This paper draws on 'Strengthening shock-responsiveness of social protection systems in the Ukraine crisis' produced by Sarah Blin for STAAR in July 2022.¹

2.1 Acknowledgements

This research was entirely desk-based and took place between August and October 2022 and the write up in November 2022. With respect to the study of social protection systems, the research used sources from the Government of Ukraine, interviews with UN and INGO actors, and a review of both legal texts and secondary literature. This paper is intended as an overview of the current systems to establish facts and is not intended to undertake analysis of these systems.

¹ Blin, S., Cahill Billings, N. (2022) 'Strengthening shock-responsiveness of social protection systems in the Ukraine crisis', Social Protection Technical Advice, Assistance and Resources (STAAR) Facility, DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom



3. SOCIAL PROTECTION ASSISTANCE IN UKRAINE

3.1 Overview

Ukraine has a mature social protection system that has historically demonstrated its ability to respond to shocks – establishing specific programmes for people affected by the 2014 Russian invasion (IDP programme) and COVID-19.

The system comprises a complex array of contributory and non-contributory instruments, covering an estimated 22 million people. In Ukraine, cash transfers have a long history within social protection programmes aimed at families with children or foster families, people with disabilities, the elderly, and the unemployed. Years of reform have gone into Ukraine's social protection system, but it is acknowledged that there are still issues and weaknesses, including coverage, inclusion, gender responsiveness, benefit adequacy, and local budgeting adequacy. Like most other countries in the region, social assistance programmes in Ukraine are primarily residual safety nets offering short-term benefits to narrow categorical recipient groups, driven by the perception that benefits foster dependency, as well as the weight of benefits on state budgets.

In Ukraine, being enrolled in the social protection system primarily refers to having a categorical legal status that qualifies one for the system (e.g. nationals, residents, persons with legal work status, and pensioners with a minimum number of years of contribution). The only exceptions are the GMI and HUS programmes, which are both means-tested. According to the World Bank's Ukraine country team, 54% of Ukrainians (around 22,000,000 people). were enrolled in some form of social protection programme as of 2021.²

The Housing and Utilities Subsidy (HUS) in Ukraine is a non-repayable targeted social assistance transfer provided to vulnerable consumers of housing and utility services. This includes members of households living in residential premises who are unable to pay for housing and utilities, such as caretaking costs, utility bills, and household heating fuel costs. This programme's benefits are granted on a means-tested basis – criteria include household income and property ownership status. The HUS is a significant component of Ukrainian social policy, accounting for 1%-2.5% of GDP in 2016-2020. The programme received 22.3% of the total social assistance budget, with an annual budget of UAH 24.4 billion (USD 815 million) allocated for 2022. The programme's monthly budget for 2022 was budgeted as UAH 2 billion (USD 68 million) a month during the heating season. However, the World Bank has estimated that due to the increase in poverty as a result of the Russian invasion the programme is expected to grow up to 2.5-fold over the 2022/2023 heating season.³

The Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)⁴ programme is Ukraine's anti-poverty programme of last resort, providing monthly benefits to low-income families with children based on the difference between the subsistence minimum for a family and monthly family income. The GMI programme's goal is to provide low-income families with monthly cash assistance based on the amount of the average monthly total family income. A low-income family is defined as a family with an average monthly total income that is less than the "statutory" subsistence minimum for a family (UAH 2,600 a month per person).

In 2020, the target population for the GMI was 341,000 people. According to data on the demographic composition of beneficiary families, the majority of direct programme beneficiaries (62%) are children, the majority of adult recipients (73%) are women, and only 38% of all beneficiaries are 'able to work.' The government has allocated UAH 14.8 billion (USD 493 million) for the programme's annual budget for 2022. The government has set aside UAH 1.2 billion (USD 41 million) per month for the programme in 2022. As the estimated average benefit size per beneficiary family per month for 2022 is UAH 6,012 (USD 206), this

² Interviews with the World Bank Ukraine country team in August 2022

³ The World Bank Ukraine Sectoral Briefs June 2022

⁴ https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/632-2020-%D0%BF#Text





implies that there are currently 199,029 households enrolled in the programme and that the programme has not expanded to respond to the economic shocks caused by the Russian invasion.

Ukraine has received long-term support from the US, Germany, Denmark, the UK, and international financial institutions (IFIs). The World Bank's Social Assistance Modernization Project began in 2006. An additional facility was granted at the end of 2020 to "increase coverage of the poor by the GMI programme (see below), improve targeting accuracy of the HUS programme and monetisation of the benefits, scale up unemployment benefits, strengthen the capacity of the Social Inspectorate to limit fraud and error in the social assistance systems, and extend remote accessibility of dignified care." ⁵

Ukraine lacks comparable and reliable poverty data. The government estimated Ukraine's poverty rate to be 1.1% in 2019, while the World Food Programme reported 37.8%. Ukraine has suffered from severe poverty since the fall of the Soviet Union. Poor crop forecasts in 2003 increased the country's poverty rate, which was reduced to 25.8% between 2008 and 2013. Poverty increased from 28.6% to 58.3% after the annexation of Crimea and the start of the Donbas war, peaking in 2016. In mid-2022, the UNDP predicted that 62% of the population would be at risk of poverty within a year of the Russian invasion. The overall economic forecast is bleak, with the IMF predicting that Ukraine's GDP will fall by 10-35%, while the EBRD predicts a 20% drop.

3.2 Responding to the 2022 Russian invasion

Following the 24th of February 2022 invasion, direct budgetary support to the Ukrainian government has been significantly increased, with a total of USD 29 billion identified as grants or loans to the Ukrainian government in 2022. Social protection payments have been identified as the second priority after the defence budget in the wartime national budget 2023, so a significant portion of this funding has likely gone toward supporting social protection programmes, complementing the USD one billion earmarked for this purpose by the World Bank.

As a result of this international support, Ukraine has been able to make social protection payments to everyone legally entitled to them as of November 2022. Additionally, following the Russian invasion, the government enacted policies to tailor social assistance transfers to the population's needs. The ability to quickly legislate was demonstrated by the adoption of numerous decrees at the start of and in the months following the Russian invasion, particularly on the 8th of March 2022, when the Minister of Social Policy outlined mechanisms to ensure that all social protection entitlements (cash benefits and subsidies) would be paid even if the war disrupted local social security branches. These mechanisms were implemented to ensure that everyone's benefits would continue to be paid, regardless of the state of the local social security branches.

The government's IDP support programmes have been expanded on a large scale in response to an increase in the registration of people who are legally considered to be IDPs with an additional 562,000 households reporting to have received USD 287 million as of 1 September 2022⁶.

However, the government has not been able to create any new centrally administered programmes since the Russian invasion. As a result, members of conflict-affected households who never left their home or have since returned to their place of origin, are not currently covered by any government programmes except those for which they qualify because of categorical status – pensioner, disabled, have new-born baby etc. In theory, this caseload could be covered via an expansion of the GMI programme, but currently, that has not been possible due to the funding requirements and the heavy technical assessment requirements of the programme's design.

⁵ https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/30/world-bank-steps-up-support-to-ukraine-to-help-protect-poorest-most-vulnerable

⁶ Kyiv School of Economics Report on direct losses of infrastructure from destruction as a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine as of 1 September 2022



4. ASSESSING THE CURRENT ALIGNMENT OF HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

This section examines the extent of social protection and humanitarian linkages in relation to three pillars: Policy, Programme Design, and Administration. It should be noted, however, that this is only a summary of a complex and rapidly evolving situation.

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 Financing and horizontal expansion of social protection programmes by humanitarian actors

At the start of the response, humanitarian actors examined what scope existed for them to support the 'horizontal expansion' of existing social protection programmes – extending coverage to those newly in need as a result of the conflict. However, following engagement with the Ministry of Social Policy (MOSP), it became apparent that the government could fully fund all its obligations and expand programmes as demand increased.

However, while funding for social assistance entitlements has been maintained, funding for staffing and data management support services has been deprioritised. Responding to this, WFP (with the support of BHA) has recently supported the MOSP with funding and technical support to enable ongoing systems maintenance and development. Additionally, the INGO Corus International has provided technical support to the MOSP to make their systems more usable for humanitarian actors.

4.1.2 Governance and coordination of humanitarian and social protection programmes

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC) proposed in late August 2022 that humanitarian and development actors coordinate their work through a government working group on social protection, which the Minister of Social Policy had previously chaired. To date, the MOSP has been coordinating bilaterally with actors and has not convened this group.

Prior to the 2022 Russian invasion, the co-chairs of the humanitarian Cash Working Group communicated directly and bilaterally with the MOSP. However, due to the increased importance of humanitarian cash transfers and the strategic significance of decisions regarding their use or alignment with government systems, the co-chairs have been instructed to refrain from making bilateral contact unless directed to do so by the humanitarian country team (HCT). This is because discussions on this topic have been escalated to the HCT due to their strategic nature and potential impact on the broader response efforts.

Another challenge for coordination between humanitarian and development actors and the government is the ongoing transition in management of various social protection programmes. Responsibility for social assistance programmes to IDPs is being transferred from the Ministry of Social Policy to the Ministry of Reintegration of Ukraine's Temporarily Occupied Territories, which has a focus on IDPs and refugees. However, at the time of writing, this transition has not been implemented, and the MOSP retains these responsibilities. Furthermore, the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) manages the DIIA mobile app and de-duplication system, introducing a third ministry into government and humanitarian coordination efforts.





4.2 Programme Design

Although no official coordination or alignment on programme design elements for multi-purpose cash (MPC) assistance has occurred, there has been significant informational coordination and interaction between the MOSP and humanitarian actors.⁷

4.2.1 Alignment on the transfer value

The transfer value for MPC of UAH 2,220 per person per month is very close to the Government IDP housing support rate of UAH 2,200 per person. However, the MPC rate was endorsed by the humanitarian community for use on 15 February 2022, and the MOSP changed the IDP housing support rate to UAH 2,200 per person on 24 March 2022. The rates are likely similar as the MOSP may have used the same methodology as the CWG to calculate the rate (actual subsidence rate minus average income). However, as the MOSP has not shared the methodology for calculating their rate or what basic needs it is intended to cover, it is impossible to say with certainty.

The MPC transfer rate remains de facto harmonised with the MOSP IDP housing support programme, but there are growing calls, from some humanitarian actors for the logic behind the transfer rate to be reviewed; a new emergency humanitarian minimum expenditure basket developed; and clearer links with in-kind sectoral basic needs programming established.

4.2.2 Discussions on topping up social protection programmes

Currently, all humanitarian MPC programmes have been designed to complement but not target the same caseload as government programmes. However, some actors argue that there is an opportunity to use humanitarian funds and transfer methods to vertically expand government social protection programmes in Ukraine – increasing the value of benefits to existing caseloads. The argument for this is that government social protection programmes have not been increased in line with inflation and are thus insufficient to meet the current level of need. The opposing argument is that the MOSP has the ability to provide additional payments and to directly request support from development donors to fund an expansion of payments. This warrants further high-level discussion, particularly around advocacy points on issues related to the inadequacy of existing social protection payments.

4.2.3 Alignment of transfer methods.

The transfer method utilised for MPC is consistent with government transfer methods, with the bulk of assistance delivered by direct transfer to beneficiaries' bank accounts. The post office system or over-the-counter financial service provider (FSP) alternatives are intended to reach households without bank accounts. While this transfer method is consistent with how government programmes are designed, there has been no direct, purposeful alignment. Rather, both actors have chosen the same response as it is both the most viable and cost-effective option.

4.2.4 Alignment on transfer frequency and duration.

The MOSP IDP housing assistance programme provides assistance for as long as a family continues to be registered as internally displaced, while MPC programme benefits, which are solely meant to absorb short-term shocks, only last an average of three months. As a result, there is no direct alignment between the duration of MPC programme assistance and the government social assistance programme assistance. This is the case regarding the frequency of MPC transfer and their duration.

⁷ 'Alignment' means the development of one or more elements of a parallel humanitarian response that align as best as possible with those used in a current or possible future social protection programme or DRM system. For example, this could be an alignment of objectives, targeting method, transfer value or delivery mechanism. This is distinct from piggybacking on elements of a system as it uses a parallel infrastructure rather than the same system.





4.2.5 Alignment of eligibility criteria and qualifying conditions

At the start of the response, almost all humanitarian assistance was directed toward IDPs, resulting in an overlap between government and humanitarian responses, with humanitarian actors providing immediate assistance. In contrast, government IDP assistance could take several weeks to become active after enrolment. However, as the response has evolved, it has shifted increasingly to the country's east, with assistance increasingly going to those who did not flee conflict zones and are not now covered by a dedicated government social protection programme.

4.3 Administration

4.3.1 Targeting via piggybacking on MOSP social register (eDopomoga)

At the beginning of the crisis in 2022, some humanitarian actors had access to the government's IDP database, allowing them to target households quickly. However, there were two main issues with this method. The first was that the data permission obtained from the household by the government at the time of registration only allowed the data to be shared with UN organisations and the Red Cross movement. This restriction blocked NGOs and INGOs from using it and UN agencies from sharing data with their implementing partners and third-party monitors. Another concern is that the data could not be triangulated with other MOSP data since permission to utilise that data was not acquired.

The MOSP built an International Organisations component into its online eDopomoga platform to address this problem. Because data privacy laws prevent releasing personally identifiable data without the resident's informed agreement, eDopomoga's International Organisations component is required to target humanitarian aid using the Unified Social Register.

Persons living/staying in temporarily occupied, de-occupied, or active hostilities zones in Ukraine and people identified in the Unified Information Database on IDPs may utilise the system to seek financial aid from international organisations and provide the necessary consent.

This consent to share data and request assistance is documented in a social register maintained by the MOSP Unified Social Registry, which is part of their larger Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS). Using this consent, the MOSP may use data from the Unified Social Registry and the UISSS software capabilities to deliver potential beneficiary lists to agencies depending on the criteria the agency provides with the MOSP. A full overview of this process can be found below:

Figure 1: Process of cash payments from international humanitarian organisations via the eDopomoga platform

PROCESS OF CASH PAYMENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS VIA THE EDOPOMOGA PLATFORM Requests from the 血 CITIZEN OF UKRAINE MoSP via a MOU data MoSP creates Uses UISSS to extract consolidated file of on benificiaries from data from the unified people who meet the the UISSS on people MOSP criteria and send it that meet categories agency 1's request and have provided back to agency 1 consent Receives data from Registers on Edopomoga for MOSP ensures MoSP and uses it for de-duplication from lists assistance granting consent cash transfers. Agency provided with other to MoSP to share data CITIZEN OF UKRAINE independently informs agencies before being the citizen about the sharing to agency 1 Receives cash transfer payment via SMS or messenger. Agency 1 Confirms payment has Updates UISSS that person been made to MOSP and reports back on who has not been person not supported updates MOSP Consent is recorded in the UISSS to share information MOSP so that they are marked data to be shared to a still to be assisted in the UISSS. different agency in future





Currently, the MOSP has documented the details of the memoranda of cooperation with four UN agencies, the ICRC/URC, three INGOS, (NRC, ACTED and Humanitarian Inclusion) and one private company (RedRose, a payments system company). As of 20 September 2022, 2,545,645 people had been included in the lists submitted by the Ministry of Social Policy to various international organisations, for the payment of financial assistance, of which 901,052 people have already received financial assistance.⁸

As of 31 October 2022, 10,028,317 people had been registered in the social register, with the system closed to new registrations as of early October. A full breakdown can be found below.

Table 1: Registrations by category

Category	Social registry data validated against	Number of people
Pensioner	Pensions Beneficiary Register	4,957,409
No status specified	None	2,241,390
Internally displaced person	IDP Register	1,351,899
A person with a disability	Disability Beneficiary Register	1,101,488
Single mother or father	Childbirth Beneficiary Grant Register	299,043
Recipient of assistance to low-income families	Guaranteed Minimum Income Beneficiary Register	296,803
A large family	Childbirth Beneficiary Grant Register	220,836

Some humanitarian actors have flagged potential challenges to the use of the register, citing issues of completeness/exclusion of the register; the need for vulnerability; not categorical targeting; and the challenges to humanitarian principles of using a government system in non-government-controlled areas.

The most common concern among actors is the completeness of the eDopomoga social register since an individual needs to register online to be included. As a result, there are worries that families with little digital literacy, low income, or who live in conflict-affected regions and hence lack internet access would be excluded. While this is not seen as a critical challenge in government-controlled areas (because people can ask a friend or a Social Protection sub-office to register on their behalf), when humanitarian agencies are looking to target newly de-occupied areas, it is felt that area-based coordination and vulnerability targeting, as well as collaboration with local authorities to access beneficiary lists, could potentially be a more appropriate approach for minimising exclusion errors.

It is agreed that further discussion on how the eDopomoga social register can be used as part of a larger humanitarian strategy is required, this will be a key area of focus for the newly restarted CWG task team Social Protection Linkages.

4.3.2 Coordination/de-duplication of MPC via the use of the Ministry of Digital Transformation DIIA de-duplication system

Early in the response, the CWG noted that area-based coordination of MPC transfers would be impossible due to self-registration, referral channels, and shifting caseloads. The only way to avoid overlaps and duplications of aid would be through family-level data exchange. After a review of various systems in April 2022, it was determined that the WFP Building Blocks system would enable real-time de-duplication, allowing organisations to confirm whether people they are attempting to help have already received assistance from another participating humanitarian partner/organisation. 18 humanitarian organisations accounted for 89.7% of MPC volume between 1 - 31 August 2022. De-duplication allowed the examination of possible overlap for 1.1 million households.

⁸ https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/minsotspolityky-vtretie-peredalo-do-ahentstva-oon-u-spravakh-bizhentsiv-spysok-zaiav-na-vyplatu-hroshovoi-dopomohy





The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) informed the CWG during its initial engagement with various government entities in March 2022 to work toward greater use of existing government systems for the cash response, including the DIIA and asked for support for building a digital solution for online registration, verification, payments, and assistance de-duplication in a meeting with the CWG at the end of April.

The CWG and UNDP discussed the DIIA app's potential as a single digital solution for MPC deployment. First, de-duplication, enrolment, and payments were discussed before returning to de-duplication. The Government DIIA de-duplication system would require the same technological capabilities as the WFP building blocks system. However, the data would be stored on government networks and governed by Ukrainian law and MOUs between the MDT and humanitarian organisations. However, as the technical infrastructure and legal framework were not yet functional in April, the CWG decided to use Building Blocks and study whether DIIA would be used once it became operational while waiting for more information on the supporting legal framework. During these discussions, it was noted that a decision to use the DIIA system must be made at the HCT level due to the strategic issues involved in using a government system for humanitarian response.

Currently, a shift to this system has not occurred as there has been no formal discussion on this topic at the HCT, and there remains outstanding technical and legal issues that are still to be worked through. This topic is expected to be picked up by the CWG task team Social Protection Linkages.





5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the alignment of humanitarian and social protection programmes in Ukraine is complex and evolving, with challenges in financing, coordination, programme design, and data management. In the Policy pillar, while funding for social assistance entitlements has been maintained, funding for staffing and data management support services has been deprioritised. In terms of coordination, the MOSP has been coordinating bilaterally with actors and has not yet convened a government working group on social protection, while the ongoing transition of management of various social protection programmes and the involvement of multiple ministries has also presented challenges. In the Programme Design pillar, there has been significant informational coordination and interaction between the MOSP and humanitarian actors, but no official coordination or alignment on programme design elements for MPC assistance. There are also differing transfer values and modalities for humanitarian and government cash transfer programmes, as well as a lack of shared data systems and de-duplication mechanisms.

To address these issues in the short term, it is recommended that the government work closely with humanitarian actors to establish clearer coordination mechanisms and align transfer values and modalities. This could include convening a government working group on social protection and improving communication and information sharing between the MOSP and humanitarian actors.

In the medium term, efforts should be made to improve data sharing and de-duplication efforts, including by establishing shared data systems and de-duplication mechanisms. It is also important to address the lack of funding for staffing and data management support services and to reinforce the Ukrainian government's social protection systems. As the country transitions from emergency response to recovery and reconstruction, it is crucial to consider how to develop new social protection programmes in order to eventually transition to a state-led response. Transition planning should be a priority and discussions around the costs of lifesaving shock-response actions and their progressive assumption by the government and development partners are crucial in the context of humanitarian cash and social protection linkages.

One of the fundamental principles of the 2017 New Way of Working agreed upon at the World Humanitarian Summit is strengthening rather than replacing national institutions, and this should be kept in mind as efforts to align humanitarian and social protection programmes in Ukraine continue.

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