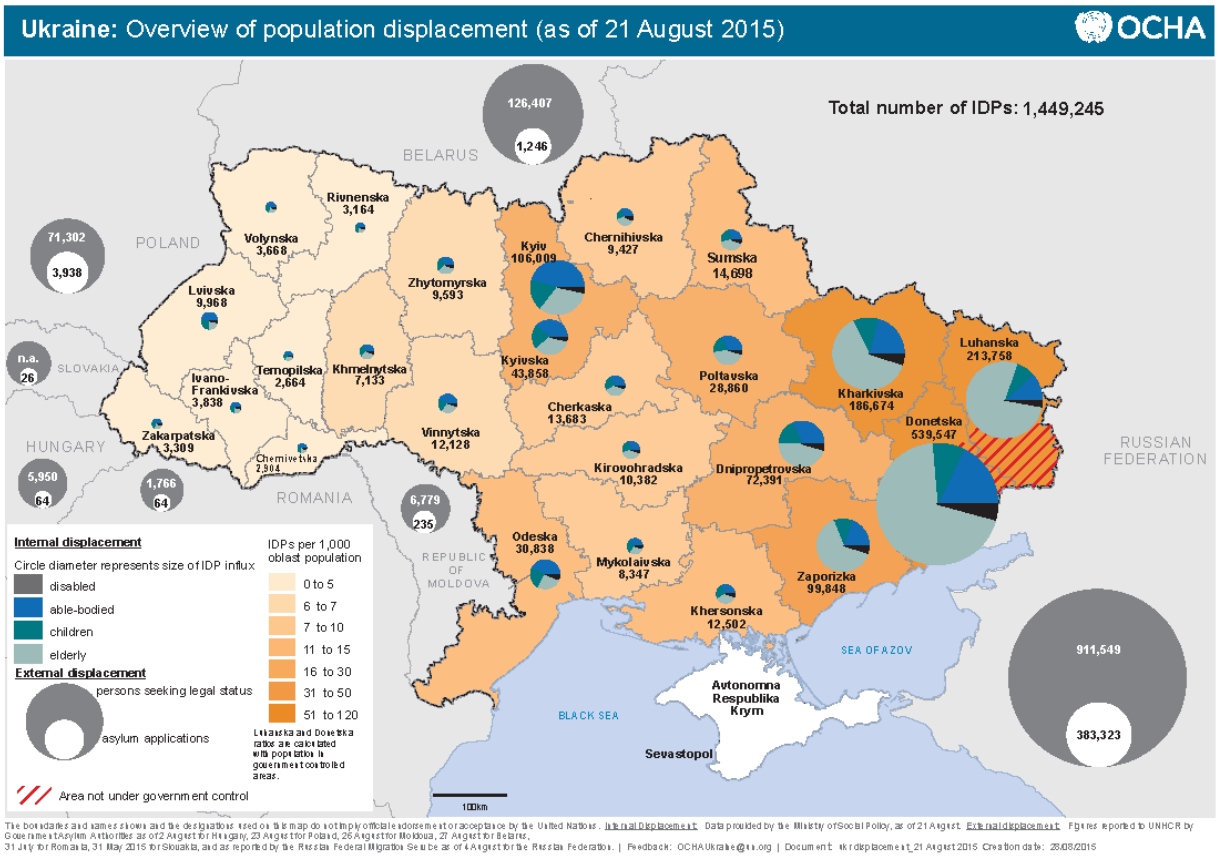
CHS Alliance

Mission to Ukraine Report

July 2015



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Background

In late February 2014, after months of mass protests on Kiev's Independence Square – Maidan Nezalezhnosti, which gave its name to the movement – Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych fled the country with Russian assistance. A power vacuum quickly developed in eastern Ukraine, his home base. Yanukovych's Party of the Regions disintegrated, followed by the politicised and highly corrupt security structures. The vacuum was filled by demonstrators calling for closer relations with Moscow, or even absorption by their northern neighbour. Crimea's swift declaration of independence from Ukraine and subsequent reincorporation into the Russian Federation led activists in the south-eastern oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, and their supporters in Russia, to believe that they could repeat the scenario in eastern Ukraine. Instead, this led to the current armed conflict.

While most south-eastern oblasts resisted and ultimately suppressed pro-Russian demonstrations, protesters, rarely more than a few thousand, seized government buildings, barracks and security force arsenals throughout Donetsk and Luhansk. By May, most of the two oblasts were in separatist hands. Soon after his election in late May, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko launched a major military operation – officially known as an anti-terror operation (ATO) in the east. By the summer, the separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) had lost much of the land it had seized, and had concentrated its forces in and around Donetsk city. Its counterpart in Luhansk was even further reduced[1].

As of 3 July, the United Nations (UN) stated that 6,764 people had been documented as killed and another 16,877 as wounded in the conflict zone of eastern Ukraine. Landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) remain a major threat to civilians in conflict-affected areas. As of 10 July, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) stood at 1,381,953. This was an increase of about 24,000 people compared to the previous three weeks. In addition, by 9 July, 922,651 Ukrainians had sought asylum, residency permits or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries – an increase of more than 22,000 people compared to the previous two weeks, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Overall, more than 2.3 million Ukrainians, including IDPs and those who sought refuge abroad, have been uprooted by conflict since April 2014[2].

Since this report author's visit in mid-July, the situation in non-government controlled areas (NGCA) has changed for the worse. In Lugansk and Donetsk, de facto authorities are refusing applications for registration of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As at 5 October 2015, at least nine international NGO have withdrawn from the regions and all UN operations were suspended. As a consequence of this situation "some 16,000 tons of humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter and non-food relief supplies cannot be delivered. Hospitals cannot perform surgery because they lack anaesthesia. Patients' lives are at risk without essential medicines such as insulin and tuberculosis vaccines".

[1] International Crisis Group (December 2014), "Eastern Ukraine: A Dangerous Winter", p.1.
[2] OCHA (July 2015), "Situation update No. 6 on Ukraine", p.2.

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"Some 150,000 people are not receiving monthly food distributions, 1.3 million people's access to water is at risk, and more than 30,000 people have not received shelter materials and household items they urgently need. The suspension of almost all humanitarian programmes in Luhansk and Donetsk since mid-July is putting lives at risk and preventing the most vulnerable, including children, women and the elderly, from accessing basic services. It is having a serious impact on some three million people as winter approaches"[3].

[3] Statement on Ukraine from the United Nations' Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien.

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Introduction

Following a request from the Kiev-based NGO Forum, the CHS Alliance carried out a mission between 12 and 24 July 2015[4], focusing on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) across the response in Ukraine. The mission, hosted by Save the Children, aimed at assessing the current level of understanding and concrete implementation of AAP throughout the response, identifying context-related factors positively and negatively impacting AAP and suggesting measures to increase the operationalisation of AAP at both collective and individual levels.

The mission visited Kiev, Dnipropetrovsk, Slovyansk and Svyatogorsk, and met with representatives of national and international NGOs as well as UN agencies. Discussions with affected communities were organised during field visits as a central part of the mission, to ensure their voices and views were taken into account.

The CHS Alliance team has unfortunately been unable to visit NGCA to get a first-hand look at the situation and have face-to-face discussions with stakeholders including affected populations there, due to security concerns and complex bureaucratic authorisation processes. All information about the situation in NGCA therefore comes from the direct experiences shared by those organisations and people the Alliance met that have operations in these areas.

At the end of the mission, a two-day introduction to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) was organised in Kiev and hosted by UNHCR. Seventeen national staff from national and international NGOs, and UN agencies participated in this introduction to the Standard's nine commitments and quality criteria[5].

The following report is structured on the CHS. For each of the Standard's nine commitments, the report presents the most relevant mission findings as well as initial suggestions for a way forward. The Alliance remains committed to further discussing and adapting the report's suggestions with the various stakeholders consulted during the mission and providing support to implement them.

The CHS Alliance would like to thank all NGOs, UN agencies and individuals who helped staff during the mission, in particular Save the Children for hosting the mission and for all the logistic support offered, and UNHCR for supporting the two-day workshop held on its premises.

[4] The situation in the east of the country especially in NGCA is in constant evolution and access to affected people is further restricted. Follow this link www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/ukraine for updated information on the current situation.
[5] Workshop participants list in Annex 2 of this report.

Overview of the challenges to quality and accountability in the response

The quality of a humanitarian response is strictly related to the level of interaction aid agencies have with affected populations and how they use opinions and feedback (on what they think their priorities are) to inform programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In other words, the more we interact and listen, the better we are able to respond.

The response in Ukraine is shaped differently according to the geographical zones of operations[6]. Operational accountability approaches are tailored to the dynamics and factors affecting the response in each of the zones, including varying degrees of security (or insecurity) and access to affected populations.

Government Controlled Areas (GCA)

In GCA, stakeholders interviewed have highlighted that the quality and accountability of the response was mainly affected by:

- **Lack of experience in emergency response from national organisations and national staff**

Many of the national staff working on the response have less than one-year experience in emergency operations and do not therefore have the necessary knowledge and experience to effectively run projects and programmes. This is one of the factors leading to a poor understanding of response architecture including concepts of programme quality, accountability, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

- **Challenges related to a new operational context faced by some of the international staff**

The culture and customs of Ukraine and its people are complex and certainly different from those in other countries (particularly developing countries) where humanitarian operations are normally implemented. Some actions of international personnel have not been recognised as appropriate by both beneficiaries and national staff, creating tensions in relations[7].

- **Lack of strong partnerships between international and local actors**

Investing in capacity strengthening of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local community based organisations (CBOs) with the aim to improve collaboration could partly mitigate the negative consequences of the above two points. This was constantly highlighted by national staff and organisations met during the mission and also indicated by some of the affected people interviewed as a possible solution to strengthen accountability and improve the quality and the sustainability of

[6] OCHA, (February 2015), "4 zone map" explains the different operational contexts shaping the response in Ukraine https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Ukraine_4zone_map.pdf as well as the overview of the situation in Annex A.

[7] One clear example of this was reported by a national staff member of an international NGO: during a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) intervention the (international) hygiene promotion expert told beneficiaries that they had to wash their hands after having used the toilets. While this approach is often justified by poor hygiene practices in some countries, in Ukraine it was perceived to be rather offensive by the local people and national staff.

the response; people are aware that international actors will not stay forever and would prefer working with organisations that offer a more sustainable presence.

- **Difficulties faced by coordination structures**

Duplication of activities was repeatedly mentioned by interviewed stakeholders as one of the issues impacting the quality of the response in all zones. Actors expect that coordination would support stronger complementarity resulting in a better coverage of needs and affected people.

- **Short-term funding cycles and funding unpredictability preventing meaningful engagement with communities**

During discussions with affected populations and NGOs working with them, it was clear that quality and accountability issues mainly related to ongoing projects. Interviewees said this was due to the lack of predictable funding and uncertainty on what the organisation could engage on beyond the current project life cycle. Only now are some donors extending projects to one year but until now many have operated on an average of monthly funding cycles.

NGCA and buffer zones

Ongoing conflict, unpredictable security and, as a direct consequence of it, restricted access and declining humanitarian space characterise the operating environment in NGCA and the buffer zones[8]. The buffer zones are home to some of the most vulnerable populations and the current response does not provide enough assistance or solutions to their situation. Security protocols often do not allow UN agencies and international NGOs to access these areas resulting in poor knowledge of the situation faced by affected people there and what their priority needs might be.

The relation with the de facto authorities in NGCA[9] has been one of mistrust and suspicion. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) expulsion from Donetsk[10] demonstrates the lack of trust - but also lack of understanding - de facto authorities have toward humanitarian agencies. In this situation, it is difficult to effectively engage affected communities to understand their priority needs and design responses that are built to respond to those identified needs. The de facto authorities see with suspicion any effort by NGOs or UN agencies to spend time talking to people.

In these areas, additional challenges were mentioned in interviews, which compounded the list above:

- **Ongoing conflict and the unpredictable security situation**

The conflict is still ongoing and the risks associated with it are present not only within the buffer zones but also well within NGCA. Humanitarian workers operating in NGCA work under constant

[8] Buffer zones are areas at the border between GCA and NGCA. These zones are constantly under shelling and unpredictable exchange of heavy artillery. UXOs present an additional risk to both civilian populations still living in those areas and humanitarian actors trying to bring assistance.
[9] Lugansk, under the control of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk, under the control of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR).
[10] The IRC team based in Donetsk was expelled by the DPR authorities on suspicion of espionage and spying on 30 April 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/30/us-ukraine-crisis-donetsk-aid-idUSKBN0NL1S520150430

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security constraints that hamper the possibility to fully engage affected populations in discussions related to their needs. Operating in these areas often results in organisations dropping off in-kind assistance.

- **Logistic constraints, bureaucracy and corruption affecting transport of goods across check points**

Organisations operating in NGCA have to apply for authorisation with the Government of Ukraine every time they transport goods across the border from GCA. When authorisation is granted, there are long queues with abuses of power often reported from the soldiers manning the checkpoints on both sides. Corruption cases have also been reported with soldiers asking for money to let goods through[11].

- **Lack of knowledge amongst de facto authorities of the laws, codes and standards underpinning and regulating the work of humanitarian workers and organisations**

Humanitarian staff interviewed during the mission (from both NGOs and UN agencies) indicate that one of the problems leading to mistrust and suspicion lays in the lack of knowledge and understanding on the work of humanitarian agencies amongst de facto authorities in NGCA. NGOs and UN agencies constantly advocate for humanitarian spaces with the DPR and LPR authorities but there is a need to do it more systematically[12].

- **Risk that political discussions have a negative impact on humanitarian space**

The Government of Ukraine has imposed economic sanctions on the territories under the control of the pro-Russian de facto authorities. The sanctions include commercial bans, closing down the banking system and suspending the pensions system. At the same time the de facto authorities demand humanitarian organisations register if they wish to operate in their territories. The operating environment defined above is not conducive to quality work and humanitarian organisations need to be attentive and constantly stress that their operations are regulated by humanitarian principles and laws.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has said that food insecurity in the context of NGCA is fuelled by economic factors rather than a lack of food. The situation is created by a lack of purchasing power, a direct consequence of the suspension of the pensions system. Humanitarian organisations have also noted an increase in the cost of food and other basic household goods and services that, coupled with the above, has reduced communities' purchasing power and puts more stress on an already vulnerable population. Basic services have almost collapsed. Many among the affected communities rely on assistance from both national and international organisations that operate within the limited space available. The closing down of all banks in NGCA has forced national and international NGOs and UN agencies to undertake cash-based financial transactions with

[11] As one international humanitarian worker put it "crossing the border is stressful as the feeling is that your fate depends on the mood of soldiers on both sides and you never know if and how long it will take to cross it especially when you have humanitarian cargo".
[12] OCHA (August 2015), "Situation Update No. 7 as of 14 August 2015", https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/situation-update-no-7-14-august-2015

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vendors; adding to the risks these organisations already face. The closing of the banking system also explains why there are no cash-based programmes and all assistance brought by humanitarians in NGCA is in-kind.

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Commitment 1: Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs

Mission findings:

The use of AAP tools and approaches is defined by the level of control agencies and organisations have on the operating environment.

- In GCA the constraints on the use of these tools and approaches are mainly programmatic and the operating environment, which is free of security impediments limiting humanitarian space, should facilitate more meaningful engagement with affected populations throughout the response.
- The challenge of shrinking humanitarian space in NGCA and within the buffer zones however, plays an important role in NGO and UN capacity to fully engage affected populations. It is for this reason that aid agencies cannot foresee the same level of engagement they aim at in GCA but rather something that is realistic in that particular scenario. Sharing information with affected populations on organisations' mandates, the contacts of implementing agencies, ongoing and planned projects, and eligibility criteria should be the minimum level of engagement aid agencies should aim for while keeping in mind that they should improve this as long as the situation allows for a change.

An additional characteristic for all zones is that for the majority of local people and institutions, including government, de facto authorities and CSOs, this is the first time they have collaborated with humanitarian organisations in an emergency response. There is little knowledge of humanitarian architecture, humanitarian principles, and international laws governing humanitarian operations concepts of AAP and PSEA.

The above challenges impact on the appropriateness and relevance of the humanitarian response that can and should therefore be improved to take into account these specific needs and build upon the capacities of people requiring assistance.

Suggested ways forward:

- Find ways to constantly engage either directly or indirectly with affected populations in discussions to identify needs and appropriate responses. Ensure multiple sources of information are consulted, including affected people, local institutions and other stakeholders.
- Ensure responses are designed based on an impartial assessment of needs and risks and a clear understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities of the different groups.
- Implement awareness-raising campaigns to inform the Government of Ukraine and de facto authorities in NGCA on humanitarian principles, codes of conducts and AAP.
- Review best practices in AAP from contexts where humanitarian access is difficult, to see whether some tools can be adapted to NGCA. Among the extensive literature available on the subject is the Tearfund report, Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely

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managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments[13], that could be valuable for the situation in NGCA.

[13] Tearfund (February 2012), "Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments", http://www.alnap.org/resource/7956

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Commitment 2: Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time

Mission findings:

Lack of access due to security and shrinking humanitarian space are essential factors impacting the achievement of CHS commitment 2.

- The security situation is largely unpredictable, and the related level of stress is not conducive to quality work. Crossing between GCA and NGCA is a complex undertaking. Humanitarians need to face roadblocks manned by soldiers from both conflicting sides and neither welcomes their work. Slavic Heart, a national NGO set up by IDPs from the Donetsk region, with operations on both sides laments the continuous harassment it faces at checkpoints and the time that it takes to go through them. The number of roads open for transport is limited[14] and NGOs with operations in NGCA can wait up to five weeks to deliver goods.
- In NGCA the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality are at risk of being overshadowed by the politics of the conflict with the subsequent reduction of humanitarian space. This negatively impacts humanitarian operations, reducing the capacity to access and assist affected populations. The situation is even more complex in the buffer zones with active fighting and shelling reported on an almost daily basis. Many people have not left their homes and are in dire need of assistance. As of today, assistance is only sporadically delivered and still far from meeting needs. The winterisation program will be a pivotal moment as it will bring along challenges but also opportunities to discuss openings and humanitarian corridors with the warring parties.

An additional challenge to ensuring that communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time is limited funding: as of today only 35% of the request expressed by the humanitarian community in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)[15] has been funded. All sectors are largely underfunded, hampering the capacity of national and international responders to meet identified needs, which has a direct impact on CHS commitment 2.

Suggested ways forward:

- Continue advocating with the de facto authorities in NGCA to create more humanitarian space and pursue advocacy efforts to facilitate procedures to bring humanitarian supplies into NGCA. The timeliness of assistance directly affects its effectiveness.
- Ensure unmet needs are referred to those organisations that have the mandate and the capacity to address them.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation results include communities' perception of success and are used to improve programme design.

[14] One of the consequences of the war is the destruction of the road network and the mining of some other areas. This situation leaves only a few roads to be used for transport between GCA and NGCA. Hundreds of trucks queue at border posts.
[15] OCHA (February 2015), "2015 Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan", https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/2015-ukraine-humanitarian-response-plan

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Commitment 3: Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action

Mission findings:

There is frustration among CSOs that the international response is overlooking the existing national capacity while the complexity of the situation requires a strong understanding of social dynamics and cultural issues. There is a missed opportunity to strengthen the capacity of national staff and reinforce CSOs. Strategy and programme design should be inspired by good practice on community consultation: one example is the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)-funded Save the Children programme in Svyatogorsk which uses a community-based approach to allow IDPs and local populations to identify projects to benefit their community. Considering that national NGOs and CBOs working in operational areas are staffed mainly by people affected by the crisis, reinforcing partnerships and investing in building their capacity would be instrumental to develop more resilient communities. Another example representative of the potential of strengthening local capacity is Slavic Heart. The NGO is now collaborating with Save the Children, UNHCR and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) among others, in designing and implementing projects in Svyatogorsk. Slavic Heart's knowledge of IDPs and host communities is an added value facilitating the identification and design of projects with meaningful engagement of affected groups in their diversity.

The mission found that there is limited knowledge about PSEA. When approaching the matter with national staff there, the initial reaction was a strong rejection, and doubts raised about the possibility that these issues could take place in Ukrainian society.

Suggested ways forward:

- Invest in meaningful partnerships with national organisations and strengthen the capacity of national staff on project cycle management, humanitarian principles, and quality and accountability standards.
- Strengthen relations with affected communities and design responses based on their feedback. Such an approach reinforces communities' dignity and confidence. Integrating the view of affected people into programming helps build communities' resilience.
- Raise awareness of all stakeholders including international and national NGOs, UN agencies and affected populations on SEA and train staff to identify and act upon potential or unintended negative effects generated by the response.
- Ensure UN agencies and all NGOs have a focal point dealing with issues of AAP and PSEA and a space for discussions on common constraints, best practices and other related issues.

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Commitment 4: Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them

Mission findings:

While several individual agencies interviewed are operationalising various accountability tools at different steps of the humanitarian project cycle[16], there is currently no systematic and coherent approach to ensure engagement of affected populations either at individual agency level or collectively.

In GCA, all stakeholders interviewed confirmed their organisations share information on who they are and on their response using different types of media. However, discussions with affected communities have highlighted that lack of information is among their major concerns. This highlights that sharing information may sometimes be a mechanic exercise undertaken without confirming that the information shared has actually been well understood by the beneficiaries. It also highlights the need to ask affected people what type of information they would like to receive and how.

Some organisations indicate that their limited engagement with affected populations is affected by the short funding cycle which hampers a longer-term strategic vision and the adaptability of the response to needs which are changing overtime.

Interviewees report that people in NGCA are "paralysed" by lack of information. Collaboration with national media should be better explored and reinforced to be able to reach the highest number of people. The reports by Ground Truth Solutions, Key perceptions of internally displaced people in Ukraine[17], could be better used by the humanitarian community in Ukraine. The study has identified, among other important key issues, the media sources used and people's preferred and most trusted national media channels. Internews is also doing work with the national media and currently trying to play a stronger role within the response community by linking closely with the clusters.

The humanitarian system in Ukraine needs improvement to close the feedback loop and adapt response strategies based on communities' feedback; the same is valid and frequently reported at global level. Stakeholders mentioned the difficulties faced in systematically using feedback to improve programme delivery or to inform people within a given time whether their feedback was well-received, used and how. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is currently trying to work towards streamlining the various toll-free hotlines currently in use by individual agencies.

Some agencies have demonstrated specific capacities to operationalise AAP at a given stage of the project cycle:

[16] Save the Children, DRC, Help Age and UNHCR (to mention only those organisations the Alliance met or had a Skype with) are all using their own tools and approaches.

[17] Ground Truth Solutions (December 2014), "Key Perceptions of internally displaced people in Ukraine – 2014", http://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Ukraine_R1_2014.pdf
Ground Truth Solutions (March 2015), "Key Perceptions of internally displaced people in Ukraine – 2015", http://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Ukraine_R2_2015.pdf

UNHCR

UNHCR has implemented participatory assessments[18] in Donetsk, Sievierodonetsk, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv, illustrating how to meaningfully engage with affected populations taking into account age, gender and diversity. The tool's objectives are to:

- Identify protection risks and unmet needs from the person of concern's perspectives;
- Identify capacities of the IDP community to address protection concerns;
- Draft programmatic and operational recommendations to humanitarian and social organisations and institutions;
- Build consensus and promote dialogue between all stakeholders, including government institutions, NGOs, UN agencies, internally displaced and conflict-affected populations;
- Promote meaningful participation of IDPs and conflict-affected persons.

The results of these participatory assessments should be shared more widely or made easily accessible to interested stakeholders.

Save the Children

Save the Children has demonstrated its positive and successful engagement with affected populations in project design and implementation[19]. Community-based projects benefitting both locals and IDPs are identified with the participation of representatives of both communities.

A major issue lies in the lack of involvement and participation of affected communities in the decision process related to the selection of eligibility criteria. This inevitably results in communities' frustration and lack of understanding about why some community members are eligible and others are not. There are of course positive examples showing how the involvement of communities in this essential step of humanitarian intervention is crucial and demonstrating that the often mechanical identification of the most vulnerable (as beneficiaries) does not always represent the best solution. A participatory targeting approach used by Save the Children in Svyatogorsk, saw the community identify able-bodied youth to be the beneficiaries of a specific aspect of the intervention, namely cash for work. The community justified the selection of that group by the fact that able-bodied youth were not targeted by assistance most of the time, as interventions always focused on the most vulnerable. At the same time people highlighted that youth should be given a chance to demonstrate how they could support the community and be productive.

Suggested ways forward:

The importance that affected communities give to information access[20] has often been underestimated by humanitarian organisations. However, when asked about it, affected populations put it as one of their first priorities more and more often. Access to information allows affected people to make informed decisions. NGOs and UN agencies should go a step further in their quest to

[18] UNHCR (May 2006), "Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations", www.unhcr.org/450e963f2.html
[19] OFDA-funded Save the Children project in Svyatogorsk
[20] Information needs are different and can vary from information about the organisation, its principles and mandates, types and quantities of assistance, and criteria of eligibility, to security and more sensitive issues.

inform affected populations about their intended programmes and build functional two-way communication systems to ensure that people's views are treated as an integral part of the response process.

- Ensure that information is shared in a way and using language, formats and media that are appropriate to the situation and preferred by beneficiaries. In order to do that it is important to build a trustful and open relation with the communities.
- Reinforce proximity with affected populations and field presence to share valuable and constructive time with communities. Proximity is essential in humanitarian work as it helps in building effective relations. It also facilitates understanding of changes as the situation evolves.
- Ensure that affected communities understand the importance of feedback and are given the possibility to provide it.
- Close the feedback loop by keeping people constantly informed about the organisation's use of their feedback.
- Explore ways to set up collective feedback mechanisms learning from similar experiences in other operations such as the Somalia Return Consortium[21]. More information and insights on collective accountability can also be found in Chapter 10 of the CHS Alliance's Humanitarian Accountability Report 2015[22].
- Ensure different gender and age groups contribute to the discussion on the type of complaints and feedback mechanism they would feel confident and safe using.
- Strengthen collaboration with local media. Particular attention should be paid to avoiding politicisation of information and ensuring information also reaches affected communities in NGCA.
- Seek to regularly collect affected people's views and opinions about success, priorities and gaps in the humanitarian response[23].

[21] Collective feedback mechanism for beneficiaries of the Somalia Return Consortium, www.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/system/files/documents/files/Collective%20feedback%20Mechanism%20for%20beneficiaries%20of%20The%20Somalia%20Return%20Consortium.pdf

[22] CHS Alliance (September 2015), "Humanitarian Accountability Report 2015, On the Road to Istanbul: How can the World Humanitarian Summit make humanitarian response more effective?", Chapter 10, www.chsalliance.org/files/files/CHSAlliance-Humanitarian-Accountability-Report-2015-Chapter-10.pdf

[23] Ground Truth Solutions, Methodology, www.groundtruthsolutions.org/methodology/, and OCHA, Methodology, Participative evaluation of accountability to affected populations, www.chsalliance.org/files/files/Participative-evaluation-of-accountability-to-affected-populations-Methodology-v2_0.pdf, are but two tools/methodologies among a much larger list of available materials.

Commitment 5: Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints

Mission findings:

Complaints mechanisms are seldom used across the response in Ukraine. Among the NGOs met during the mission, a limited number of organisations confirmed that they have set up one. Tools are usually developed at headquarters and lack adaptation to the context[24]. Staff often lack knowledge and understanding of what a complaints mechanism is about and the potentiality of such systems remains to be further explored. A complaints mechanism has a positive effect on the quality of the work of the organisation, and it is important that organisations are able to explain this and convince their staff about it.

Suggested ways forward:

- Raise stakeholders' awareness on the importance of complaints mechanisms and ensure there is technical capacity in-country to set up effective systems.
- Explore ways to set up collective complaints mechanisms on the experience gathered from other operations[25].
- Clarify the difference between feedback and sensitive complaints, and explain their intended use as well as the processes and systems an organisation has to put in place to close the loop.
- While collection of feedback and sensitive complaints can be done using the same entry point, ensure they are processed differently.
- Organise capacity building activities for NGOs and UN agencies on complaints mechanisms and investigations. The capacity building should focus on:
    - Designing a complaints mechanism
    - Raising awareness of the affected population about how to make a complaint
    - Managing complaints
    - Documentation
    - Protecting a complainant
    - Acting on received feedback and complaints to modify programmes accordingly

[24] At the time the mission was undertaken mid-July 2015.
[25] The Uwajibikaji Pamoja is a collective complaints system tested in Kenya to improve service delivery to the residents of Turkana county and facilitate the referral of complaints from one service provider to another, www.haipcrm.com

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Commitment 6: Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance

Mission findings:

- Coordination was often referred to as one of the main factors contributing to unfair distribution of the assistance. Despite OCHA's effort to set up and reinforce much-needed coordination in decentralised hubs closer to the buffer zones, lack of experienced staff, resources and geographical constraints affect the quality of the response. International coordination mechanisms set up specifically during this crisis need to better explore ways to reinforce the Government of Ukraine's existing systems and capacities. Also it was mentioned that an improvement of the coordination's quality is urgently needed as it needs to move from mere information sharing to more active problem solving support to operations (i.e. reduce or avoid overlaps)[26].
- The food security and livelihoods (FSL) cluster coordinator confirmed that important decisions (standardisation of the food basket and eligibility criteria) are taken during cluster meetings. However he also confirmed that the decisions process does not include consultations with affected communities or their representatives.
- There is no forum to discuss accountability in the current formal and informal coordination structure. Despite the existence of good practices on AAP in the current response these are not shared among the humanitarian community. There is a missed opportunity to learn from each other and replicate approaches and the use of tools that are successful in the current response.

Suggested ways forward:

- Coordination is not the sole responsibility of coordination bodies such as OCHA but that of every organisation or agency. Each organisation should actively coordinate its response with other organisations to ensure the coherence and complementarity of assistance.
- Ensure that local authorities, civil society actors and networks are involved in coordination mechanisms.
- Ensure that coordination structures share information with local existing bodies to reinforce sustainability.
- When military are involved, clarify distinction between humanitarian and military and constantly work toward maintaining that distinction.
- Ensure information related to the response is shared and programmes and projects are designed taking into account what others are doing and to complement their work.
- The NGO forum could host the AAP/PSEA group discussions. Mission discussions had with Save the Children (the NGO hosting the forum) and the NGO forum coordinator confirmed an interest in doing so and that the possibility should be better explored.

[26] During a meeting with affected people in Slovyansk, a mother of two indicated that coordination was the priority for her as many were left out of assistance just because NGOs were not talking to each other.

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Commitment 7: Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection

Mission findings:

The limited results achieved by Save the Children with its information sharing approach in Svyatogorsk, and by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) with its complaints mechanism in the Dnipropetrovsk region[27] show how contextualisation of tools and approaches is an essential requisite for them to be successful. Approaches that have been successful in one operation are not necessarily effective elsewhere. Their application therefore risks becoming a mechanical exercise if it does not include the necessary analytical elements that make the difference between an implemented action and an action implemented successfully. A forum or space to discuss, learn and share on best practices, needs and gaps on AAP and PSEA would increase the possibility to share, learn, and adapt existing good practices.

Suggested ways forward:

- Organisations with experience in AAP and PSEA should ensure that learning informs and improves practices. It is essential to emphasise the importance of contextualisation and that organisations teach their staff how to do it.
- Set up mechanisms through which learning and experiences are made accessible to others. This could be one of the roles of the coordination structures and of the accountability working group hosted by the NGO forum. It would also be important to upload on the Humanitarian Response website, all information related to best practices, studies and research undertaken in the country that are relevant to programme quality and accountability[28].
- Strengthen peer and sector learning within the current response architecture. NGOs and UN agencies operating in Ukraine have conducted operations, and developed tools and approaches, in other complex emergencies. The experience gathered from other operations in similar contexts should be taken advantage of within these same organisations.

[27] Both organisations are AAP champions globally and specifically in Ukraine. Despite implementing information sharing and complaints mechanisms tools and policies they do not seem to be able to achieve expected results and are therefore experiencing firsthand that implementation without proper analysis and contextualisation achieves limited results.

[28] For example, the Ground Truth Solutions reports on Key Perceptions of IDPs and the UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations are important documents but not easily accessible.

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Commitment 8: Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers

Mission findings:

NGOs and UN agencies with an already established presence in Ukraine have had to adapt operations to the new emergency response reality[29]. Others however, had to set up new offices and hire new staff. Many national staff members only have a few months experience in humanitarian operations. Also, for specific language needs, many international staff were hired from the former Soviet Union countries of eastern Europe (Russian is widely spoken within these countries). These staff members often come with rather development-focused experience and therefore need time to learn how to operate in an emergency response environment. Other international staff come with experience gained during years of work in developing country operations that needs to be constructively revised as approaches and practices need to be well contextualised and adapted to the culture, customs and traditions of the people of Ukraine.

International actors often overlook the potential advantage of partnering with capable national staff and CSOs. Many national staff and CSOs the Alliance met during the mission expressed their disappointment at the attitudes of international actors towards existing Ukrainian capacity.

Suggested ways forward:

- Identify which policies are in place and which need updating or developing.
- Conduct skills and experience audits to strengthen capacity where required (i.e. working in emergencies or languages) for both local and international staff.
- Organisations should be aware of local labour law.
- Organisations should be clear on their compensation and benefits structures, aiming at transparency and fair policies to limit perceptions of inequality between local and international staff.
- Invest in building the capacity of national staff and strengthen partnerships with national CSOs.
- Staff develop and use the necessary personal, technical and management competencies to fulfil their roles.
- Organisations need to ensure their recruitment and selection processes, as well as the on-boarding phase, consider the operational particularities of this response to ensure sufficient awareness raising and information sharing to achieve appropriate behaviours and approaches by staff. This will address inappropriate comments such as that made by a WASH staff member (see footnote 7).
- Organisations should prepare clear job profiles, with clear objectives and skill levels required. Share clarification on expectations and their context during the on-boarding or briefing process. Provide adequate training and share information on the context and culture (e.g.

[29] Prior to this current crisis, some NGO and UN agencies had offices working on development programmes and refugees operations in Ukraine.

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use local staff knowledge to inform new expatriates). This awareness-raising process should start at recruitment phase, for example, with clear behaviour expectations and personal specifications listed in job profiles.

- Explore mechanisms to facilitate this learning process such as by assigning a buddy and mentoring from a local counterpart or inviting the community to participate if appropriate. Establish a clear code of conduct detailing expected behaviours that align with the organisation's values, mission and vision. Implement briefings on cultural appropriateness.
- Ensure the right provisions are in place for staff security, health and safety, and wellbeing support, adequate to working in a conflict zone for both national and expatriate staff (e.g. rest and recuperation (R&R), psychological debrief in case of exposure to fighting, awareness around vicarious stress, and mechanisms to prevent sexual violence).

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Commitment 9: Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically

Mission findings:

The Government of Ukraine has recently opened a dialogue with the international community with the aim to review its legal system as it relates to laws and processes regulating the current humanitarian response[30]. This was confirmed in a statement issued by the Minister of Finance about "the necessity to cancel the private person income tax which is charged on the monetary aid to IDPs from international organisations"[31]. The government move goes a long way to ensuring the effectiveness of resources distributed to IDPs in GCA.

Currently INGOs hire a high number of international staff. This is justified by the lack of emergency response capacity of national staff in the country. On a longer-term basis however, this is not sustainable on both economic (international staff cost much more than national) and programmatic (from a resilience perspective) levels.

Organisations report corruption practices especially at border-crossing points. Accepting to pay bribes affects the integrity of an organisation and its capacity to deliver messages of transparency and integrity.

Suggested ways forward:

- Use coordination events to ensure information is used to maximise use of resources. In a situation like that of Ukraine where the humanitarian response plan is largely underfunded, it becomes essential to use resources effectively and efficiently. Coordination structures can play a role in ensuring that the work of humanitarian agencies is based on an ethical use of the limited resources available.
- Investing in building the capacity of national staff and organisations will have the double effect of being more cost effective and building both national organisations' and affected communities' resilience to cope with the crisis.
- Ensure policies are in place that address corruption, fraud and conflict of interest, and take appropriate actions when these are identified. The alleged corruption cases at border crossings could be seen as one, and almost certainly the most important, misuse of resources that need to be addressed.

[30] The Ukrainian legal framework does not allow for the specific needs of both affected populations and service providers. Different representatives of national and international NGOs complained that the Government of Ukraine taxed the beneficiaries of cash interventions.

[31] CEDOS (April 2015), "Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine: Policy Review", www.cedos.org.ua/en/migration/internally-displaced-persons-in-ukraine-policy-review-april-2015

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Conclusions and next steps

The operating environment in Ukraine, especially in NGCA, is complex and presents dynamics that are difficult to negotiate. In NGCA, security is an imposing factor that impacts the capacity of humanitarian organisations to access affected populations and deliver quality assistance. However, strengthening accountability throughout the humanitarian response in Ukraine should be a constant aim of humanitarian organisations as it would contribute to increased sustainability and programmes' cost effectiveness; especially necessary in a context of limited resources. Beyond that, the humanitarian community operating in the country should recognise accountability as something the population has a right to.

Each CHS Alliance deployment mission finds that there is theoretical knowledge and language on accountability that does not always translate into practical action. Humanitarian organisations and actors know that involving affected people and communities in all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle will lead to a more effective and efficient response[32]. Still this is not happening systematically and the response in Ukraine is another example of this shortfall of humanitarian operations[33].

The Alliance mission did not encounter any knowledge of PSEA issues and, when they were raised, local staff strong denied that such incidences could happen in Ukraine. The reaction clearly showed a lack of understanding of the concept of PSEA and a need to introduce it in the response architecture[34].

Finally the interested participation of UN agencies, national and international NGOs in the introduction to the CHS workshop, organised in collaboration with Save and Children and UNHCR, shows the incredible drive of national staff and organisations to learn more about humanitarian operations, including accountability standards. It is a confirmation that the way forward is to invest in strengthening the capacities of national staff and partnering with national organisations.

This report presents the mission's findings in a way that is intended to give Alliance members and humanitarian actors working in Ukraine access to clear steps to undertake to strengthen accountability in the response.

The ways forward presented in this report are organised according to the nine commitments of the CHS, and could serve as a basis for discussion to move forward on accountability at both collective and individual levels. If the NGO forum decides to host a specific group on AAP/PSEA, an action-planning exercise could be informed by the proposed recommendations. NGOs and UN agencies can

[32] HAP International, Save the Children and Christian Aid (June 2013), "Improving Impact: Do Accountability Deliver Results?", www.chsalliance.org/files/files/improving-impact-do-accountability-mechanisms-deliver-results.pdf

[33] Operational peer reviews (OPR) implemented by the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) have highlighted that AAP is the worst performing transformative agenda pillar.

[34] It also highlights a sort of "civilisational struggle" that is also present in the constant request by Ukrainians to manage their own response. Ukrainian people and organisations do not accept lightly the fact that the response is managed by international actors as they believe they have all the skills necessary to do it themselves.

also review the recommendations and select the ones they would like to specifically take action on to improve on a specific CHS commitment.

As part of its engagement and to follow-up on requests received by UN agencies and national and international NGOs during the mission, the Alliance confirms its willingness to support and facilitate capacity strengthening in areas requested by interviewees. These areas include introduction to the CHS, complaints and feedback mechanisms, PSEA and community engagement throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. A specific training needs assessment would be carried out to refine the subjects most needed by participants. Additional support can also be provided remotely to a specific AAP/PSEA group, such as the provision of examples and good practices from other contexts, or sharing of guidance on specific aspects to facilitate translating the recommendations into practice.

Capitalising on learning is an essential part of quality and accountability work. It is for this reason that the Alliance is aware of the need to learn the potentials and limitations of the CHS and to offer constructive services to our members and to the wider humanitarian community. We have decided accordingly to design our deployment mission reports on the nine commitments of the CHS. This report is the first attempt at doing so and we welcome feedback on this to info@chsalliance.org. We aim to more coherently support the use of the Standard, indicate what actions are needed to apply each of its nine commitments and demonstrate how it can be used practically during humanitarian operations.

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Annex 1
People met during the mission

	Name	Title	Organisation
1	Michele Cecere	Country Director	Save the Children
2	Eva Sztacho	Area Manager	Save the Children
3	Olesia Ogryzko	Partnership Manager	Save the Children
4	Nino Zhvania	NGO Forum Coordinator	Save the Children
5	Krista Zongolowicz	Country Director	Danish Refugee Council
6	Alina Kazimova	Grants Manager	Danish Refugee Council
7	Anna Radchenko	Livelihoods Officer	Danish Refugee Council
8	Barbara Manzi	Head of Office	OCHA
9	Yanna Thay	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	OCHA
10	Oleksandr Ovdiienko	Humanitarian Adviser	OCHA
11	Anna Sokolova	Humanitarian Adviser	OCHA
12	Maria Sliacka	Project Director	ADRA Ukraine
13	Giancarlo Stopponi	Head of Office	World Food Programme
14	Irena Loloci	Program Co-ordinator	World Food Programme
15	Khalid Khan	Co-ordinator	Food Security Cluster
16	April Pham	Senior GenCap Adviser	IASC (hosted by UNFPA and UNHCR)
17	Hannah Vaughan Lee	Humanitarian Advisor	GOAL
18	Natali Kirkach	Director	Slavic Heart
19	Andrew Antonenko	Project Assistant	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
20	Anastasia Borziuk	Project Assistant	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
21	Wayne Sharpe	Chief of Party	Internews
22	Iryna Negreyeva	Communication and M&E	Internews

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		Programme Officer	
23	Oksana Maydan	Deputy Chief of Party	Internews
24	Nataliya Ivaniv	Capacity Building Manager	Internews
25	Pilar Robledo	Education Cluster Co-ordinator	UNICEF
28	Fredric Larsson	Country Director	People in Need
29	Dina Urazbaeva	Emergency Programme Manager	People in Need
30	Jeff Wilkinson	Head of Sub Office	UNHCR
31	Sinead McGrath	Field Programme Manager	Help Age International

Many other people from different organisations were met during the mission and even though their names do not appear here, their contributions to the mission have been important.

During the mission there have been three different meetings with representatives of IDPs and local affected populations. These have been organised by Save the Children, ADRA and Catholic Relief Services. The contributions of the people met were instrumental to understanding some of the shortfalls of the response and gave the perspective of affected populations about some of the areas the humanitarian organisations need to improve upon.

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Annex 2

Participant List: Introduction to the Core Humanitarian Standard: 21-22 July 2015, Kiev, Ukraine

Name	Organisation
Valeriia Vitynska	World Food Programme
Rauf Yusupov	World Food Programme
Anastasia Borziuk	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
Andrew Antonenko	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
Dina Gud	Danish Refugee Council
Anna Radchenko	Danish Refugee Council
Olga Dolinina	Save the Children
Svitlana Fesenko	UNICEF
Khalid Khatki	World Food Programme
Oksana Medvedeva	SOS Children's Villages
Fatima Yandiev	UNICEF
Olesia Ogryzko	Save the Children
Nataliya Drobot	Save the Children
Anzhela Kocholodzian	ACF – The Right to Protection
Artem Dikhtiaruk	ADRA
Roman Sheiko	UNICEF
Kate Holland	People in Need

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