



**Real-Time Response Review
of the
Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal 2022
for
Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)**

Moldova Country Report
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Contents

Acronyms	i
Acknowledgments	i
1. Executive Summary	1
2. Introduction and Background	3
2.1. The review and this report	3
2.2. Background and context.....	3
3. Who we heard from	5
4. Findings	6
4.1. CHS1: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.....	6
4.2. CHS 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely	7
4.3. CHS 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.	7
4.4. CHS 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	8
4.5. CHS 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed	9
4.6. CHS 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	10
4.7. CHS 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	11
4.8. CHS 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	12
4.9. CHS 9: Resources managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically	13
5. Conclusions	13
6. Recommendations	14
Annexes	16
7. Overview of DEC Response	16
8. Purpose and Scope of Review	17
8.1. Purpose.....	17
8.2. Scope and limitations	17
9. Review Concepts and Approach	18
9.1. Concepts	18
9.2. Approach and priorities.....	19
10. Review Methodology and Deliverables	20
10.1. Methodology	20
10.2. Deliverables	22
11. Reflections from the Real-Time Review (RTR)	22
11.1. Using the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).....	22
11.2. Learning about learning.....	23
11.3. Real-Time Review (RTR) Process	25

Acronyms

CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CMC	Conflict Management Consulting
CSO	Civic Society Organisations
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations
KID	Key Informant Discussions
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MPC	Multi-Purpose Cash
NFI	Non-Food Items
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PSEA	Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSHEA	Protection against Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse
RTR	Real-Time Review
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UHA	Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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1. Executive Summary

Since 24 February 2022, the conflict in Ukraine has led to a major humanitarian crisis, with millions of people in need, including those who have fled across borders, those who are displaced inside the country and those unable or unwilling to leave conflict-affected areas. On 3 March 2022, DEC launched the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA), which has raised £400 million to date, of which £215 million was allocated in Phase 1 and £86 million spent. 13 Member Charities responded as part of the DEC appeal, working with partners in Ukraine and four neighbouring countries: Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary.

As part of its commitment to accountability and learning, the DEC commissioned this Real-Time Response Review, its aim being '*to instigate collective real-time reflection and learning to inform adjustments across DEC Members' responses.*' It draws on the experience of initial phase of the response to help formulate lessons to be applied in real-time and to the second phase of the response. The approach of the Review was to support real-time learning as part of the Review process and to further support this and future learning with reports and inputs to workshops. In line with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), which is itself at the centre of the DEC's Learning and Accountability Framework, the Review was centred on affected people. In execution, it was rapid and light in touch, and used participatory and qualitative methods. It sought to hear from all the main stakeholders (affected people, aid workers, local organisations, DEC Members and others), to reflect and report on what was heard and from this to draw conclusions and propose recommendations. In doing so, it used the 9 commitments of the CHS as the main framework for the discussions (further details in *Annex*).

CHS 1 - Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant: The response is relevant to affected people, and affected people mention humanitarian aid as among the top sources that help them cope. The response is based on needs assessments that are conducted regularly and reflected in programming. In Moldova neither national Government nor local authorities provide social payments to affected people, so there is a need for the response to continue, catering to the evolving needs of affected people, including those caused by limited supply of heating and electricity. In Moldova affected people include both refugees from Ukraine and Moldovan vulnerable families affected by the crisis. DEC is one of the few funders to support both groups, and it is important to continue this approach.

CHS 2 - Humanitarian response is effective and timely: From the start, local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) started to provide response with their own resources; so was very timely. Only a few INGOs, including DEC Members, were present in Moldova. Others came later, and they brought critical resources. First actions were to set up offices, hire staff, partner up with local CSOs and provide training. Affected people, DEC Members and local partners assess that the DEC-funded response has been flexible and effective. Also, giving the rapidly evolving challenges, continuing and strengthening the practice of contingency planning is important.

CHS 3 - Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects: Local partners are recognised as very strong in programming and delivery. While most local organisations had no specific experience in conflict-related humanitarian response, they were able to quickly start their response activities. Later, they benefited from support from DEC Members. There is a tension between the need to deliver a response and the need to devote time for reporting and visibility. There is a recognition by DEC Members that local partners have good capacity to plan, to implement and to manage bigger budgets.

CHS 4 - Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation, and feedback: DEC Members make good efforts to ensure communication and participation with affected people, most of which occurs through local organisations. This mostly takes place through questionnaires about their needs and consultations with a limited number of affected people during site visits. Usually affected people do not participate in designing the aid programmes. Affected people may lack knowledge on what aid is available and what can be their needs in different scenarios. The experience of local partners and DEC Members is an asset in anticipating such needs and in contingency planning.

CHS 5 - Complaints are welcomed and addressed: DEC Members have set up complaint and feedback mechanisms, directly or through local partners, including phone numbers, e-mails, boxes, visits and direct interviews, and affected people mostly know about the available mechanisms. However, these mechanisms are

not always working because, according to local partners, affected people are not used to share feedback. More research and reflection are needed to learn which complaint and feedback mechanisms are more appropriate and effective, including the possible use of liaison volunteers within the affected community.

CHS - 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary: The Review found that coordination is strong at the national level, through the Refugee Coordination Forum, with Government and with UN Agencies, and through Working Groups (that perform the functions of Clusters). Local partners were already in those coordination mechanisms that were functional before the response started, such as the Ombudsman platform on human rights monitoring. However, some still question the value of participation in coordination versus the effort required. Thematic cooperation seems to be stronger than regional cooperation, for example on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child protection. DEC Members and local partners use referrals well. A big issue flagged by local partners is the need for, and lack of, a coordination platform between Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs / responders.

CHS - 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve: The Review found a strong commitment to learn and practice of learning on the part of DEC Members and local partners. DEC Members have robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) systems & conduct own reviews. MEAL informs programming and specific approaches. For example, the appointment system for affected people to timely receive support. Local partners had their MEAL systems in place, then they were further strengthened by training and examples of MEAL policies provided by DEC Members. Local partners actively implement and use them. There is scope for more structured and regular experience sharing / learning between DEC Members and local partners on what they learned and how they learn.

CHS 8 - Staff are supported to do their job effectively and are treated fairly and equitably: DEC Members and local partners (after being supported by DEC Members) have policies and provide support to staff (safeguarding, prevention of burnout, R&R leave). Support to community responders / aid workers is mostly provided by local partners. DEC Members give them indirect support costs for it. Also, DEC Members try to hire Moldovan staff for Moldova activities, a good practice. At the individual level, staff of local partners prioritise providing aid to affected people over taking care of themselves; there is scope for significant improvement in how support for aid workers / staff is actually implemented.

CHS 9 - Resources are managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically: The Review identified in a general way, that DEC Members and local partners effectively, efficiently and ethically manage resources. Of concern is that, despite the coordination systems in place, there is room for improvement in systems to avoid duplication of aid delivered in Moldova, where more 'active' affected people may receive more aid than others.

Summary of conclusions: The Review concludes that the DEC Members and local partners are doing well in how they provide humanitarian aid in difficult circumstances in Moldova, covering not only refugees from Ukraine but also Moldova people affected by the crisis. They have a strong commitment to and practice of engaging with affected people, while recognising that feedback and participation are areas for improvement. The response is timely and well-planned, and winterisation needs are being addressed. Local partners are very strong. Appreciating the flexibility of DEC funding, there is still room for further decentralisation and empowering of local partners in decision-making. Both DEC Members and local partners have a good commitment to and implementation of learning, noting there is scope to improve the sharing of learning between DEC Members, and between Members and local partners. In the context of rapidly evolving situation, it is important to strengthen the practice of contingency planning, so that the stakeholders, notably local organisations, have ready scenarios and resources to be able to urgently respond to emerging and evolving needs of affected people.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. The review and this report

This is the Country Report for Moldova of the Real-Time Review (RTR) of the response funded by the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA). It follows the Aides Mémoire, draft country reports and a draft of the synthesis report, taking on board comments received and recent discussions, such as the learning workshops of 4 November and 9 December 2022. This report complements the Country Reports for Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary and the Synthesis Report.

The primary purpose of the RTR is to *instigate collective real-time reflection and learning to inform adjustments across DEC Members' responses*. The Review draws on the experiences in the initial phase of the response in order that lessons be applied in real-time and into the second phase of the Members' programmes. Recognising the lead role played by national and local actors in the crisis response to date, and the DEC's own commitments to strengthen localisation efforts, attention to how DEC Members are establishing and scaling up their responses in ways that are complementary to and reinforcing of local humanitarian action was an important part of the picture. The RTR serves an accountability function, both to communities and people affected by crisis¹, as well as to the UK public and other key supporters of the DEC appeal. Complementing this Review, a third party monitoring process is ongoing in Ukraine, being conducted on behalf of the FCDO of the UK.

The Review covered the humanitarian response in 5 countries, conducted by 13 Members and supported by the DEC Secretariat, and involved discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. The Review focused on 'collective learning' and did not conduct in-depth reviews on the responses of individual DEC Members.

The review was designed as a participatory process, whereby collective learning was facilitated during the course of the review, notably in the use of workshops and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), both in-country and across the whole of the response. This report is the final stage of this process.

Further details on the review purpose, approach and methodology are given in the *Annex*.

2.2. Background and context

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) brings together 15 of the UK's leading aid charities to raise funds in response to major international humanitarian crises. In order to support Members' activities, harness lessons and inform real-time revisions to ongoing humanitarian programmes, the DEC Secretariat commissioned this Review of programmes funded by the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA).

Since 24 February 2022, the conflict in Ukraine has escalated and led to a massive humanitarian crisis, with millions of people in need, including those who have fled across borders and many more who are on the move inside the country or unable to leave encircled towns and cities. Currently over 5.6 million people are displaced internally and more than 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine have fled to European countries².

The majority of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children. Over 4.3 million refugees from Ukraine have registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in different European countries³, out of which around 1.5 million are registered in Poland⁴.

¹ In line with CHS commitment 7 "humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve".

² <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>

³ Ukraine Situation Flash Update #33 (21 October 2022).

⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10781?secret=unhcrrestricted>

The Ukraine crisis has triggered exceptional levels of support and solidarity. Neighbouring Governments have mobilised quickly, as have local communities in those countries. In contrast with their approach to refugees from other conflicts, EU countries have been fast to provide temporary protection and access to jobs and services to Ukrainians. The UN humanitarian flash appeal for Ukraine is one of the biggest and most generously funded ever⁵. Public appeals in many European countries have also been very well supported.

As part of this support, the DEC launched the UHA on 3 March 2022. 13 Member Charities⁶ have responded as part of the DEC appeal, working with partners in Ukraine and 4 neighbouring countries: Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary, and providing cross-border support from Romania and Slovakia.

At the time of writing, the DEC fundraising campaign has raised over £400 million. The 13 Member charities taking part in the appeal will spend DEC funds over a period of at least 3 years, split into Phase 1 (the first 6 months) and Phase 2 (the following 30 months) of the response. During Phase 1 £215 million was allocated to DEC Members to support humanitarian programmes.

The response priorities for DEC Members and their partners in Phase 1 were:

- Health: provision of primary healthcare services, providing items like trauma kits and first aid kits, as well as supporting healthcare facilities with oxygen compressors and vital pharmaceutical products.
- Cash: support affected populations needs (Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, as well as members of the host communities) through Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) delivered using a variety of approaches: pre-paid cards, digital transfers etc to meet vital basic needs and protection services.
- Food: food assistance, hot meals or using cash transfers like supermarket vouchers.
- Water, sanitation & hygiene: safe drinking water, hygiene information and hygiene kits.
- Protection: psychosocial support for affected people, stress management training sessions.
- Shelter: bed linen, blankets, towels, kitchen sets, jerry cans, buckets for displaced people and host communities.

Large scale and rapidly evolving context: As the data shows, this is a large scale, sudden onset crisis, and the scale of the response has been very large, in a region where many Members had little presence. While this large-scale response is welcome, it brings a range of ‘scaling-up’ challenges, including establishing partnerships, recruiting staff and developing support systems, that were particularly evident in the early stages of the response.

In recent months, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, which was already dire, has further deteriorated, with winter having come and the systematic destruction of critical infrastructure by the Russian military. A notable development is a call⁷ from Ukraine’s Government for those who have left the country not to return until after winter. Public statements have also been made about the possible need to evacuate Kyiv, due to the destruction of its energy and water infrastructure. Ukraine’s Government reports⁸ that the country has lost 50% of its power production. On 19 November, the CEO of DTEK (Ukraine’s major energy company) stated⁹ that Ukrainians should consider leaving the country for at least for 3-4 months to help save energy. With continuing attacks on infrastructure, the situation is likely to deteriorate further.

⁵ https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Navigating_Ukrainian_dilemmas_in_the_Ukraine_crisis.pdf

⁶ Action Against Hunger, ActionAid, Age International, British Red Cross, CAFOD, Care, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision. Islamic Relief Worldwide and Tearfund will respond at a smaller scale with their own funds but will participate in DEC MEAL activities.

⁷ <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukrainian-refugees-should-not-return-in-winter-deputy-prime-minister.html>

⁸ <https://ukranews.com/en/news/896078-almost-50-of-ukraine-s-power-system-disabled-by-russian-missiles-shmyhal>

⁹ <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/11/19/694029/>

Another reason for a likely increased demand for humanitarian aid is related to liberation of Ukraine's regions in September-November 2022, especially parts of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Kherson regions. Firstly, people who lived under occupation are now encouraged by the Government to leave these areas for safer regions, because the liberated areas are now heavily shelled by the Russian military and continue to be mine-contaminated. These people will need continued assistance. Secondly, for those who remain, improved humanitarian access allows aid to be brought to the several hundred thousand residents of these areas who remain, and who are badly in need of assistance.

3. Who we heard from

A consistent effort was made to make sure that the right people are engaged in Real-Time Response (RTR), including:

- Affected population: Refugees from Ukraine, mainly women. In addition to being affected by the conflict, most respondents had other vulnerabilities, including disability, having children with disabilities or being elderly. We understand that in Moldova, affected people also include local nationals, but they were not directly consulted for the RTR.
- Local actors, including large national Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), community responders.
- Local authorities that engage in or coordinate humanitarian response for affected people.
- DEC Members. We were able to hear from all 4 Members operating in Moldova: Action Against Hunger (AAH), CARE International, Plan International UK and World Vision (WV).

To hear from them, we conducted remotely 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and held 8 Key Informant Discussions (KIDs).

FGDs were conducted with:

- FGD with affected people – 5 refugees from Ukraine, (4 women, 1 boy with disability).
- FGD with NGOs – local partners of DEC Members (7 participants: 2 men, 5 women, representing 5 organisations).
- FGD with DEC Members – 8 participants (4 men, 4 women), representing 4 Members. Participants included leadership of Members (based in the UK, other European countries and Ukraine), programme managers and MEAL specialists of DEC Members.

The Key Informant Discussions were held with:

- 1 refugee from Ukraine (1 woman).
- 5 representatives of three NGOs that were not able to join the FDG (2 men, 3 women).
- 2 representatives of local authorities in Chisinau and Balti areas where programmes of DEC Members are implemented (2 women).
- 1 representative of NGO that is non-DEC-partner (1 woman).
- 1 volunteer community responder of Ukrainian nationality not affiliated with DEC Members and local partners (1 woman).

Because of limited time and online format of the Review, the sample size for key groups of stakeholders, notably the refugees from Ukraine, was small. However, it still allowed for a good review and engagement of stakeholders in reflection about the humanitarian response provided in Moldova.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the Review, structured according to the 9 CHS commitments. The findings in this report present an overall view of the response in the country; they do not assess specific Members and their performances.

4.1. CHS1: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant

In Moldova, the response was found to be appropriate and relevant to affected people. Local organisations started their response in February to March 2022, mostly acting as volunteers, as they wanted to help immediately. They provided food items and helped with accommodation and first needs. Then their work became more 'organised,' especially when INGOs came and provided financial support and technical assistance.

DEC Members and local partners work with two groups of refugees from Ukraine; those who stay and those in transit, offering services to both on an intersectional basis, taking account of people's different vulnerabilities. DEC Members and local partners assess the needs of affected people and consult with them on their needs, and on modalities (cash, in-kind etc.), asking different groups to understand their differing perceptions. Other sources of data about the needs of affected people are reports on needs assessment by international organisations, updates from local authorities and by groups of refugees from Ukraine in Facebook.

These needs are reflected in the programming both in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Needs analysis is regularly updated and these updates are also reflected in programming. The Review heard that affected people are positive about the aid they receive. Specifically, they are happy with how their requests / needs for aid are processed. At the same time, with the start of winter and evolving situation in Moldova, responders (mostly Moldovan NGOs) have to stretch their resources to help not only refugees from Ukraine, but also Moldovan vulnerable groups (especially in terms of energy crisis).

A particularity of Moldova is that it is the only country in the Review where neither national Government nor local authorities provide social payments to affected people, therefore, humanitarian aid is the only source of support for refugees, on top of their own resources.

Certain local partners have adopted a child protection and vulnerable protection policies, and the staff were trained on these policies.

As martial law does not allow Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 to leave Ukraine, the refugees from Ukraine in Moldova are mostly women with children, with families being separated; therefore, family support, as a way to cope, is limited. Compared to Ukraine, when asked what helps them cope, affected people do not mention family as often as in Ukraine; therefore, the role of humanitarian aid in helping people cope is greater.

As about 18% of refugees from Ukraine in Moldova are older people, attempts are made to include specific needs of this part of the beneficiaries in the response. According to specific surveys, the vast majority (96%) of older people surveyed are experiencing conflict-related mental health issues, have severe income shortages, due to low pension levels and difficulty accessing payment points due to discriminatory attitudes and physical barriers, and spend the large part of their income in healthcare.

Recent attacks against Ukrainian energy infrastructure left many Moldovan residents without electricity for 12 hours or longer. Lack of gas and other sources of heating is also widely recognised as a problem, with the Government calling the residents to make stocks of firewood as a back-up option. The prices for heating materials have increased sharply, becoming a common vulnerability factor for Moldovan families and refugees.

Other common vulnerability factors are access to food, education (e.g., laptops for remote education), and access to jobs. Medical services and pharmaceuticals are also needed, since affected people are exhausted by long travels, stress and get sick. Some shortages are being felt in the pharmaceutical market in Moldova.

So far, DEC supports such multi-pronged aid, but it is important not to forget about the needs of affected people who are Moldovans.

4.2. CHS 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely

Overall, the Review found that the response has been effective and timely.

From the very start of the crisis, the response was provided by local NGOs and individual volunteers when affected people arrived in Moldova.

As of February 2022, only a few INGOs, including DEC Members, were present in Moldova. Others came later, but they brought critical resources. As one of key informant put it, “*humanitarian response in Moldova is 99% provided by national CSOs and 99% funded by international donors.*” Those who were present or managed to arrive early got a ‘competitive advantage’ in finding local staff and partnering up with local NGOs to deliver the response.

Certain DEC Members prioritised recruiting Moldovan staff, which is reasonable, because Moldova has a strong non-profit sector, and many professionals with necessary knowledge, skills and contacts are available. Hiring and training staff took some time, as did partnering up with local NGOs, joint development of project proposals and providing training to them.

There has been a significant change in numbers of affected people residing in Moldova: from 190,000 refugees in March 2022 to 80,000 in June to July 2022 (when most response projects started). The number of refugees is especially high in the districts neighbouring Ukraine but is also decreased from March to June 2022. Some affected people returned to Ukraine, some moved to more prosperous regions in Moldova or European countries. The number of refugees started to increase again after summer and especially after the attacks by the Russian military against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. Also, since over 600,000 refugees have entered Moldova since February 2022 in total, Moldova has been experiencing huge needs in terms of transit support. Local partners continue checking the situation of refugees on a monthly basis. Monthly updates help them assess the changes in the situation and to react accordingly.

The flexibility of the DEC Secretariat and Members enables the response to remain effective in terms of meeting evolving needs of people, and these needs will definitely continue to evolve.

Moldovan nationals are also affected by the crisis, both directly and indirectly. Attacks against energy infrastructure in Ukraine impacts on Moldova. Since Moldova used to import electricity from Ukraine and now this import is not possible, the Moldovan Government is considering power cuts in Moldova. As a response, local partners are considering buying generators (or even installing solar panels) for refugee centres/dormitories, schools in communities with high number of Ukrainian children study. Reprogramming the response (including in terms of budget) for buying such equipment as a matter of top priority could be an important and necessary step for phase 2 of DEC Response – it is highly likely that this need will there at least until April 2023.

Overall, affected people, DEC Members and local partners confirm that the DEC-funded response has been effective so far. Being able to adjust the response to rapidly and drastically evolving needs of affected people is a factor to sustain this effectiveness.

4.3. CHS 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

From the very onset of response, local partners are recognised as strong and effective in programming and delivery. As most local organisations had no specific experience in conflict-related humanitarian response, in the first months, it was difficult for them to understand that they lacked knowledge, for example on specific humanitarian principles.

Yet local organisations were able to quickly start their response activities on their own initiative and using their own resources. Later, they benefited from support from DEC Members. Specifically, the Members provided training in key principles, including safeguarding, child protection, Gender Based Violence (GBV), as well as on demand training (for example, on anti-trafficking). Periodically the Members assess where their partners need support. Local partners report having received enough training to do their job properly.

Local organisations work with several donors (including DEC Members) at the same time. In April to May 2022, there were so many INGOs who were looking for local partners in Moldova that local partners had 2 to 3 meetings a day with them. Sometimes Moldovan NGOs cannot remember which DEC Member is supporting them also because some of the money and coordination goes through Romanian NGOs.

Local partners are now experienced in humanitarian work, have wide contacts and good integration in the sector, including contacts with UN agencies and local donors. The DEC Members recognise that the skills and capacity of local partners to deliver the response are pretty much at the level of INGOs and can absorb and manage bigger budgets.

To capitalise on these benefits, the Members increasingly work with local partners on project design, implementation and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL). At the same time, it was highlighted during the Real-Time Review (RTR) that the DEC Members should engage more with local partners; this is seen as an area for improvement.

In Moldova, there is a debate between the urgency of response versus bureaucracy / visibility requirements and on prioritising the use of money. The perception of local partners is that they prioritise using money for local interventions, while DEC Members have a requirement for visibility and reporting. The Members explain the importance of visibility and reporting by the implications of integrity, transparency and further fundraising needs. The process to finding a good balance is still ongoing.

The Review heard of the huge amount of administrative and reporting work needed; sometimes donors, including some DEC Members, requested weekly reports / updates. This is a challenge that stretches the resources of local partners. The local partners report that they prioritise serving the needs of affected people over frequent reporting, highlighting that a 3-month reporting interval is optimal for them.

A good indicator of strengthened capacity of local organisations is that certain local organisations develop their own response strategies / action plans for 2023 and are now on the outlook for other donors to provide support. This also means that the Members should recognise the capacity of local partners to plan and to continue striving for a good balance between their own priorities and the priorities of local organisations, focusing on the needs of crisis affected population.

4.4. CHS 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback

DEC Members and local partners mostly ensure communication and participation with affected people through questionnaires about their needs. The Members in most cases communicate through local organisations as they have better access to affected people in the communities.

The Members recognise that needs assessment (their own and those done by the authorities and other agencies in Moldova) are a primary source of information for programming. Local authorities provide not only information about the needs of affected people, but also their contacts. A lot of good studies / assessments of needs are already available.

Participation and complaints and feedback mechanisms used by the Members and local partners are:

- Sharing questionnaires through Telegram and Viber groups. This works well because most Ukrainians have access to the Internet in Moldova.
- e-mail and phone number, suggestion boxes.
- Meetings with affected people during monitoring visits and consultations with affected people (see CHS 5 for more details).
- Ad hoc needs assessment and Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM).

The Members also have specific complaints and feedback mechanisms for people who cannot read or write, including oral conversations and a website adapted for visually impaired users. Possible improvements are making the mechanisms more 'tech friendly.'

In general, the Members and local partners encourage affected people to give feedback and to share their needs. During monitoring visits, they give affected people their contact information and ask them to share everything they want to share.

However, participation of affected people in decision-making by Members is still quite low. They interact with DEC Members and local partners individually and do not unite into groups / elect leaders among themselves to represent their interests. Also, consultations with affected people are done at the individual level, and feedback is collected from them individually. However, interaction between affected people in Moldova is very active. Therefore, such groups / networks could be used as a platform to facilitate their participation in programming and decision-making over the humanitarian response.

DEC Members try to strengthen capacity the local partners in terms of accountability to affected people, work on developing the indicators on such accountability. Other notable improvements that are currently developed by the Members include an appointment system that will ensure that word about available aid goes to all the affected people who are eligible and have not yet received support to self-identify, book an appointment for registration, and come to the registration centres. The appointment system will help ensure that flows of affected people are well-managed, reducing waiting time and thus improving their comfort and communication with the Members.

4.5. CHS 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed

As noted above, all DEC Members have complaints and feedback mechanisms (directly or through local partners), including phone numbers, e-mails, boxes, visits and direct interviews to collect complaints / feedback. Local partners also have (or are in the process of establishing) such mechanisms. Certain experienced local organisations had them in place before the response started, while others benefited from DEC Members training and support in developing and launching them.

However, these mechanisms are not always working as a source to collect complaints. During the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), affected people stated that they have nothing to complain about and are happy with the aid which is provided to them. However, the DEC Members and local partners may want to make sure that available tools are providing a safe space for affected people to share their feedback in a more convenient manner, so that affected people can still share complaints without worrying about any possible negative repercussions. Such space can be provided by regular conversations that aid workers have with affected people – in addition to the formal methods of asking the affected people to share their complaints / feedback.

Therefore, the Members and local partners could potentially reflect more on which complaints and feedback mechanisms are more appropriate and effective. Existing mechanisms, including hotlines, e-mails, boxes, site visits by donors may not be informative to collect complaints.

Similar to what was discussed with RTR stakeholders under CHS 4, more inclusivity in project design and decision-making may create more room for affected people to share complaints and / or feedback. Some initial steps have already been taken in this regard. For example, certain local partners have a practice of looking for affected people through liaison volunteers of Ukrainian nationality who stay within the communities of affected people and know everybody and everything there. These volunteers could be the bridges to affected people to

instigate their participation in programming of humanitarian aid and to collect complaints and feedback in situations when affected people only use existing feedback mechanisms to share positive feedback.

4.6. CHS 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

The coordination and complementarity of humanitarian response varies depending on the level. Also, DEC Members and local partners have different perspectives on the quality of coordination, with the Members being more positive and local partners being more critical about it, because local partners work more than the Members on local level where coordination is less effective than at the national level.

At the national level, coordination is generally strong. DEC Members and local partners coordinate through the Refugee Coordination Forum, with Government and with UN agencies (through Working Groups that are similar to Clusters in other countries). However, this Review was the first opportunity where the DEC Members in Moldova came together and met each other.

DEC Members have coordination meetings with other agencies, and with Government representatives and they use data and reporting from the Government / media for programming their interventions. Certain Members are co-leading the GBV and Child Protection Working Groups of the Refugee Coordination Forum and participate in the Roma protection Working Group. A deliberate effort is made to ensure good coordination and involve all relevant stakeholders, Government, social workers, other partners.

At regional / community level, coordination has room for improvement. While local partners have good contacts / networking with local authorities and other humanitarian organisations working locally, the Members do not have such contacts. For them, local partners are basically the only 'window' to regional / district / community level in Moldova. Cases were mentioned during the Review when representatives of two different DEC Members came on the same day to the same affected people in the same municipality for the site visit and learned about each other's visit only when already on-site.

Local partners were already participating in the coordination mechanisms, including the Ombudsman platform on human rights monitoring, before the response started. However, some of them still tend to question the added value of participation in coordination versus the effort required.

According to local partners, at the national level, a lot of coordination takes place – sometimes the partners feel that the coordination is excessive in terms of the number of resources they have to invest in it. Since Moldova is now affected by multiple crises (refugee crisis + energy crisis + other challenges), many response activities are running, and many coordination formats are there. Also, local partners claim that the Government has no vision (Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance) on the needs of refugees, and what resources are coming to Moldova. But at grass-roots level, very little coordination exists both between local responders, and between donors visiting such sites.

Coordination with municipalities depends on the municipality (how supportive they are, how many refugees they have, what services they can provide), with no general trend being observed. Still local partners opt for partnering up with local service providers, social service departments and NGOs. Departments provide lists of affected people, their contacts, their needs and advice on how local partners can make distribution. Such departments are recognised as a key element in the chain: if they are not proactive, affected people can be overlooked. Also, the lists of affected people, notably of refugees, provided by local authorities are often obsolete. Most of the refugees in these lists already left the municipalities and moved somewhere else, while the lists have not been updated in the last few months.

Thematic cooperation is stronger than regional cooperation, examples are coordination of providers of services related to GBV and child protection. Local partners can 'pool' the support they provide to affected people. Some providers provide cash / vouchers, others provide social, information or psychological services, targeting the same affected people. Information is shared between the responders about shelters, accommodation, emergency response.

For this, DEC Members and local partners try to establish and use referrals. They try to help people from the start to the end to monitor if the referred people received the service and if they were happy with it. They do referrals even to other countries, especially for specific medical services that may be unavailable in Moldova. Poor coordination at regional level hinders referral when providers do not know each other, but generally referral works well in Moldova.

A big issue highlighted by local partners is the lack of coordination platform between Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs / responders. First, Moldova is mostly a transit country, and many refugees return or periodically travel to Ukraine, or go to third countries. Second, many families of Ukrainian affected people are separated. Therefore, the need for coordination and cooperation between Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs is high. It is noted that coordination between Ukrainian and Romanian NGOs / responders is much stronger.

4.7. CHS 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

DEC Members and local partners have a strong commitment to learn. However, during the FGDs and KIDs the question on this issue appeared to be 'new' and 'not easy' for them.

DEC Members have robust MEAL systems and conduct own reviews. MEAL informs programming and specific approaches. For example, the appointment system for affected people to receive timely support. Their approach is learning by doing. They admit not having 'by-the-book' learning processes. They are trying to learn from local partners on how they implement projects, how they interact with other stakeholders, and to give them advice based on their observations.

Since local partners were engaged in the response before the Members started partnering with them, they are a good source of knowledge for the Members.

However, it is a two-way street. Local partners had their MEAL systems in place which was further strengthened by training and examples of MEAL policies provided by DEC Members, as well by understanding the importance of MEAL that was promoted by the Members. Some of them are also members of international networks, they learn and share experience within these networks.

The Members report that they see their job in supporting their partners in learning. Notably, the Members hire staff who will be able to support local partners if they have some learning gaps. In collaboration with the Members, local partners try to adjust certain things based on what they learn. For example, when they noticed that some awareness raising modalities were not working, they started using others.

When local partners have learning needs, they contact the Members, and the latter provide advice and guidance based on international standards and best practices. As experienced humanitarian INGOs, DEC Members have access to all these standards, databases and knowledge, they communicate with international experts and give their local partners the advice which is relevant to them.

However, there is an issue associated with how local partners learn from DEC Members. They benefit from the training provided by the Members, they learn from such international standards, best practices and guidance, but there is little learning from the experience of DEC Members, such as reviews and evaluation reports. Two reasons mentioned by local partners are: one, the Members (and other donors) do not share such learning products, and two, local organisations are not sure these learning report can teach them something they do not know.

Certain local organisations (partners of DEC Members) have capacity to provide training to other NGOs, for example on GBV and gender. Local partners claim that Moldovan NGOs now have the experience they can share with other countries: *"We used to learn from the others, but now we have experience to share. It's not only about Ukraine crisis, but also our response to pandemic, energy crisis, etc."* Certain local partners have a *"Donors*

should be educated attitude, in the sense that they feel that donors (by this they mean institutional donors, bilateral donors and INGOs) should know more about target groups of affected people, their needs, possible solutions.

Local partners also report that they can help translate the voice of Ukrainian people, to bring it to major donors, to decision-makers, for them to develop next programmatic interventions and avoid duplication.

More structured and regular experience sharing / learning between DEC Members and local partners on what they learned and how they learn would be helpful. In this regard, the commitment of certain Members to provide access to all of the information and lessons learned for all its partners is a good practice, as it will further improve their capacity during programme implementation.

Also, during the RTR it was noted that donors may be ready to have less control; for example, switch from 3-month to 6-month reporting, since local partners do demonstrate good capacity and integrity in programme implementation, and since frequent reporting is indeed exhausting.

4.8. CHS 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably

DEC Members have policies and provide support to staff (safeguarding, prevention of burnout, R&R leave). The policies of local partners on support to aid workers are based on the policies of their donors. They provide local partners with guidance, sometimes training / introduction / orientation. DEC Members provided two rounds of training on protection and safeguarding, and a third round is planned.

Support to community responders / aid workers is mostly provided by local partners. DEC Members give them indirect support costs for this, a good practice. Local partners are strong and have good capacity in the eyes of DEC Members.

DEC Members have policies in place and also encourage staff orally to take care of their own health and security. DEC Members try to hire Moldovan and Ukrainian staff for activities in Moldova, another good practice.

At the organisational level, local partners recognise the problem of burnout and have some experience with it (at least since the response to COVID-19). They are experienced on how to work with distressed people. They provide training and guidance to their staff, as well as induction training to new staff, and also facilitate peer support among their staff. They study policies of donors on prevention of burnout and develop their own policies (with support of DEC Members). Local partners provide training on prevention of burnout, self-care, personal welfare, safeguarding, on team building. Such trainings are organised by local partners directly and by DEC Members / other donors. Certain local partners also offer medical support for staff; medicines, physiotherapy, stress relief.

But at the individual level, staff of local partners tend to neglect the problem of burnout. The staff started feel chronic pain because of much work and stress, but they often do not have time for self-care, since they prioritise work.

Local partners recognise that they are very close to burnout, sometimes even there. The Ukraine refugee crisis is just one of the challenges that Moldovan NGOs are dealing with, so they are stretched. Staff have significant work overload. They try to discuss this problem internally, but the responders (staff of local partners at the individual level) often neglect to care for themselves, explaining that providing aid to affected people is their ultimate priority and so they have no time for self-care.

Therefore, a possible improvement could be developing and enforcing clear donor requirement that staff should have access and be encouraged to free psychological counselling, guaranteed annual and sick leave from the donor, and psychological supervision of staff working in the field.

4.9. CHS 9: Resources managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically

It is noted that while the RTR is not well suited to assessing this standard, all the stakeholders interviewed generally confirmed the efficiency, effectiveness and ethics of resource use.

A risk was flagged that more 'active' affected people may receive more aid than the others just because they are active, look for information more actively and request aid from different providers. In fact, few systems are in place to avoid duplication of humanitarian aid delivered in Moldova. Neither the Government nor humanitarian coordination Working Groups nor Refugee Coordination Forum established any systems to avoid duplication of humanitarian aid. This highlights the need for providers (including DEC Members and local partners) to increase coordination between themselves.

Local organisations managed to sensitise DEC Members coming to Moldova about the fact that vulnerable Moldovan people should be also supported within the framework of Ukraine response. Initially, the ratio of Ukrainians to Moldovans in these response programmes was about 70/30 or 60/40, but now, 9 months after the start of the crisis, it is closer to 50/50. Local partners praise DEC Members (unlike other donors) for their readiness to support both Ukrainian and Moldovan affected people and expect that this approach will continue.

5. Conclusions

The DEC Members and local partners welcomed the Real-Time Review (RTR) as a timely and important exercise.

While the response has been appropriate and relevant, the situation continues to evolve. Contingency planning, preparedness and further flexibility are necessary to ensure that the response continues to be appropriate and relevant.

A critical feature in Moldova that impacts on the effectiveness of the response is that the Ukrainian refugee crisis is not the only humanitarian challenge in Moldova. Certain groups of Moldovan nationals are also affected by the war in Ukraine; both directly and indirectly. This fact is now reflected in programming of DEC Members and this practice should continue.

Local partners are very strong, and their capacity was further strengthened by DEC Members. Two questions in this regard are:

- How DEC Members and the overall response in Moldova can capitalise on this?
- How the stakeholders in other Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA) countries can learn from it?

Decentralisation of decision-making, including localisation of support, is considered very possible in Moldova, because local partners are strong.

While DEC Members and local partners created mechanisms for participation and communication of affected people, they are not used to full capacity. Participation of affected people in programming mostly takes place through filling in the questionnaires about their needs and sometimes face-to-face meetings when donors arrive to project sites to collect feedback. The same is true for complaint handling. While all necessary mechanisms are there, affected people do not share complaints and negative feedback. DEC Members and local partners recognise the importance of more active and profound consultations with affected people, so that their voice is reflected in programme design.

Coordination and complementarity of response is stronger at the national level, where coordination with / within Refugee Coordination Forum, with Government and with UN agencies takes place. There is room for improvement at the local / grassroots level. Since the local partners work more at local / grassroots level, while the Members work more at the national level, they have different perspectives on the efficiency of coordination.

Systematic learning mechanisms are in place and both DEC Members and local partners have a commitment to learn. However, there is scope for improvement in sharing learning and to hearing from others learning efforts. DEC Members have mechanisms to support their staff and have helped local partners develop policies and build capacity for supporting their own staff. Being able to provide indirect support costs for local partners is important, notably when such money can be used for supporting aid workers. However, while at the organisational level local partners recognise the problem of exhaustion / burnout, at the individual level, staff do not prioritise it compared to providing aid to affected people.

Overall, the response is delivered well and in line with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) commitments. The most critical point for reflection, which is cross-cutting among numerous CHS is the tension between prioritising the needs of affected people at the operational level, on one hand, and reporting and visibility on the other hand.

Looking forward, as the crisis evolves, there is a need for contingency planning, even more flexibility and localisation of response.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations in this section are based on the findings and conclusion discussed above.

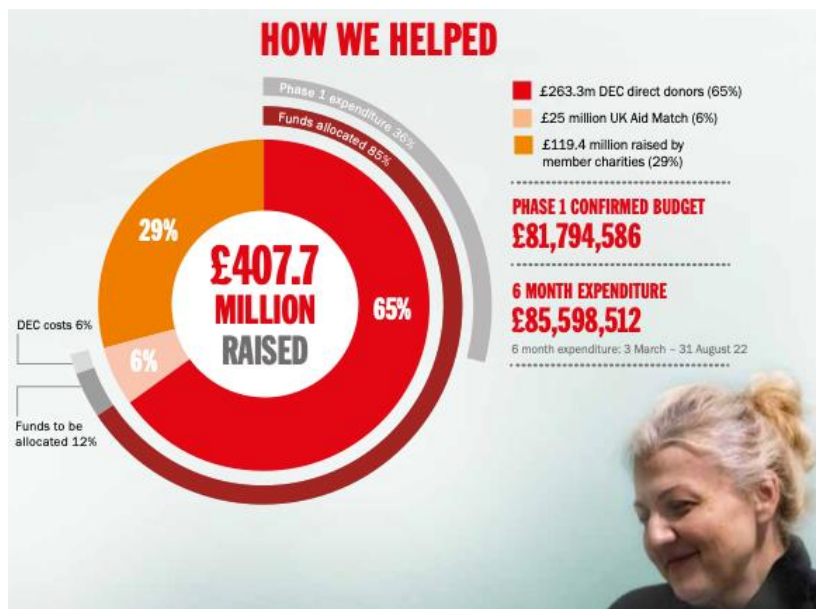
Keep, maintain and enhance the strong points of the response	Who
1. Working hard in difficult conditions, striving to meet the needs of people at risk in line with best practice.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
2. Conducting needs assessments and consultations with affected people to inform programming. Intensified consultations will be even more beneficial.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
3. Providing support not only to refugees from Ukrainian but also to Moldovans who have been affected by Ukrainian crisis or are vulnerable otherwise.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
4. The flexibility of DEC Secretariat and Members as a pre-requisite for effective response and look for ways to strengthen this flexibility even further.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
5. Probing new practices of reaching out to affected people, such as an appointment system for affected people to register for aid without waiting in the line. It is important to make sure that such a system is comfortable for all affected people whatever their vulnerability.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
6. Hiring Ukrainians and Moldovans as much as possible, as soon as they have necessary skills and capacity or can quickly learn them.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
7. Developing new practices of liaising with affected people to encourage their participation and collecting feedback from them, such as looking for affected people through volunteers among the refugee community – those who stay within the communities of affected people and know everybody there.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
Even better, develop further by:	Who
8. Continue working in Moldova in the second phase of Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA) response, since the affected people will be in need of further aid. Capitalise on good practices already in place.	<i>DEC Secretariat.</i>
9. Strengthen contingency planning by elaborating on different scenarios from business as usual to the influx of more refugees and a deteriorated energy crisis.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>

10. Consider using mechanisms for expedited procurement of energy generators for the centres / facilities frequented by affected people if the blackouts in Moldova become regular.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
11. Make the mechanisms for sharing / collecting feedback more diverse, so that every beneficiary has a choice of what mechanism to share feedback they can use – dropbox, questionnaires, hotline, QR code, website, Telegram, Viber and other groups in social networks, conversation with an aid worker or a representative of a monitoring mission, etc.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
12. Use groups / networks of refugees from Ukraine as platforms to facilitate their participation in programming and decision-making over humanitarian response.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
13. Seek complaints and feedback from affected people through informal leaders or groups of affected people; those affected people who have certain experience of civic activism, have good networks with other affected people and can act as a kind of intermediaries.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
14. Strengthen coordination between DEC Members operating in Moldova and seek opportunities for delivering as a team, so that the DEC response in Moldova is bigger than the sum of its parts. Specifically, strengthen practical organisational collaboration on things such as needs identification / assessment, staffing, shared research, useful partners and contacts.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
15. Recognise the capacity of local partners, notably the capacity to plan, and seek an improved balance between priorities of DEC Members and priorities of local organisations.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
16. Simplify reporting from local partners. Local partners have strong capacity to design, implement and monitor programmes and demonstrate a high level of integrity and efficiency.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
17. Ensure more structured and regular experience sharing / learning between DEC Members and local partners on what they learned and how they learn. Notably, strengthen the learning between the Members, on one side, and local partners, on other side.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
18. Develop and enforce clear requirement that staff of local partners, should have access and be encouraged to free psychological counselling, guaranteed annual and sick leaves, and psychological supervision	<i>DEC Members.</i>
19. Encourage staff, notably staff of local partners, to take care of themselves to be able to provide a response over the long-term, because the crisis will continue for long months or maybe even years	<i>DEC Members</i>
20. Improve national level coordination to avoid duplication of aid to affected people to make sure that no affected people are left behind, no matter how active they are in seeking aid. Learn from experience of Ukraine and other countries in this regard.	<i>DEC Members</i>
21. Establish a coordination platform between Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs / responders to exchange experience and jointly address humanitarian issues that cross the border.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members</i>

Annexes

7. Overview of DEC Response

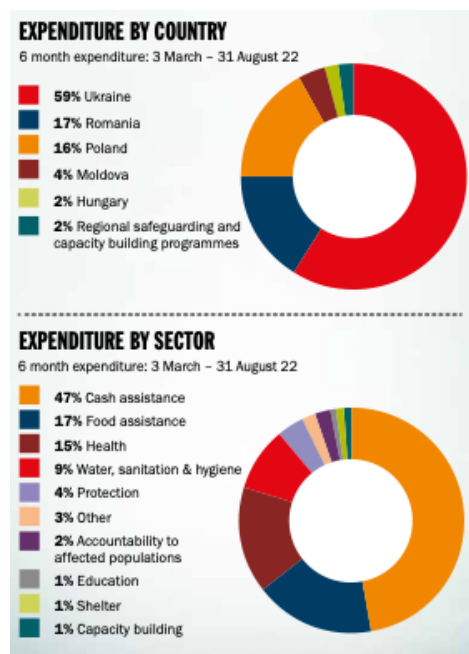
The charts and text below give a brief overview of the DEC Response¹⁰.



After weeks of escalating tensions, the conflict in Ukraine began in the early hours of 24 February 2022. Intense clashes and aerial attacks forced thousands of families to flee as their homes were destroyed and essential infrastructure such as water supplies, hospitals and schools were damaged.

Within a week, more than one million people had fled Ukraine and many more were displaced inside the country. Hundreds of thousands of people began to cross the borders into neighbouring countries, mostly women and children who arrived with only what they could carry. With the country on the brink of a humanitarian crisis, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched an appeal on 3 March 2022 for people affected by the conflict, including refugees, those displaced within Ukraine and people still in situ. 13 DEC Member charities are responding with DEC funds to the crisis in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Moldova and Hungary.

The conflict caused Europe's fastest growing displacement crisis since World War II. Nearly 13 million people fled their homes in less than two months – almost a third of the population. There has been widespread urban devastation and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Around 300 health facilities are in conflict areas and many health workers have been displaced or are unable to work. Almost half of Ukraine's pharmacies are thought to be closed. In April 2022, it was reported that 1.4 million people in Ukraine had no access to water, and another 4.6 million people had only limited access. By June 2022, 15.7 million people were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance; this figure rose to 17.7 million by October 2022.



¹⁰ From the DEC's 6 month report, March to August 2022.

8. Purpose and Scope of Review

8.1. Purpose

The primary purpose of the Real-Time Review is to instigate collective real-time reflection and learning to inform adjustments across DEC Members' responses. The Review draws on the initial phase of the response in order that lessons be applied in real-time and into the second phase of the Members' programmes. Recognising the lead role played by national and local actors in the crisis response to date, and the DEC's own commitments to strengthen localisation efforts, attention to how DEC Members are establishing and scaling up their responses in ways that are complementary to and reinforcing of local humanitarian action was an important part of the picture. The RTR serves an accountability function, both to communities and people affected by crisis¹¹, as well as to the UK public and other key supporters of the DEC appeal.

The Review aims to:

- Provide an overview and assessment of the response so far against the Core Humanitarian Standard commitments (CHS).
- Draw out key lessons, at operational level, that can inform real-time adjustments and be utilised during implementation of on-going DEC programmes.
- Highlight good practice in the humanitarian operations funded by the DEC.
- Where relevant, identify gaps, areas of unmet needs, and challenges to the humanitarian operations funded by the DEC, from both a sectoral and cross-cutting perspective.
- Inform the partnership approach of DEC Members (including their relationship with national and local partners).
- Explore the extent to which the implementation of the CHS contributes towards high quality and accountable programme plans.

8.2. Scope and limitations

The Review covered the humanitarian response in 5 countries, conducted by 13 Members and supported by the DEC Secretariat. For this, a total of 202 consultant-days¹² was available. In line with this and the scope of the humanitarian action, the Review included in-country fieldwork in Ukraine and Poland, remote missions for Romania and Moldova and a more limited remote mission for Hungary.¹³ Due to the breadth in scope and in line with the TOR, the Review focused on 'areas of enquiry most relevant and meaningful to them (DEC Members) as a collective.'

A limitation was the fact that not all DEC Members and local partners have physical presence in one location. Instead, their main offices are scattered around Ukraine and Europe, requiring their staff to regularly depart for travels, which due to security concerns, take a long time. Therefore, it was impossible to gather representatives of DEC Members operating in Ukraine and their local partners in one place, so online discussions were necessary. Furthermore, the busy schedules of stakeholders made it impossible for everyone to participate in the Review and prevented certain Members from delegating the same representatives for different discussions in the Review, which would have helped with consistency. In Ukraine, an additional limitation was the security situation, which limited travel within the country.

¹¹ In line with CHS commitment 7 "humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve".

¹² One consultant working for one day gives one consultant-day, a team of 4 working for 50 days gives 200 consultant-days.

¹³ Ukraine and Poland were chosen as this is where the majority of the affected people are, which has also translated into where DEC and its Members plan to spend the majority of funding – 54% in Ukraine and 20 % in Poland.

As the Review focused on what was heard from a wide range of stakeholders about the overall response, it was not generally feasible to disaggregate that part of the response funded by the DEC. Similarly, given the breadth of the Review, it was not practical to go into depth on the responses of any one Member. In this regard, it is noted that individual Members have been conducting their own reviews, and this review should be seen as complimentary to those.

9. Review Concepts and Approach

9.1. Concepts

Key aspects of the conceptual framework of the Review are outlined briefly below. These align closely with the concepts underpinning the Terms of Reference (TOR) and the DEC strategy.

Guided by TOR: The Review adhered closely to the key requirements of the TOR, noting, in particular, the requirement for *‘real-time reflection and learning to inform adjustments across DEC Members’ responses,* bearing in mind the DEC’s plans for Phase 2. It also provides a strong element of accountability, notably through its engagement with affected people and allowing another, independent, channel for their voices to be heard by the DEC.

Centred on affected people and communities, participation by humanitarian actors: The Review centred on the people and communities affected by the crisis. As illustrated in the simplified diagram below, the Review aimed to act as an independent channel for the voice of affected people to reach the DEC, complementing the current mechanisms through which the DEC hears their voices.

This centring on affected people aligns with the DEC Accountability Framework and the Grand Bargain commitment (No. 6) to a ‘Participation Revolution’. In line with this, the Review notes the work of Ground Truth Solutions (GTS), which the DEC has commissioned to ascertain the perceptions of people on the humanitarian response¹⁴.

The Review is informed by a ‘risk-informed approach,’ which seeks to understand how affected people cope with the risks they face, including considerations of the main hazards faced, and their capacities and vulnerabilities that affect their ability to manage their risks. This understanding is informed by an intersectional approach, noting how risk varies with characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, class and location.

In so doing, the Review explored how the humanitarian action is enhancing the agency of affected people and their communities, supporting their resilience and ‘doing no harm.’

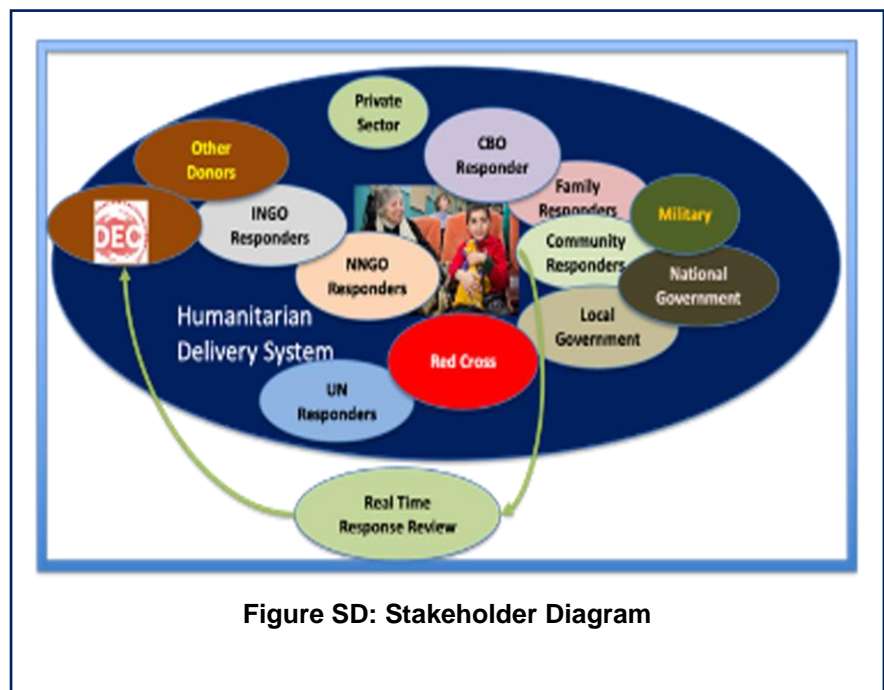


Figure SD: Stakeholder Diagram

¹⁴ <https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/projects/a-locally-informed-humanitarian-response-insights-from-ukraine>

Linking the above, noting the need to review how the affected people participate in decisions that affect them, the Review will ask how humanitarian actors engage with affected people and participate in their decisions and actions in managing their risks. In doing so it examined the role that DEC plays, and can play, in this complex set of relationships.

Engaging with the aid worker: Within the complex set of relationships that form the humanitarian system, the relationship between the aid worker¹⁵ and the affected people is key, as the aid worker is one of the main interfaces with affected people. As has been learned over decades, and as is reflected in Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) commitment No. 8, the competence of the aid workers is crucial to an effective response; this includes how the aid workers are recruited, trained, supported and released. Recognising this, and complementing the voice of affected people, the review sought to hear directly from and give voice to the aid workers on the ground.

The Review briefly examined the structure and architecture of the humanitarian system, noting in particular how it supports and builds local capacity in a spirit of partnership and the nature of coordination with local actors. In this examination, the role of DEC Members was explored, particularly in relation to their engagement with local actors and through them with affected people.

Learning and improving: It has long been recognised¹⁶ that learning is central to effective humanitarian action, bringing learning in from previous operations, sharing and supporting learning within an operation, and taking that learning out for other contexts. The Review examined how such learning was fostered within this operation and how lessons are identified and applied in practice to bring about improvements, including ‘are we doing things right, are we doing the right things?.’ In doing so, it notes that learning is a mutual, two-way process.

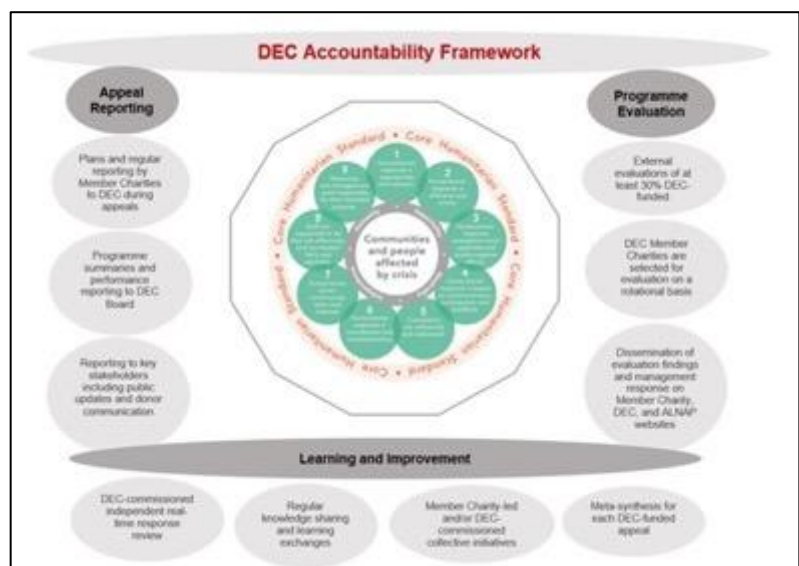
Truth to power: The consultants understand the need for an external, independent and professional source of information ready to ‘speak truth into power’ and acknowledge the full support of the DEC in this regard. It gives due regard to confidentiality, especially for key informants.

9.2. Approach and priorities

The Review was conducted in line with the DEC’s Accountability Framework (see below), noting the centrality of communities and people affected by the crisis, the Humanitarian Principles and the nine CHS commitments.

The nature of the Review was light-touch, qualitative and participative; it aimed to harvest and document real-time key learnings.

- Light, rapid and participatory.
- Use of appreciative inquiry (what is working well, how to improve, key challenges).
- A critical friend / sparring partner stance, promoting dialogue, constructive criticism and learning.
- Open and adaptive, learning within the review and adapting the review as needed.



¹⁵ In this context an ‘aid worker’ is anyone providing assistance or support to affected people, whether working informally or for an ‘official’ agency.

¹⁶ An example was the formation of ALNAP (the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance).

- Practical and realistic, recognising the human and logistical constraints involved in the response and the Review.
- Rigorous and evidence-based, as far as possible within the constraints of this Review.

The Review was concerned to learn was the response ‘doing the right things and doing them in the right way.’ Arising from the consultations and review in the inception phase, the following 5 priorities were identified to guide the Review:

- Are affected people at the centre and is their voice being heard and acted on?
- How healthy and functional is the relationship between DEC Members and local organisations (including Government): is the DEC engaging as well as it could?
- Are ‘frontline’ aid workers / volunteers / local groups being well supported in their work?
- Is the DEC and its Members able to respond quickly and well to rapidly changing circumstances, predicted (such as winter) and unpredicted (such as changes in the conduct of the conflict)?
- Is learning being promoted at all relevant levels (including DEC board level) through structures and processes that work and result in improved practice (both in Ukraine and elsewhere)?

10. Review Methodology and Deliverables

10.1. Methodology

A mix of methods and tools were used, and a wide variety of information sources were consulted to facilitate triangulation and verification of data. The mix was developed during the initial inception, during the country briefing workshops and adapted in line with the realities on the ground. The tools included:

- A focused review of secondary data, including key documents, agreed with the DEC¹⁷.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), semi-structured in nature.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).
- Observation, including onsite visits and attendance at operational meetings (where possible).
- Participatory analysis, incorporated in the FGDs.

The Review questions were developed to expand and better understand the implementation and performance of DEC funded programmes. A review matrix was developed during the inception phase and was used to inform the conduct of the review.

The phasing of the review is outlined and discussed briefly below:



¹⁷ Secondary data will also be obtained from Ground Truth Solutions (GTS), with whom CMC will coordinate throughout the assignment. CMC have contacted with GTS in the inception phase and are liaising with them, with support from DEC. CMC will explore how to utilise the data from GTS to inform the review and in particular to triangulate the findings from the qualitative data collected in the review. Additionally, during the inception phase the data collection tools will be informed by the initial findings of GTS, and CMC will make sure that there is complementarity.

Inception: During this phase, the team conducted a preliminary desk review, a range of inception interviews, drafted the inception report, held a participatory inception workshop, finalised the inception report and made the necessary logistical preparations for the field work.

Field work with debrief: The field work was conducted from late September into November 2022, starting with the in-person field missions to Ukraine and Poland, and followed by remote missions to Romania, Moldova and Hungary. The fieldwork involved a considerable amount of discussion between DEC Members and with others, so facilitating reflection and learning throughout the process.

Initial analysis and Aide Memoire: After the field work, an Aide Mémoire for each country was prepared and shared with the DEC Secretariat and through them with the DEC Members. This was to allow for early feedback to inform the design and implementation of Phase 2, in advance of the more formal country and synthesis reports.

During this phase, the initial findings, conclusion and tentative recommendations were presented and discussed at an online learning workshop held on Friday 4 November.

Data analysis and reporting: During this phase, the review team conducted further analysis of the data and drafted the country reports.

Reporting and Presentation: During this phase, drafts of the reports will be reviewed and discussed, and a final presentation made.

Reporting and Presentation

During this phase, drafts of the reports will be reviewed and discussed, and a final presentation made.

10.2. Deliverables

The deliverables are as follows:

Deliverable	Date
An inception report submitted to the DEC Secretariat and presented to Members as part of an inception meeting in London or online.	12 Sep 2022
Facilitation of the inception workshop sessions with DEC Members and their partners.	12 Sep 2022
Facilitation of in-country briefing workshops for DEC Members and partners.	3 Oct 2022
Contribute to DEC Members Humanitarian Directors' Meeting.	4 Oct 2022
Facilitation of in-country learning / debriefing workshops at close of field work phase.	17 Oct 2022
5 Aides Mémoire, one for each country, submitted after completion of field work.	End Oct 2022
Contribute to a DEC Membership and Accountability Committee Meeting.	3 Nov 2022
Contribution to a response wide learning workshop at the end of the field work.	4 Nov 2022
Five brief draft country reports (this report) and a draft Synthesis report.	Late Nov 2022
Presentation at debriefing meetings with DEC Secretariat and Members (and possibly FCDO) in London or online.	Early Dec 2022
Receive comments from DEC Members & Secretariat.	Late Dec 2022
Finalise the 5 country reports and synthesis report.	Early Jan 2023
Submit the final reports.	Late Jan 2023

It is noted that a key result of the real-time review is *collective real-time reflection and learning* on the part of the DEC Members, the Secretariat and local organisations. In addition to reports and other knowledge documents, this reflection and learning has been facilitated during the course of the review by the discussions at the interactive and participatory workshops listed above.

11. Reflections from the Real-Time Review (RTR)

11.1. Using the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)

These notes are provided to give some reflections on the use of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in the response and in the review itself. It is not intended as a comprehensive review, which is beyond the scope of this Real-Time Review (RTR).

For the Review: The CHS gives a useful framework for the Review and discussions. It helps keep discussions structured but is not too complicated.

For a full learning exercise, it would be a useful part of the package.

For supporting the response: DEC Members were familiar with it – so that is good.

In the view of the review team, it provides a useful framework for checking that the response is doing what it should be doing. However, it must be used as part of a package, alongside assessment (risk-informed approach), planning (the logical planning framework) and implementation methods (project cycle) and linked to a credible Theory of Change.

Suggested improvements:

- **CHS1 and 2** Amalgamate them – very hard to separate these in discussions or analysis.
- **CHS 4** – Review this to ensure participation is the right way around – that agencies recognise they are participating with affected people, local organisations and Government. There is still a strong (and understandable) tendency for aid workers to see 'participation' as meaning how 'beneficiaries' participate in the response, rather than how agencies participate with affected people. Review wording in light of the proposed principle set out below.
- **CHS 8:** This needs strengthening, for example "Policies are in place, are implemented in practice and regularly reviewed" for the various items.

Statement of principle: 'our rights respected and risks managed': *We, the people affected by disaster, assert our right to assistance that helps ensure our rights are respected and that supports us in managing the risks we face and in coping and developing as communities and individuals. Such assistance will be based on a sound assessment of the hazards we face, respect for our capacities as well as our needs and will be designed and provided in a framework that is people-centred and community-led, with appropriate external agency participation, and which enhances our resilience to future risks.*

As affected people, we have a right to participate in the governance of the assistance provided by external actors, by having meaningful representation in oversight and governance mechanisms.

A key competency of external actors and their staff shall be their ability to engage with us as affected people, with competence and respect. Their selection, preparation and training shall include this aspect.

11.2. Learning about learning

Good responses are supported by good learning and a RTR can be one useful component of the learning support package, alongside others. DEC as a collective is well placed to support this process, and perhaps even to extend it, seeing it as an 'investment not a cost.'

In looking at what constitutes a learning support package for a response, the following points may be considered.

Firstly, a useful question to guide the design of the learning is: *What do we need to learn and how can we best meet the learning needs of the organisation as well as groups of individuals within the organisation?*¹⁸

Theory of Change for learning: In current parlance, work with an evidence-based theory of change that supports effective learning, at all relevant levels, including individual, organisational and institutional.

Agree on the key metric for effective learning, proposed as an improvement in practice (not simply more knowledge).

Who needs to learn?

- Affected People, the starting point: what do we (affected people) need to know and learn in order to cope with our situation?

¹⁸ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/from-real-time-evaluation-to-real-time-learning>

- Individual aid workers (MASKS¹⁹, Technical & Operational Competence including Welfare).
- Country team and operations (MEAL, the Project Cycle, Systematic Induction and Briefing of staff).
- DEC Members: from board to field worker, linking to organisational capacity, recognising key drivers of learning.
- Between Members – supporting collective learning.
- DEC Secretariat – including as a facilitator.
- DEC Board – strategic lessons to be learned, including monitoring the learning process itself.
- Broader humanitarian community, recognising the convening and advocacy potential of the DEC.

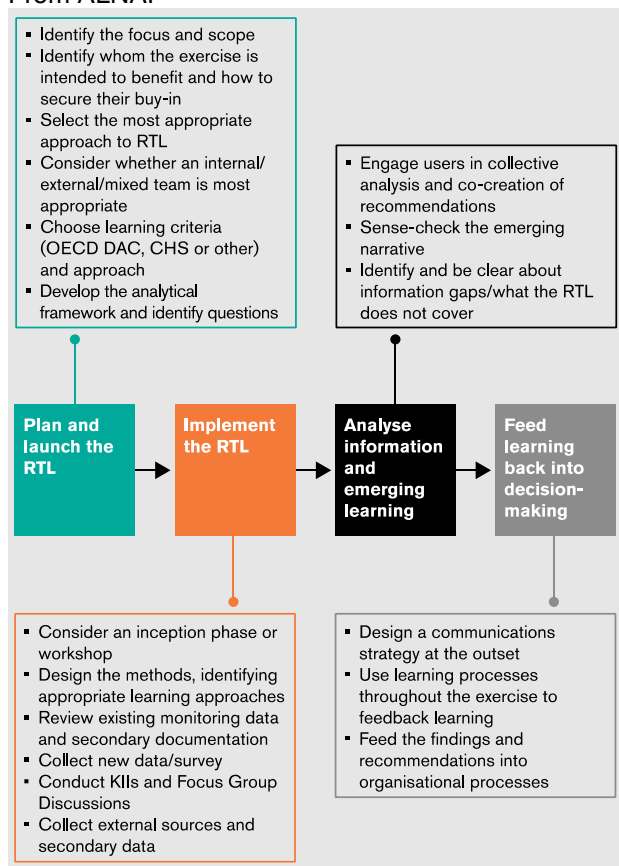
Cycle of learning: Consider the full cycle of learning:

- Before: Bringing learning in from previous experiences.
- During: Sharing learning around and developing learning.
- After: Taking learning out and incorporating into practice, using policies, procedures and support.

Learning Process: At the DEC level, provide for linking current learning exercises to learning from previous exercises, including reviews and/or evaluations by the DEC, and taking on board external sources of good practice (e.g. ALNAP, see below). As part of this process, check how previous learning has been incorporated by the DEC (at board, Secretariat, and Member level).

During a crisis look at how learning is supported, developed and shared during the course of the crisis, at all levels. Consider developing a simple mechanism to support further learning between DEC Members, including regular exchanges and sharing of key information (such as learning from Member reviews).

From ALNAP²⁰



¹⁹ Motivation, Attitude, Skills, Knowledge and Support - elements of competence

²⁰ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/from-real-time-evaluation-to-real-time-learning>

11.3. Real-Time Review (RTR) Process

The RTR was appreciated by all the stakeholders. In addition to being seen as good practice, it also gave them a forum to feed back to the DEC through an independent channel. This is also an important point for DEC governance. The emphasis on collective reflection and learning was well judged.

How can this process itself be improved?

- Results focus: clarify the desired learning result (e.g. improvement in practice).
- Strengthen the focus on learning, reduce that on evaluation. Review the language used in the TOR.
- Keep: light-touch, rapid, qualitative, participative.
- Enhance: Participatory nature with a focus on real-time learning during the review e.g. emphasise in-country learning workshops. Note the action taken on the proposal for coordination between DEC Member.
- Timing – Consider starting earlier in the response; start commissioning process as soon as possible after appeal is launched, use 'light touch reporting' even more, participatory workshops and Aides Mémoire.
- Duration – Run the RTR in parallel with the response, not just as a 'one-off' review.
- Framework: Clarify from the start that the CHS is to be used as the basic framework for the review
- Scope: Encourage a more strategic 'whole of the response' approach, including initial decision to launch, the allocation of funds and the engagement by DEC Members. Link to overall DEC learning process, 'before and after' (see below). Avoid going into low-level operational detail at Member level.
- Reporting: Reduce the amount and time involved, use the Aide Memoire format for country reports and one synthesis report.