



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

Ukraine Country Report
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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*).

CHS1 - Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant: The Review found that the response has been appropriate and relevant. Noting that in the early days and quite understandably, the response was somewhat disorganised, as it progressed, and with support from international organisations such as the DEC Members, it became more structured. A positive point is the flexibility of DEC funding. Looking forward, there is a need to ensure that Members continue with good practice, such as contingency planning, to ensure the response adapts to the changing context (winter and conflict).

CHS 2 - Humanitarian response is effective and timely: The initial response, mainly conducted by local organisations, community groups and individuals, was timely. Most, but not all, DEC Members had not got a presence on the ground and took time to develop their response. Those who had a presence were able to respond more quickly. The effectiveness of the response was helped by good coordination with national and local Government, with concerted efforts to reach all those in need. The preferred response modality was cash, noting that this was complemented by in-kind assistance and services where needed.

CHS 3 - Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects: The Review found that DEC Members has strengthened local capacities, and especially of their local partners. The DEC Members developed good relationships with local organisations, and navigated well some of the challenges involved, such as how to apply humanitarian principles and reporting requirements. Local partners valued the support provided, the flexibility and willingness to engage with innovative approaches. An issue that needs further attention is the allocation of funds to local organisations.

CHS 4 - Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation, and feedback: The Review found that the Members have made significant efforts to ensure that the response has been guided by communication, participation and feedback. Much of this has been through Government, local partners and community groups. There is an issue of how affected people can actually participate, partly because of their situation and their lack of prior experience in participatory processes. An area for attention is the harmonisation of communication with affected people, to ensure all have access to the information they need in an appropriate format.

CHS 5 - Complaints are welcomed and addressed: Mechanisms have been set up to collect complaints and feedback and some have attracted much feedback. However, it was noted that most affected people are not used

to, and may be wary of, providing complaints and feedback. There may be scope to use local leaders as channels for this feedback. The review also noted the value of the findings of Ground Truth Solutions¹.

CHS 6 - Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary: Coordination is seen to be good at the national level, amongst the international humanitarian agencies and larger local organisations who engage well in the Cluster system. Coordination is also seen to be good at local level, notably with local authorities. However, there is room for further improvement in engaging many local organisations / Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the coordination system. A challenge was noted in the management of referrals, to ensure that people do not get lost in the system. It was noted that there is scope for DEC Members to coordinate better with each other, to maximise the added value of DEC funding, whilst complementing existing coordination structures.

CHS 7 - Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve: The Review found a solid pattern of continuous leaning and improvement. This ranged from the formal use of MEAL systems, the provision of training and capacity strengthening by DEC Members in humanitarian principles and practice (such as needs assessment and Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)). Local organisations appreciate the learning support from international organisations (learning from others), and especially DEC Members, and have actively engaged in learning from their own experience. There is scope to enhance the sharing of learning between DEC Members, such as sharing key findings from their own individual agency reviews.

CHS 8 - Staff are supported to do their job effectively and are treated fairly and equitably: It was noted that DEC Members have good policies in this area and have made considerable efforts in practice. As was noted above, Members have invested in training, capacity strengthening and learning support. However, there is still considerable room for improvement in the actual implementation of good practice, especially with local organisations and community responders, notably on managing excessive workload and burnout.

CH 9 - Resources are managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically: The DEC Members have long experience in this area, and it was noted that they brought this to bear in Ukraine in a variety of ways, such as the commitment to coordination, the support for capacity strengthening and learning. One suggestion to improve the utilisation of resources was the establishment of a local mechanism to directly provide funding and support to smaller local organisations.

Summary of conclusions: The Review concludes that the DEC Members are doing a good job in difficult circumstances, including developing good relationships with local organisations. There is a strong commitment to engaging with affected people, noting that there are practical challenges here. The flexibility of DEC funding is highly appreciated. While it took some time for most DEC Members to ramp up their response, they are now generally up to speed. The main response modality is cash, complemented by others, in discussion with local partners and affected people. The commitment to and implementation of learning has been good, especially between DEC Members and local partners, noting there is scope to improve the sharing of learning between DEC Members. An area for further development is the funding of smaller local organisations. In view of the rapidly changing situation (winter and conflict), there is a need to ensure that humanitarian assistance continues to evolve to meet changing needs, supported by good practice such as contingency planning and regular risk assessments.

¹ <https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/projects/a-locally-informed-humanitarian-response-insights-from-ukraine>

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. The review and this report

This is the Country Report for Ukraine 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 Poland, Romania, Moldova, 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 crisis², 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 countries³.

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 countries⁴, out of which around 1.5 million are registered in Poland⁵.

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

² In line with CHS commitment 7 "humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve".

³ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>

⁴ Ukraine Situation Flash Update #33 (21 October 2022).

⁵ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10781?secret=unhcrrestricted>

Ukrainians. The UN humanitarian flash appeal for Ukraine is one of the biggest and most generously funded ever⁶. 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 Charities⁷ 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 call⁸ 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 reports⁹ that the country has lost 50% of its power production. On 19 November, the CEO of DTEK (Ukraine’s major energy company) stated¹⁰ 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.

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

⁶ https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Navigating_Ukrainian_dilemmas_in_the_Ukraine_crisis.pdf

⁷ 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.

⁸ <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukrainian-refugees-should-not-return-in-winter-deputy-prime-minister.html>

⁹ <https://ukranews.com/en/news/896078-almost-50-of-ukraine-s-power-system-disabled-by-russian-missiles-shmyhal>

¹⁰ <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/11/19/694029/>

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.

Who we heard from and how: The review team made a deliberate and consistent effort to hear from the right people, including:

- Affected population: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and residents of conflict-affected areas, mainly women. In addition to being affected by the conflict, most respondents had other vulnerabilities, including disability, having children with disabilities or being elderly. Including these, helped apply the principle of intersectionality and a risk-informed approach throughout the review.
- Local actors, including large national agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), community responders.
- Local authorities that engage in or coordinate humanitarian response for affected people.
- Private business that provides humanitarian aid to affected people.
- DEC Members. We were able to hear from 11 Members of 13 operating in Ukraine: Action Against Hunger (AAH), ActionAid (AA), Age International, British Red Cross (BRC), CAFOD, CARE International, Christian Aid (CA), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam, Save the Children (SCI) and World Vision (WV).

To hear from them, we conducted four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and held 26 Key Informant Discussions (KIDs). FGDs were conducted with:

- FGD with affected people – 6 IDPs in Lviv, (2 men, 4 women), including a man with disability, an elderly woman and a woman with 3 children (families with many children are considered as vulnerable individuals of social support in Ukraine). Gender mix in the group did not create any barriers for the participants, men and women were equally vocal, and every participant answered every question asked during the FGD.
- FGD with NGOs – local partners of affected agencies (9 participants: 2 men, 7 women, representing 6 organisations),
- FGD with NGOs and other responders that are non-DEC partners (4 participants: 2 men, 2 women),
- FGD with DEC Members – 8 participants (4 men, 4 women), representing 6 Members. Participants included leadership of Members (based in the UK, other European countries and Ukraine), programme managers and MEAL specialists of DEC Members.

Another 5 Members were heard from through 5 KIDs, because they were not able to participate in the FGD due to conflicting schedules.

Other KIDs allowed to hear from:

- 5 residents of de-occupied districts of Kyiv region – affected people (1 man, 4 women).
- 4 affected people (IDPs) in Lviv (4 women).
- 4 community responders in Kyiv area and Lviv (1 man, 3 women).
- 4 representatives of local partners (1 man, 3 women).
- 1 representative of NGO that is non-DEC-partner (1 man).

- 2 representatives of local authorities in Vinnytsia and Kyiv area where programmes of DEC Members are implemented (2 women).
- 1 representative of a private business that provides humanitarian aid to affected people.

This wide and representative sample allowed for comprehensive review and engaging all groups of stakeholders into reflection about humanitarian response provided in Ukraine.

3. Findings – what we heard

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.

3.1. CHS1: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant

The Review found that the response by DEC Members is, and always has been relevant to affected people including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and those in conflict-affected areas. This was partly because the response was well planned to be appropriate and relevant, noting that this involved adjustments to some original elements in response to feedback. It was also partly because the needs of affected people are so diverse and large that every type of humanitarian aid coming to them helps meet their needs. According to DEC Members and local partners, during their consultations with affected people they confirmed that the response was mostly relevant to different groups of people, including men and women, the elderly, youth, children, people with disabilities, people in urban and rural settlements. However, certain limitations – of which DEC Members and local partners are aware – include somewhat limited access of rural residents and the elderly to digital communication about available aid. This finding was corroborated during the Focal Group Discussion (FGD) with affected people.

In the initial days after the onset of the humanitarian crisis, the distribution of aid was somewhat chaotic. The responders were mostly volunteers or informal voluntary groups, including NGOs, community responders, regular individuals – who quickly ‘self-mobilised’ and began to organise humanitarian aid and communicate with affected people.

The two most common groups of affected people were:

- IDPs: arriving to the new city by train, having to leave at very short notice with few belongings. On arrival, feeling confused, having little access to information, but needing practically everything – from shelter and food to psychological support and toothbrushes.
- People staying on or next to conflict-affected areas: they experienced a sharp deficit of food, hygiene items and other commodities, the destruction of housing and utility supplies, disruption of education and other services, need to provide care for their children, elderly relatives and relatives with disabilities, accompanied by a need for psychological support.

The needs of affected people far exceeded what could be provided by the responders. Therefore, everything they offered was in some way relevant and appropriate to affected people.

Regular needs analysis started later. Certain attempts to analyse needs of affected people were made by the authorities and bigger NGOs, but later, when DEC Members and other international NGOs arrived (see CHS 2), needs assessment became a more institutionalised practice.

Since then, DEC Members have been basing their response / programming on the findings of needs analysis. DEC Members conduct needs assessments in different ways: a) directly – through field visits, b) through local partners, iii) through Government authorities. Needs analysis informs the response and is regularly updated and reflected in programming – it is the case both for Phase 1 and Phase 2 (re)programming.

The Members are happy about the flexibility of DEC funding and how it is administered by the DEC Secretariat, as it gives them space for manoeuvre.

In the wider humanitarian context, there has been a debate around the promptness of humanitarian aid delivery versus in-depth needs assessment that informs the response, with Vice Prime Minister in charge even calling in November 2022 not “to drown in endless needs assessments.”¹¹ At the same time, all the stakeholders surveyed (DEC Members, local partners, affected people) confirmed that DEC-funded response has a good balance of needs assessment and actual delivery of aid.

At the same time, with winter approaching and a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation it was noted that it is important to learn from the experience of humanitarian responders (DEC Members and local partners) in anticipating and responding to needs. Comments were made that affected people do not have the experience of organising life in dire humanitarian conditions and may not have the time or capacity to formulate their future needs.

Therefore, in a rapidly evolving situation with new and changing risks, it was felt that the programming of future responses should go beyond a current needs assessment and be guided by an assessment of risk, for various possible scenarios, this assessment to be conducted by aid agencies in conjunction with affected people.

The evolving situation also affects the modalities of aid delivery (specifically, cash or in-kind). While at the initial stage of response distribution of essential items such as food was a priority, already in April the affected people stated that cash Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) was more convenient for them. The DEC Members and local partners responded to this and carefully combined cash, distribution of essential items and other types of aid (services such as MHPSS, legal, information assistance). However, with recent damage to electricity infrastructure, affected people started to increasingly need energy generators, boilers, heaters, wood and other means to provide heating and electricity, and Ukraine’s market has a deficit of these items (for example, when one wants to buy a power generator for cash, they should order it and then wait for about a month for the generator to be brought to Ukraine). This illustrates how the DEC Members can capitalise on their funding flexibility to quickly adapt their aid modalities to the evolving context.

3.2. CHS 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely

Most, but not all, INGOs (including DEC Members) were not present in Ukraine as the crisis developed in late February 2022 and this affected the speed of their response. Establishing offices, hiring staff, finding contacts with local partners, providing training and support, conducting needs assessments (or collecting findings of such assessments conducted by other stakeholders) and planning programmes also took some time. Those Members who were present were able to respond much more quickly.

Therefore, affected people did not receive aid from most INGOs until April 2022. This is understandable as INGOs without a local presence, including some DEC Members, needed time to mobilise, plan and implement the response; an important point to consider when allocating resources to best effect.

The efforts of the Ukrainian Government, national NGOs, community responders and volunteers, as well as UN agencies helped meet some of the needs of affected people. However, the added value of INGOs, especially of DEC Members, was that they strengthened the integration of humanitarian standards and best practices,

¹¹ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/irina-vereshchuk-do-mizhnarodnih-gumanitarnih-organizacij-sprostiti-proceduri-i-trimati-fokus-na-klyuchovih-rechah>

including the principle of neutrality / impartiality, risks-informed approach, human rights-based approach, support to aid workers, culture of learning, in the overall response.

When it comes to effectiveness of the response, an important factor is that affected people receive aid from different sources and cannot distinguish that which is funded by DEC from that funded by others. This makes it difficult to assess the perspectives of affected people on the effectiveness of DEC-funded aid. As an approximation, the effectiveness can be assessed from the perspective of the DEC Members and their local partners. Generally, according to discussions with DEC Members and local partners, the DEC-funded response has been effective. In terms of modalities, DEC Members (with some consultations with local partners and based on findings of needs assessments) made informed decisions on selecting modalities that would be most appropriate to the context, the needs of affected people, as well as projected changes in both.

For most DEC Members, the modality is mostly Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), complemented by in-kind assistance. In western regions, they provide aid in collective centres, which was appropriate to the context. In eastern Ukraine in spring and early summer 2022, since markets were not working well, more in-kind assistance was provided. MPCA is the more common modality and was recognised by affected people as the most appropriate modality throughout spring to autumn 2022. The DEC Members use selection criteria for MPCA target populations – these should be IDPs and people in conflict areas having certain vulnerabilities (many children, disability, children with disability, etc.). The DEC Members made efforts to reach the most affected communities.

The DEC Members and local partners have also explored opportunities to complement what other agencies are doing in terms of humanitarian support, including cash, winterisation, etc. The stakeholders recognise that with winter coming, MPCA may not be the optimal modality because relevant materials such as fuel, heaters, energy generators are not available in the market.

Also, DEC Members and local partners regularly conduct monitoring visits to check the appropriateness and relevance of their response and adapt from what they learn.

The Members also recognise that since MPCA as a technical activity was probably difficult to implement for their local partners who had no prior humanitarian experience, they started with in-kind assistance. It was easier to effectively learn and implement and was appropriate at first. But then the decision was made to move to MPCA as a more universal modality that ensures effectiveness of response. This illustrates the importance of flexibility in programming, adapting to changing needs, context and the capacity of partners.

Looking forward, the Review noted concerns that winter-related support comes without delay (see discussion above under CHS 1).

Local partners have expectations for a significant expansion of the humanitarian programmes. Some say that they need 5 times more money than they have now (from the DEC response) to cover the needs of affected people. Others expect that Phase 2 will bring at least 4 times more aid than Phase 1. Also, they say that they are ready for and would benefit from longer-term programming and from being engaged in response design from the very start.

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

The Review found that the DEC response has been very instrumental in strengthening local capacities, especially the capacities of local partners of the Members.

In the eyes of local partners, especially compared to other donors, DEC Members are seen to be very flexible and supportive to staff, in programming, and reporting. DEC Members were also praised for having less bureaucracy (compare to other donors) and listening to local partners concerns and challenges. Generally, the DEC

Members and their local partners have good relationships and are committed to addressing any issues that may arise between them in a prompt, constructive and mutually beneficial manner.

According to discussions with DEC Members, most of local organisations were not humanitarian actors, therefore, the issue of humanitarian principles arose, noting that the principles of impartiality and neutrality could be challenging for some local organisations, mostly with regards to occupied territories. Since local organisations associate themselves with Ukrainian people and Ukrainian side to the conflict, it took certain time for them to embrace the principles of impartiality and neutrality and use them as a ground rule for the response.

In terms of technical capacity, at the onset of the humanitarian crisis, most local organisations had little experience in humanitarian response and many NGOs across the region had little or no prior MPCA experience.

DEC Members provided tremendous support and training to local partners to help them abide by humanitarian standards. Certain Members report having provided more support to local partners than initially anticipated in their programming. In terms of reporting and data collection, they also supported local partners and took effort to create harmonised tools to collect as much disaggregated data on affected people as possible.

Local partners confirm that they welcomed and benefited from DEC Members support. While training and helping local partners develop policies and procedures was a priority during Phase 1 – and was mostly successfully implemented – local partners still have learning needs and DEC Members are reacting accordingly.

Outside of the DEC environment, there is a debate within local organisations between the urgent need to respond and the need for training and capacity strengthening for responders. Certain local NGOs (non-partners of DEC Members) have complained about heavy bureaucracy on part of INGOs and about capacity strengthening initiatives being unconstructive. However, during the Key Informant Discussions (KIDs) and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), local partners mostly praised the Members for their approach to capacity strengthening / capacity exchange. At the same time, certain local partners confirmed that they have already good capacity and can manage bigger budgets.

The Members and local partners recognise that because of the specific context of the Ukrainian crisis, local agencies have some power to push back (against INGOs patronising them). Eventually, as the DEC response progressed, the Members and local partners seem to have found a good balance and have developed good relationships.

In terms of funding, both DEC Members and local partners reported that the allocation of funds to local partners is not optimal and needs to be addressed. The Members are exploring about how they can engage even more effectively with local partners, involve them more in decision-making and how to provide a bigger share of money, whilst making sure that the delivery chain is working efficiently. One idea being discussed and explored by DEC Members is about creating a DEC supported 'response fund' that can directly allocate funds to local partners, with suitable oversight by the DEC, such as Membership of the board (see CHS 9 for more details).

In terms of reporting requirements, local partners recognise DEC Members as friendly and quite flexible donors. Certain Members moved from monthly to bi-monthly or quarterly reporting which decreased the reporting burden of local partners. This was seen as a good practice that is worth continuing and sharing.

Certain Members allocate unrestricted funding with no strings attached. They also provide institutional support, but with that, more reporting was required. Recognising it as an issue, the Members are trying to navigate it with the partners, but no final solutions were available at the time of the Review. What is commendable is that the Members are always on the outlook for improving their already quite healthy relationships with local partners.

Limited funding, lack of long-term programming and the need for earlier engagement into the response design were the main issues where local partners were critical of the DEC response. Local partners would like to be part of the decision-making process from the beginning of the response, since they have been providing aid from the very onset of the conflict, and they have been in contact with affected people since then and know their needs.

Finally, local partners report that DEC Members (in contrast to some other donors) support innovative approaches. A good example is providing support for community-driven humanitarian initiatives, where local partners were supported in piloting and then adopting more widely. These approaches increase ownership and capacity of local communities, because it is about: a) longer-term support; b) joint ownership, c) allowing people to better plan their lives and develop their coping mechanisms, d) promoting among local communities' better self-esteem and trust in collective aid. Local partners (through DEC funding) can support any initiative that a local community considers important – from cleaning up wells to procuring medical equipment.

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

Communication and participation with affected people are areas where theoretically, there is a scope for improvement. Such improvements should consider the overall context, the situation and habits of affected people as explained below.

So far, communication and participation with affected people was mostly organised through questionnaires about their needs. Also, certain Members especially those who are not physically present in Ukraine learn about the needs of affected people through Ministry of Social Policy, regional administrations, and community authorities. Information about their needs is also received through local partners, many of them are church networks, frontline and IDP hosting communities.

For most Members the communication and participation with affected people is not direct; instead, they rely on local partners. In this context, while most partners were new to humanitarian activities and programming, DEC Members made considerable efforts (provided training, helped develop procedures) to make sure that local partners follow good practice (as in the CHS) in engaging with affected people.

Local partners advertise aid in social networks, by placing posters in frequented places and through lists of contacts from local authorities. Then affected people spread this information by word of mouth.

Both DEC Members and local partners agree that engagement with affected people is very strong – all mechanisms for that are available, regularly used, monitored, and updated. The Members and local partners learn about the emerging needs, do risk assessments, try to be the point of first contact (offer all types of assistance to affected people whom they reach out to) and refer affected people to other providers where appropriate.

However, it is noted that affected people do not demonstrate a high participation in the feedback assessments conducted by local partners and DEC Members. In most cases, they act only as receivers of aid and do not try to influence decision-making about the modalities of humanitarian aid delivery. Part of the explanation may be that many affected people have not had to think deeply about how the important decisions affecting their life are made, let alone trying to influence these decisions.

In discussions with affected people on how they cope with their situation, the Review found that affected people do not list international humanitarian assistance among the top coping mechanisms. Some of the coping methods mentioned include support from Government, communication with family and friends, going for sports, religion, taking care of children, etc. This does not mean that they do not need such assistance; it may be simply that it is one of many ways in which they cope. General perception of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine is positive, and its importance is recognized by Ukrainian people. For example, in a December 2022 public opinion poll, 37% respondents named humanitarian aid an important life-saving factor for affected people¹². This has an important implication for DEC Members: continuing to have and develop a clear understanding of what mechanisms people

¹² https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/v_dbudova_ukra_ni_ta_m_zhnarodna_dopomoga_20-21_listopada_2022.html

use to cope and seeking to complement them, especially as the situation evolves; an inherent part of the risk-informed approach¹³.

The FGDs show that many affected people are extremely stressed because of displacement, loss of housing and livelihoods, sometimes loss of their family members and friends, air raid sirens, shelling, blackouts, and other factors. It is difficult for them to look for available aid, wait in long lines, do the paperwork (which, according to many affected people, they must do too often) make the applications for aid and then wait for 2-3 months in uncertainty. In addition, affected people interviewed living in rural areas report that they have limited access to information and do not know where to look for aid.

However, affected people who had prior experience of being involved in participatory processes and civic action (e.g., Members of NGOs or interest groups, Members of advisory councils under local authorities, civic activists, etc.) report that it is relatively easy for them to navigate all the procedures related to applying for and receiving humanitarian aid, either because of their prior experience, or because they know the system 'from the inside.' This underlines the need for the humanitarian community to continue to be vigilant in establishing welcoming and friendly communication and participation mechanisms for affected people.

Since such 'active' affected people are a small minority of the entire population affected, most affected people have little capacity and motivation to participate in shaping the response efforts. Yet they are very grateful for every aid they receive and appreciate it a lot.

The Review noted that DEC Members were exploring how to ensure a more coordinated approach amongst humanitarian actors to harmonise communication to affected people in different formats, to prevent both bombarding affected people with information, education, and communication materials and to avoid leaving 'non-active' people behind in the communication and participation.

3.5. CHS 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed

In the course of the Review in Ukraine, DEC Members and local partners shared their feeling that CHS 4 and CHS 5 are very much intertwined, at least in the context of Ukraine response. Therefore, all the findings that were relevant to CHS 4 are also relevant to CHS 5. Below are the findings that are more specific to CHS 5.

Most DEC Members have mechanisms to collect complaints and feedback (directly or through local partners) including hotlines, call centres, direct interviews. It was noted that some Members received large amounts of feedback once people know about and have access to the mechanisms. The feedback is collected and transmitted to focal points. It was reported by some Members that they have a procedure to manage sensitive complaints.

However, it was also noted that affected people are not used to sharing feedback, especially if it is negative feedback (complaints) or when not asked directly.

More analysis is needed to learn which feedback mechanisms are more appropriate and effective. Because affected people are not used to complain about the aid that they receive, and because they might be afraid that the aid could stop / be reduced after such complaints, feedback collection mechanisms such as field visits and direct conversations may be not give accurate results.

A possible solution under discussion by local partners was to talk to informal 'leaders' among affected people – those with experience of civic activism / affiliation with NGOs, those who communicate with a lot of other affected people and may summarise their experience. Such 'leaders' are totally informal, because so far, there is no practice that affected people establish any board or councils, elect their representatives, and formally delegate

¹³ Risk being a function of Hazard, Exposure, Vulnerability and Capacity, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index>.

the authority to speak on their behalf to anyone. However, such 'leaders' can share some negative complaints / feedback that other affected people may prefer to keep to themselves.

Also, it was noted that the findings of Ground Truth Solutions¹⁴ are of particular interest and use in this regard.

3.6. CHS 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

Ensuring the response is coordinated and complementary is always an issue in humanitarian action, especially in a crisis as large and complex as that of Ukraine. Recognising this, it is noted that DEC Members have demonstrated a genuine commitment to coordination.

DEC Members and some of their partners are involved in the humanitarian coordination and Cluster system, and through this with the Government. They use many types of coordination with Government, Clusters and UN agencies that implemented similar projects in the regions. With local Governments, they used contact from regional level to identify the most vulnerable populations to be supported. When DEC Members receive requests from communities in other regions, they try to support them by referring to other providers with relevant expertise and presence.

However, it was noted that the briefing meeting for this Review was the first time where DEC Members had met in country. The discussion and interactions during the workshop were very much valued by the participants. While coordination at DEC Secretariat and DEC Members headquarter-level is seen to be taking place, it was felt that there is scope for improvement on in-country coordination, so that the DEC overall response may be bigger than the sum of each Members' response. Members recognise that resources (time and money) are needed for coordination, it does not happen automatically; they further recognise that any coordination amongst DEC Members should complement the existing coordination mechanisms.

Local partners coordinate with local authorities, with donors and sporadically with other NGOs, but only some of them with the Cluster system. They recognised that in the first months (Phase 1), they were too engaged in launching the work and lacked capacity and knowledge to be effective contributors to coordination. Over time, local partners have become more committed to coordination. Local partners recognise that coordinating with local authorities and other NGOs is important to share information and learning about the needs of affected people (and also the needs of local authorities and NGOs), reduce duplication and make maximum use of resources.

However, two significant issues were noted:

- The first issue is that many partners feel 'invited but not included' in the coordination system. Some reasons for this are: a) heavy coordination mechanisms that are time consuming and are felt to detract from time in response and engagement with affected people, b) lack of experience of partners in coordination, c) the language issue, d) local partners are extremely stretched both in terms of funding, and of human resources.
- The second issue is that there is still an attitude in many local partners of looking at how coordination can help their organisation rather than how it can contribute to the overall response. According to local partners, sometimes they feel the lack of coordination, and sometimes they feel it takes too much time. The frequency of meetings was noted as an issue. For example, if Cluster meetings are held weekly and if these meetings are very general, and do not provide a lot of useful information, and if a local partner works with 2-3 topics, it means the participation in 2-3 meetings per week, a huge commitment of time, for little perceived value.

¹⁴

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62e895bdf6085938506cc492/t/63c6d34af8020b6d3afdaa34/1673974603638/Ukraine+Bulletin+rond+1_final.pdf

According to local partners, at the local level coordination should be mandatory, especially about issues such as permit systems (permits to go to conflict-affected or combat areas), security, reaching out to affected people and learning their needs. A strong and appreciated aspect of coordination is avoiding duplication of assistance to affected people; according to local partners, this works well. They coordinate with local humanitarian headquarters (offices established under local authorities), which speeds up access to affected people, learning their needs and preventing overlaps in response.

Also, there has been a debate about referrals. Local partners report that they try to establish and use referrals but recognise that many referred affected people are 'lost,' as they do not come to the agencies to whom they have been referred. Having learnt this, certain local organisations, those having more capacity are trying to become one-stop-shops for the affected people and to provide all services they might need. However, a strong and effective referral system is seen as a more sustainable solution, which underlines the need for improved coordination.

3.7. CHS 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

The Review found that both DEC Members and their local partners have a strong and demonstrated commitment to continuously learn and improve.

All DEC Members have robust MEAL systems, and some are conducting or planning their own reviews (examples include the recent Oxfam review and CARE conducting a strategy review). It was noted that sharing such learning (or at least that which can be shared), and in a form that can be easily digested by busy aid workers, would be of benefit to the collective effort (helping the whole be greater than the sum of the parts).

The DEC Members have been also very active in supporting the learning of local partners. As most local organisations did not do humanitarian work before the full-scale conflict, they recognised they had a lot to learn, and they learned quickly. The Members provided training on MEAL, helped develop / upgrade the institutional systems and procedures of local partners, and now local partners are implementing this.

Local partners can learn from their own experience and from others (including receiving training from DEC Members).

Learning from their own experience happens through the development and use of MEAL policies and procedures, supported by capacity strengthening on MEAL provided by DEC Members and others. Local partners are seen to be good at that. Examples are:

- Monitoring departments of local partners conducting satisfaction surveys among affected people and embedding findings / feedback in the programming.
- Asking affected people about their preferred modalities of receiving humanitarian aid and acting accordingly.
- Doing Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM).
- Regular exercises in self-analysis by the local organisation. According to some respondents, it is like harvesting for them. Such self-analyses include discussions, brainstorming and workshops, internally, with partners, and with frontline responders.

For Ukrainian local organisations, learning from the experience of others mostly takes place through training received from the humanitarian INGOs and via the Clusters. An example was given of the Housing Cluster guidelines on minimum consumption volume of various types of heating (2019). Local partners learned these guidelines and used them to determine what people need for heating, how they can get it more conveniently. This learning was reinforced by consultations with affected people, and the decision was made to support cash

for winterisation. The Cluster is currently updating its guidelines, and local partners are already empowered enough to contribute to this process. However, both DEC Members and local partners agree that there is significant scope for improvement on learning from the experience of others (see below).

At the same time, learning from each other has scope for improvement. For example, DEC Members could be encouraged to share findings from their own internal reviews (as long as they are not too sensitive and 'for internal use only') with other Members and local partners.

Local partners praise the commitment of the Members to the provision of training, including training on technical skills, on safeguarding, on organisational development, project management, MEAL skills, reporting, etc. Other good practices mentioned are a) providing checklists on humanitarian aid and other knowledge products and b) connecting local partners to global education systems of the Members, where they can choose different courses and get a certificate. Local partners especially praised the professionalism of DEC Members in learning compared to certain other donors / partners.

It was noted also that the DEC Members welcomed this Review as a forward-looking learning exercise.

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

During the Review discussions under this heading were quite animated and it was found that there was considerable scope for action / adjustment.

DEC Members have good policies and regularly provide support to staff (safeguarding, prevention of burnout, R&R leave). However, there is some way to go to ensure that staff in partner agencies and community responders have the support they need to do their jobs effectively.

Recruitment was an issue in the first months of response (Phase 1), when the Members were opening up their offices or quickly expanding the staff. In Phase 2, HR management is going more smoothly for the Members. The Members have global hiring policies and select staff on a competitive basis. They provide both technical training and briefing on humanitarian standards and policies.

To decrease the workload on staff, the Members invite volunteers, 'daily' workers and 'free hands' to help with certain procedures such as registration of individuals. These volunteers usually represent target communities and are informed of organisational code of conduct, safeguarding, zero tolerance, data protection and management and other policies of the Members.

Members use annual leave for their staff. In addition, after a period (maybe 6 to 7 weeks) of hard work, staff can take some R&R leave, perhaps 5 days. The Members involve psychologists to provide support to their volunteers and staff.

As highlighted by the Members, one of their solutions is to engage partners as referrals (to reach out to affected people) and delegate certain work to local partners to decrease workload on Members' programme and finance staff. However, this can have a knock-on effect on local partners.

The Members also help local partners in supporting their staff, including training in technical skills (see CHS 3 and 7) and in personal welfare. DEC Members report having necessary systems in place to support them. For example, they have components on psychosocial support to staff for partners; they may organise workshops outside Ukraine or in a comfortable environment to help local partners get some rest.

Local partners confirm that due to the support from the Members, they have programmes to support wellbeing, trainings on safeguarding, programmes to prevent burnout among their staff including psychological counselling

and meetings for psychological support. However, they are not mandatory, so not everybody attends them (but those who do like them).

Other types of support include trainings on the principles of humanitarian aid (for both staff and volunteers), guided tours, visits to theatres, etc. Several Members have specific budgets allocated to local partners that the latter can use for psychosocial support / wellbeing of their staff, which is a good practice worth sharing.

However, this extensive offer of support to staff seems to not meet the demand for support. The Members recognise that local partners are extremely stretched – therefore, the practice of delegating certain tasks to them which may be beneficial for the Members (see above) is not so beneficial for the local partners.

Most local partners have increased their staff 3 or even 5-fold since February 2022, an extremely rapid rate of organisational growth. Since Phase 2 may well last for another year or more, it is important to cultivate an environment in which local partners can grow while continuing to develop their capacity to function well. In the long run, this is necessary for the sake of local partners and the affected people they serve.

Finally, at the individual level, responders often neglect to care for themselves. Some people have not yet gone on vacation since spring 2022 and say that they cannot be at home with their thoughts. Especially if they have relatives in the occupied territories, work distracts them from these thoughts.

It means that the response to the question “effective or exhausted?” can be hard to find, especially for community responders. There is scope for more support and training in competence and skills for humanitarian action and in self-care, with a view to being ‘effective rather than exhausted.’

3.9. CHS 9: Resources are managed effectively, efficiently and ethically

DEC Members noted that the Real-Time Review (RTR) format does not lend itself well to assessing adherence to this commitment.

It is noted that the DEC Members have long experience in working to ensure that resources are managed effectively, efficiently and ethically, and brought this experience to bear in Ukraine, including their commitment to coordination, capacity strengthening and the promotion of humanitarian principles.

Two issues to be mentioned are ‘deduplication’ of humanitarian aid and the allocation of resources.

The Members and local partners noted that there are systems in place to avoid duplication, such as the humanitarian coordination system.

As far as MPCA is concerned, duplication is controlled by the coordination system at national level. It is run by the Government (Ministry of Digital Transformation) and unites UN agencies, INGOs and local partners that implement cash programmes. The objective is to make sure that individuals do not receive cash assistance from two or more different sources at the same time. That is, a person can only apply for cash assistance from any agency which is part of the ‘deduplication’ system once in 3 months (normally, the Members provide 3-month payment in one instalment). All DEC Members that implement MPCA are part of this deduplication system.

The Government also provides social benefits to affected people, IDPs and residents of de-occupied territories. Payments from UN Agencies and INGOs may be provided, in addition to what the Government provides, and Government provision is not contingent what affected people receive from UN Agencies and INGOs.

However, some local organisations noted that the need for aid (absorption capacity) is so high that they do not regard duplication as a major concern; noting that the harm of someone receiving aid twice is smaller than the

effort / resource allocated to avoid duplication. Against this, it is noted that duplication in one area or with one group may cause deprivation in others.

As noted above, an option proposed to improve the allocation of resources is a fund to directly provide resources from the DEC to local partners, complemented by support services. During the Review, this idea was discussed in very broad terms, but the Members and local partners concur that local partners are on their way to having necessary programmatic and financial capacity to manage bigger budgets and should be empowered as the main response providers. It is noted that the DEC has commissioned a study on this topic¹⁵.

Conclusions

Overall, the Review concludes that the DEC Members' response is effective despite the difficult circumstances. The Members have developed good relationships with local organisations, through whom most of the humanitarian assistance is provided. While a concerted effort is made to ensure the voice of affected people is heard and influences the programming of assistance, challenges remain to ensure this really works.

The flexibility of DEC funding was widely acknowledged and allowed for the programmes to quickly adapt to meet the evolving needs of affected people.

The response of DEC Members is, and has been, relevant to affected people, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and those in conflict-affected areas.

At the start of the crisis, the response of most DEC Members was somewhat delayed (because of the need for most to set up offices, hire staff, establish contacts with local partners and other stakeholders), but since then has caught up well. Response modalities are selected in a participatory and risk-informed manner to effectively address the needs of affected people.

The DEC Members are praised by local partners for their focus and effort on strengthening local capacity. A feature that local partners especially like is the flexibility of Members allowing for supporting community-based initiatives which increase local ownership, agency and capacity. Also, the approach of DEC Members contributes to the humanitarian-recovery-development nexus.

While DEC Members take action to ensure participation and communication with affected people, in most cases it is limited to affected people filling in the questionnaires about their needs. Most affected people are not well versed in participation in civic society action, and have other pressing priorities, so need encouragement to get involved. This also applies to complaint and feedback mechanisms. While the Members (and local partners) have established complaint and feedback mechanisms, most affected people are not really using them. Affected people who had previous experience of civic activism are somewhat more active in participation and giving feedback; Members and local partners may be able to capitalise on this to encourage more widespread participation.

DEC Members are well engaged in coordination (through the Cluster system, with the Government, with local organisations and stakeholders). Local partners have overcome some of their early coordination-related difficulties and now are increasingly participating in coordination. There is scope for increased recognition of the role of local partners in humanitarian response.

Systematic learning mechanisms are available and used by the Members and local partners. They have a good commitment to learn, are good at learning and using the products of learning. There is scope for improvement

¹⁵ <https://www.dec.org.uk/report/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-scoping-exercise-report>

int sharing of learning products between Members, and between the field and headquarter people in the Members.

DEC Members and local organisation have mechanisms to support aid workers, in technical skills and psychological wellbeing. However, the aid workers, especially staff of local partners, do not always use such mechanisms. This problem is likely to increase unless action is taken to promote their systematic use.

There is strong interest in developing a more direct method of funding local organisations, such as through the establishment of a 'Local Organisation Funding and Support Service.'

The dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in October to November 2022 requires that Members and local partners continually review their response to keep it relevant to the changing context. The DEC flexibility in funding is helpful in this regard. With the dramatic developments in the military situation, there is an ongoing need for contingency planning for the range of scenarios that may develop.

The recent deterioration of the humanitarian situation discussed above (in *2.3 Background and Context*) underlines the need for continued (and increased) humanitarian assistance, for the programming of such assistance to be flexible and able to respond quickly to a rapidly changing situation, and to be based on good practice including contingency planning linked to regular risk assessments.

There is scope for DEC Members to further improve their collective impact, for example in learning, in supporting the funding of local organisations, and in some joint / shared contingency planning and risk assessments.

4. 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 to meet the needs of people at risk in line with best practice, such as engaging with affected people, coordinating with Government and other humanitarian agencies and investing in capacity strengthening and learning.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
2. Maintain flexibility of DEC funding, to allow real-time adaptation of Member programming to meet needs.	<i>DEC Secretariat.</i>
3. Building on the good relationships between DEC Members and local partners. Continue exploring how to develop these partnership approaches, including provision of capacity strengthening and support and strengthening engagement of local partners.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
4. Continue with cash, complementing it where necessary with in-kind and service provision; the latter may become more important as the context evolves and the market may not be able to respond (e.g., for winter kit, such as generators).	<i>DEC Members.</i>
5. Contextualizing the humanitarian principles among the local partners, notably for them to ensure neutrality in the context of protracted information psychological warfare conducted by both sides, as well in their attitudes to residents of occupied and de-occupied territories.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
Even better, develop further by:	Who
6. Ensure that winter-related support is provided without delay. Understanding that humanitarian crisis will most likely continue for at least another year, start planning for 2023 / 2024 winterisation in summer 2023. Conduct review of 2022 / 2023 winterisation programmes in spring 2023 to identify regional and urban / rural specifics, lessons learnt and best practices, and make sure that they inform further winterisation programming. Integrate contingency planning in winterisation programming and focus on issues such as procurement / supply chain, security / access challenges and timely allocation of money, as there are risks that they may slow down the winterisation programming.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
7. Develop quick and adaptable frameworks of internal guidelines, processes, cooperation across Members in the provision of in-kind assistance in situations of deficit of certain items on the market. Analyse the experience of response in case where items were in deficit, such as deficit of food and NFIs in March 2022 and deficit of energy generators in October to November 2022 and learn from this experience. To mitigate the burden of shutdowns, consider procuring and installing solar panels in hospitals, schools, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) accommodation centres and other social infrastructure facilities.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
8. Conduct contingency planning as a group of DEC Members (engaging representatives of the Members and their local partners), including a regular assessment of changing risk to affected people. ensuring these complements existing planning by individual Members.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
9. In contingency planning, provide more opportunities for aid workers and affected people to jointly discuss different scenarios, the needs arising and possible solutions. Notably, identify good practices of the Members that are already organising such discussions, and share these practices.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
10. Consider establishing a 'local organisation funding and support service' to provide direct funding to local organisations (in parallel with current modality of sub-granting), complemented by appropriate support services that will ensure appropriate, relevant, effective and transparent use of DEC funds and equal and equitable management by DEC Members (the Members can form the board that will decide on funds allocation from DEC directly to local organisations). In	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>

doing so, take note of the detailed recommendations in the recent report ¹⁶ on <i>Options for Supporting and Strengthening Local Humanitarian Action in Ukraine</i> .	
11. Partner up with local-level (not only national-level) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA) countries in terms of delivering response and collecting feedback from affected people, since such local-level CSOs may be closer to affected people.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
12. Conduct sessions / consultations between the Members (engaging representatives of the Members and their local partners) to share experience and identify multiple, community preferred and effective mechanisms to collect complaints and feedback from affected people, as well as the contexts in which particular mechanisms are relevant. Where relevant, consider more use of informal leaders to strengthen engagement with and feedback from affected people. Such leaders may be able to share complaints and feedback that affected people may be uncomfortable in sharing.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
13. Enhance the sharing of learning within and between DEC Members through a) more structured exchanges and information-sharing at country-level and b) between Member HQ and staff in-country. In particular share findings of Member assessments and reviews. Make sure that the knowledge products that are shared are accompanied by short summaries that are easier to digest. Where relevant, share learning in English, Ukrainian and other national languages so that local partners always have access to it.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members.</i>
14. Where relevant, encourage local partners to engage in the work of Clusters / sub-Clusters.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
15. Strengthen support for policies and practice to ensure aid workers and community responders take care of themselves, so they can be 'effective rather than exhausted' and keep working effectively in difficult conditions.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
16. Invest further in the harmonisation of communication with affected people to ensure: a) clarity and consistency of messaging from DEC Members and local partners, b) that no group of affected people is left out, c) that affected people and communities are not stressed with additional assessments, information sharing. In this respect, take note of the CDAC report ¹⁷ on <i>Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability across the Ukraine response</i> and on the findings of Ground Truth Solutions ¹⁸ .	<i>DEC Members.</i>
17. Make sure all groups of affected people have access to all necessary information about humanitarian in an appropriate format and have full access to different (online and offline) feedback sharing mechanisms.	<i>DEC Members</i>
18. Conduct sessions / consultations between the Members to explore ways on how DEC Members and local partners could relate in more equal manner and reduce bureaucracy while respecting the need for accountability and transparency. Identify successful practices moving civil society partnerships from a capacity strengthening approach to a genuine, more equal reciprocal capacity exchange approach.	<i>DEC Secretariat and Members</i>
19. Review the system of referrals between agencies and local partners, to actively monitor the handover and ensure that people are not lost to or confused by the system.	<i>DEC Members.</i>
20. Consider repeating the review periodically by the DEC. Encourage the Members to coordinate on their reviews and evaluations and share findings between the Members and between countries	<i>DEC Secretariat.</i>

¹⁶ <https://www.dec.org.uk/report/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-scoping-exercise-report>

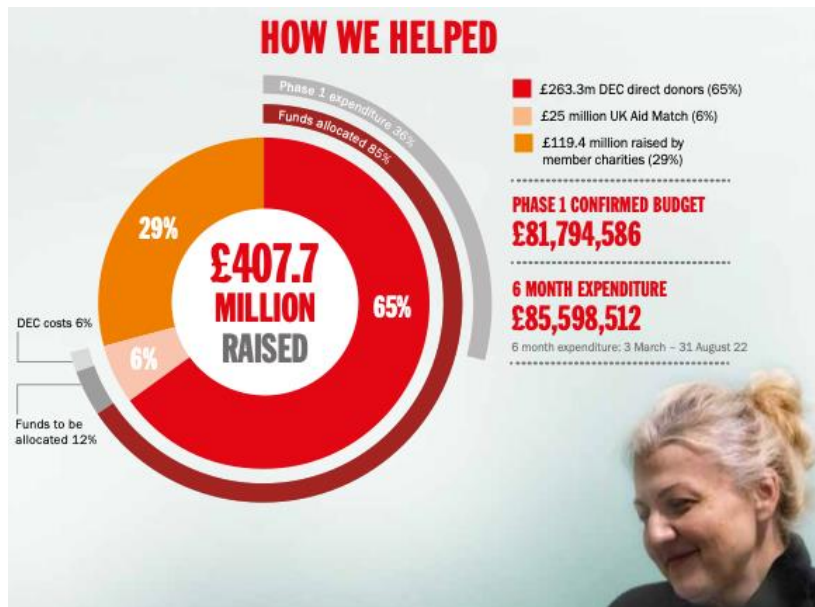
¹⁷ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60996b757eb6521a42f3839d/t/6336e153b424b77aca87d05c/1664541074709/Ukraine+snapshot_September+update_overview.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/projects/a-locally-informed-humanitarian-response-insights-from-ukraine>

Annexes

5. Overview of DEC Response

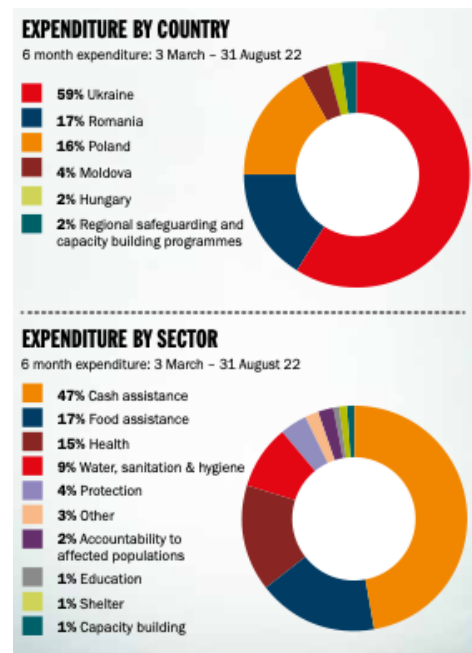
The charts and text below give a brief overview of the DEC Response¹⁹.



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.



¹⁹ From the DEC's 6 month report, March to August 2022.

6. Purpose and Scope of Review

6.1. 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 crisis²⁰, 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.

6.2. 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-days²¹ 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.²² 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.

²⁰ In line with CHS commitment 7 "humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve".

²¹ One consultant working for one day gives one consultant-day, a team of 4 working for 50 days gives 200 consultant-days.

²² 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.

7. Review Concepts and Approach

7.1. 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 response²³.

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.’

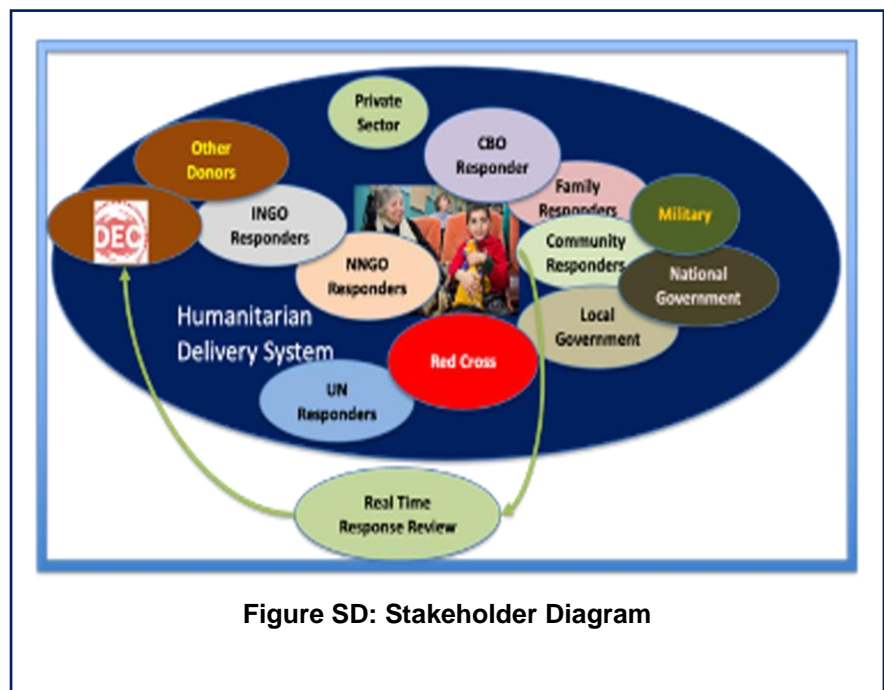


Figure SD: Stakeholder Diagram

²³ <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 worker²⁴ 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 recognised²⁵ 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.

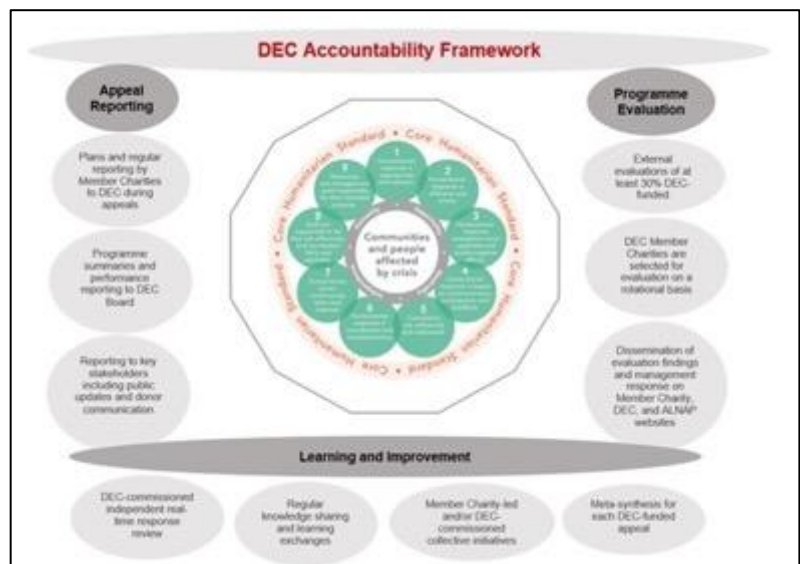
Truth to power: The consultants understand the need for an external, independent and professional source of information ready to ‘speak truth into power’ and acknowledge the full support of the DEC in this regard. It gives due regard to confidentiality, especially for key informants.

7.2. 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.



²⁴ In this context an ‘aid worker’ is anyone providing assistance or support to affected people, whether working informally or for an ‘official’ agency.

²⁵ 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)?

8. Review Methodology and Deliverables

8.1. 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 DEC²⁶.
- 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:



²⁶ 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.

8.2. 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.

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

9.1. 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.

9.2. 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?*²⁷

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?

²⁷ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/from-real-time-evaluation-to-real-time-learning>

- Individual aid workers (MASKS²⁸, 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.

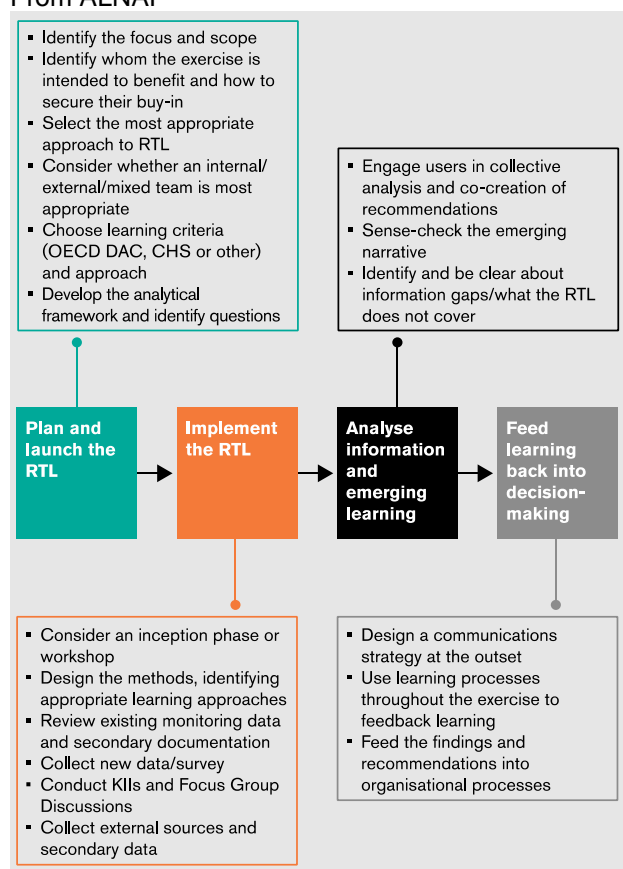
Cycle of learning: Consider the full cycle of learning:

- 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 ALNAP²⁹



²⁸ Motivation, Attitude, Skills, Knowledge and Support - elements of competence

²⁹ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/from-real-time-evaluation-to-real-time-learning>

9.3. 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.